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A VIRGIN HEART

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A NOVEL

BY

REMY DE GOURMONT

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

BY

ALDOUS HUXLEY

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PREFACE

The author had thought of qualifying this book: A Novel Without Hypocrisy; but he reflected that these words might appear unseemly, since hypocrisy is becoming more and more fashionable.

He next thought of: A Physiological Novel; but that was still worse in this age of great converts, when grace from on high so opportunely purifies the petty human passions.

These two sub-titles being barred, nothing was left; he has therefore put nothing.

A novel is a novel. And it would be no more than that if the author had not attempted, by an analysis that knows no scruples, to reveal in these pages what may be called the seamy side of a 'virgin heart,' to show that innocence has its instincts, its needs, its physiological dues.

A young girl is not merely a young heart, but a young human body, all complete.

Such is the subject of this novel, which must, in spite of everything, be called 'physiological.'

R. G.

A VIRGIN HEART

CHAPTER I

THE terrace was in a ruinous state, overgrown with grass and brambles and acacias. The girl was leaning on the parapet, eating mulberries. She displayed her purple-stained hands and laughed. M. Hervart looked up:

"You've got a moustache as well," he said. "It looks very funny."

"But I don't want to look funny."

She walked to the little stream flowing close at hand, wetted her handkerchief and began wiping her mouth.

M. Hervart's eyes returned to his magnifying glass; he went on examining the daisy on which he had found two scarlet bugs so closely joined together that they seemed a single insect. They had gone to sleep in the midst of their love-making, and but for the quivering of their long antennae, you would have thought they were dead. M. Hervart would have liked to watch the ending of this little scene of passion; but it might go on for hours. He lost heart.

"What's more," he reflected, "I know that the male does not die on the spot; he goes running about in search of food as soon as he's free. Still, I would have liked to see the mechanism of separation. That will come with luck. One must always count on luck, whether one is studying animals or men. To be sure, there is also patience, perseverance..."

He made a little movement with his head, signifying, no doubt, that patience and perseverance were not in his line. Then, very gently, he laid the flower with its sleeping burden on the parapet of the terrace. It was only then he noticed that Rose was no longer there.

"I must have annoyed her by what I said about the moustache. It wasn't true, either. But there are moments when that child gets on my nerves with that look of hers, as though she wanted to be kissed. And yet, if I did so much as to lay my hand on her shoulder, I should get my face smacked. A curious creature. But then all women are curious creatures, girls above all."

Carefully wiping his glass, M. Hervart stepped across the stream and entered the wood.

M. Hervart was about forty. He was tall and thin; sometimes, when his curiosity had kept him poring over something for too long at a stretch he stooped a little. His eyes were bright and penetrating, despite the fact that one of them had, it would seem, been narrowed and shrunk by the use of the microscope. His clear-complexioned face, with its light pointed beard, was pleasant, without being striking.

He was the keeper of the department of Greek sculpture at the Louvre, but the cold beauty of the marbles interested him little, and archaeology even less. He was a lover of life, who divided his days between women and animals. Studying the habits of insects was his favourite hobby. He was often to be seen at the Zoological gardens, or else, more often than at his office, in the animal-shop round the corner. His evenings he devoted to amusement, frequenting every kind of society. To sympathetic audiences he liked to give out that he was the descendant of the M. d'Hervart whose wife had La Fontaine for a lover. He used also to say that it was only his professional duties that had prevented his making himself a name as a naturalist. But the opin-

ion of most people was that M. Hervart was, in all he did, nothing more than a clever amateur, ruined by a great deal of indolence.

Every two or three years he used to go and stay with his friend M. Desbois at his manor of Robinvast, near Cherbourg. M. Desbois was a retired commercial sculptor, who had recently ennobled himself by means of a Y and one or two other little changes. When M. Des Boys burst upon the world, Hervart appeared not to notice the metamorphosis. That earned him an increase of affection, and whenever he came to visit, Mme Des Boys would take almost excessive pains about the cooking.

Mme Des Boys, who had been sentimental and romantic in her youth and had remained all her life rather a silly woman, had insisted on calling her daughter Rose. It would have been a ridiculous name—Rose Des Boys—if Rose had been the sort of girl to tolerate the repetition of a foolish compliment. Ordinarily she was a gay and gentle creature, but she could be chilling, could ignore and disregard you in the cruellest fashion. Her parents adored her and were afraid of her: so they

allowed her to do what she liked. She was twenty years old.

Meanwhile, M. Hervart was looking for Rose. He did not dare call her, because he did not know what name to use. In conversation he said: You; before strangers, Mademoiselle; in his own mind, Rose.

"She was much nicer two years ago. She listened to what I had to say. She obeyed me. She caught insects for me. This is the critical moment now. If we were bugs..."

He went on:

"Whether it's women or beetles, love is their whole life. Bugs die as soon as their work is done, and women begin dying from the moment of their first kiss.... They also begin living. It's pretty, the spectacle of these girls who want to live, want to fulfill their destiny, and don't know how, and go sobbing through the darkness, looking for their way. I expect I shall find her crying."

Rose, indeed, had just finished wiping her eyes. They were blue when she was sad and greenish when she laughed.

"You've been crying. Did you prick yourself coming through this holly? I did too."

"I shouldn't cry for a thing like that. But who told you I'd been crying? I got a fly in my eye. Look, only one of them's red."

But, instead of lifting her head, she bent down and began to pick the flowers at her feet.

"May I sit down beside you?"

"What a question!"

"You see, your skirt takes up all the room."

"Well then, push it away."

M. Hervart turned back the outspread skirt and sat down on the old bench—cautiously, for he knew that it was rather rickety. Now that he had money and an aristocratic name, M. Des Boys had become romantic. His whole domain, except for the kitchen garden and the rooms that were actually inhabited, was kept in a perennially wild, decrepit state. In the house and its surroundings you could see nothing but mouldering walls and rotten planks, moss-grown benches, impenetrable bramble bushes. Near the stream stood an old tower, from which the ivy fell in a cataract whose waves of greenery splashed up again to the summit of an old oak with dead forked branches—a pretty sight. The Des Boys never

went out except to show their virgin forest to a visitor. M. Des Boys dabbled in painting.

It was morning, and the wood was cool, still damp with dew. Through the thickly woven beech branches the sunlight fell on the stiff holly leaves and lit them up like flowers. A little chestnut tree, that had sprouted all awry, raised its twisted head towards the light. Near-by stood a wild cherry, into which the sparrows darted, twittering and alarmed. A jay passed like a flash of blue lightning. The wind crept in beneath the trees, stirring the bracken that darkened and lightened at its passage. A wounded bee fell on Rose's skirt.

"Poor bee! One of his wings is unhooked. I'll try and put it right."

"Take care," said M. Hervart. "It will sting. Animals never believe that you mean well by them. To them everyone's an enemy."

"True," said Rose, shaking off the bee. "Your bugs will eat him and that will be a happy ending. Everyone's an enemy."

Rose had spoken so bitterly that M. Hervart was quite distressed. He brought his face close to hers as her big straw hat would permit, and whispered:

"Are you unhappy?"

How beautifully women manage these things! In a flash the hat had disappeared, tossed almost angrily aside, and at the same moment an equisitely pale and fluffy head dropped on to M. Hervart's shoulder.

It was a touching moment. Much moved, the man put his arm round the girl's waist. His hand took possession of the little hand that she surrendered to him. He had only to turn and bend his head a little, and he was kissing, close below the hair, a white forehead, feverishly moist. He felt her abandonment to him becoming more deliberate; the hand he was holding squeezed his own

Rose made an abrupt movement which parted them, and looking full at M. Hervart, her face radiant with tenderness, she said:

"I'm not unhappy now."

She got up, and they moved away together through the wood, exchanging little insignificant phrases in voices full of tenderness. Each time their eyes met, they smiled. They kept on fingering leaves, flowers, mere pieces of wood, so as to have an excuse for touching each other's hand. Coming to a clearing where

they could walk abreast, they allowed their arms on the inner side to hang limply down, so that their hands touched and were soon joined.

There was a silence, prolonged and very delightful. Each, meanwhile, was absorbed in his own thoughts.

"Obviously," M. Hervart was saying to himself, "if I have any sense left, I shall take the train home. First of all, I must go to Cherbourg and send a telegram to someone who can send a wire to recall me. What a nuisance! I was enjoying myself so much here. To whom shall I appeal? To Gratienne? I shall have to write a letter in that case, to concoct some story. Three or four days longer won't make matters any worse;I know these young girls. Time doesn't exist for them; they live in the absolute. So long as there's no jealousy—and I don't see how there can be—I shall be all right. She is really charming—Rose. Lord! what a state of excitement I'm in! But I must be reasonable. I shall tell Gratienne to meet me at Grandcamp. She has been longing to go to Grandcamp ever since she read that novel about the place. Besides,

there are the rocks. I'm quite indifferent provided I get away from here. . . ."

"What are you thinking about?"

"Can you ask, my dear child?"

A squeeze from the little hand showed that his answer had been understood. Silence settled down once more.

"Gratienne? At this very moment she's probably with another lover. But then, think of leaving a woman alone in Paris, in July? 'I am never bored. I dine at Mme Fleury's every day; she loves having me. We start for Honfleur on the 25th. You must come and see us.' She imagines that Honfleur is close to Cherbourg. 'I am never bored.' Come, come; when women speak so clearly, it means they have nothing to hide. . . . On the contrary it's one of their tricks. . . ."

"Well, my child, how's your wretchedness? Is it all over?"

"I am very happy," Rose answered.

A look from her big limpid eyes confirmed these solemn words and M. Hervart was more moved than at the moment of her surrender. The idea that he was the cause of this child's happiness filled him with pride.

"Better not disturb Gratienne. She's so suspicious. Whom shall I write to, then? My colleagues? No, I'm not on intimate enough terms. Gauvain, the animal-shop man? That would be humiliating. What a bore it all is! Leave it; we'll see later on. And after all, what's the matter? A little sentimental friendship. Rose lives such a lonely life. Why should I rob her of the innocent pleasure of playing at sentiment with me? Summer-holiday amusements..."

"Oh," said Rose, "look at that beetle. Isn't he handsome?"

But the animal, superb in its gold and sapphire armour, had disappeared under the dead leaves. They thought no more about it. Rose was occupied by very different thoughts. She felt herself filled with an exultant tenderness.

"I don't belong to myself any more. It's very thrilling. What is going to happen? He'll kiss me on the eyes. There'll be no resisting, because I belong to him."

She lifted her head and looked at M. Hervart. She seemed to be offering her eyes. Without changing her position she closed

them. A kiss settled lightly on her soft eyelids.

"He does everything I expect him to do. Does he read my thoughts or do I read his?"

Meanwhile M. Hervart was trying to find something gallant or sentimental to say, and could think of nothing.

"I might praise her chestnut hair, with its golden lights, tell her how fine and silky it is. But is it? And besides, it might be a little premature. What shall I praise? Her mouth? It's rather large. Her nose? It's a little too hooked. Her complexion? Is it a compliment to say it's pale and opaque? Her eyes? That would look like an allusion. They're pretty, though—her eyes, the way they change colour."

He had picked a blade of grass as he walked. It was covered with little black moving specks.

"What a bore," said M. Hervart, "I've forgotten to bring my microscope."

"I've got one, only the reflector's broken. It will have to be sent to Cherbourg.

"Couldn't you take it yourself?"

"If you like."

"But wouldn't you enjoy it, Rose?"

She was so pleased at being called Rose, that for a moment she did not answer. Then she said, blushing:

"You see, I scarcely ever go out of this place; the idea hardly occurs to me. But I should love to go with you."

She added with a spoilt child's tone of authority: "I'll go and tell father. We'll start after luncheon."

M. Hervart looked once more at his indecipherable grass blade.

"I know a good shop," he said. "Lepoultel, the marine optician. Do you know him? He's a friend of Gauvain's...."

"The animal man?"

"What, do you mean to say you remember that?"

"I remember everything you tell me," answered Rose, very seriously.

M. Hervart was flattered. It occurred to him also that this sentimental child might make a very good practical little wife. His rather curious life passed rapidly before him and he called to mind some of the mistresses of his fugitive amours. He saw Gratienne; it was six months since they had met; she would

have left him, very likely, by the time he returned. At this thought M. Hervart frowned. At the same time the pressure of his fingers relaxed.

Rose looked at him:

"What are you thinking about?"

"Again!" said M. Hervart to himself. "Oh, that eternal feminine question! As if anyone ever answered it! Here's my answer...."

Looking at the clouds, he pronounced:

"I think it's going to rain."

"Oh, no!" said Rose, "I don't think so. The wind is 'suet'...."

Conscious of having uttered a provincialism, she made haste to add:

"As the country people say."

"What does it mean?"

"South-east."

M. Hervart was little interested in dialectal forms; rather spitefully and with the true Parisian's fatuous vanity, he replied:

"What an ugly word! You ought to say South-east. You're a regular peasant woman."

"Laugh away," said Rose. "I don't mind, now. We're all country-people; my father comes from these parts, so does my mother. I

wasn't born here, but I belong to the place. I belong to it as the trees do, as the grass and all the animals. Yes, I *am* a peasant woman.

She raised her head proudly.

"I come from here too," said M. Hervart.

"Yes, and you don't care for it any longer."

"I do, because it produced you and because you love it."

Delighted at the discovery of this insipidity, M. Hervart darted, hat in hand, in pursuit of a butterfly; he missed it.

"They're not so easy to catch as kisses," said Rose with a touch of irony.

M. Hervart was startled:

"Is she merely sensual?" he wondered.

But Rose was incapable of dividing her nature into categories. She felt her character as a perfect unity. Her remark had been just a conversational remark, for she was not lacking in wit.

Meanwhile, this mystery plunged M. Hervart into a prolonged meditation. He constructed the most perverse theories about the precocity of girls.

But he was soon ashamed of these mental wanderings.

"Women are complex; not more so, of course, than men, but in a different way which men can't understand. They don't understand themselves, and what's more, they don't care about understanding. They feel, and that suffices to steer them very satisfactorily through life, as well as to solve problems which leave men utterly helpless. One must act towards them as they do themselves. It's only through the feelings that one can get into contact with them. There is but one way of understanding women, and that is to love them.... Why shouldn't I say that aloud? It would amuse her, and perhaps she might find something pretty to say in reply."

But, without being exactly shy, M. Hervart was nervous about hearing the sound of his own voice. That was why he generally gave vent only to the curtest phrases. Rose had taken his hand once more. This mute language seemed to appeal to her, and M. Hervart was content to put up with it, though he found this exchange of manual confidences a little childish.

"But nothing," he went on to himself, "nothing is childish in love...."

This word, which he did not pronounce, even to himself, but which he seemed to see, as though his own hand had written it on a sheet of paper—this word filled him with terror. He burst out into secret protestations:

"But there's no question of love. She doesn't love me. I don't love her. It's a mere game. This child has made me a child like herself ...."

He wanted to stop thinking, but the process went on of its own accord.

"A dangerous game.... I oughtn't to have kissed her eyes. Her forehead, that's a different matter; it's fatherly... And then letting her lean on my shoulder, like that! What's to be done?"

He had to admit that he had been the guilty party. Almost unconsciously, prompted by his mere male instinct, he had, since his arrival a fortnight before, and while still to all appearance, he continued to treat her as a child, been silently courting her. He was always looking at her, smiling to her, even though his words might be serious. Feeling herself the object of an unceasing attention, Rose had concluded that he wanted to capture her, and she had al-

lowed herself to be caught. M. Hervart considered himself too expert in feminine psychology to admit the possibility of a young girl's having deliberately taken the first step. He felt like an absent-minded sportsman who, forgetting that he has fired, wakes up to find a partridge in his game-bag.

"An agreeable surprise," he reflected. "Almost too agreeable."

CHAPTER II

IT had already grown hot. They sat down in the shade, on a tree trunk. Large harmless ants crawled hither and thither on the bark, but M. Hervart seemed to have lost his interest in entomology. Idly, they looked at the busy little creatures, crossing and re-crossing one another's path.

"Do they know what they're doing? And do I know what I'm doing? Some sensation guides them. What about me? They run here and there, because they think they've seen or smelt some prey. And I? Oh, I should like to run away from my prey. I reason, I deliberate.... Yes, I deliberate, or at least I try."

He looked up at the girl.

Rose was engaged in pulling fox-glove buds off their stems and making them pop in the palm of her hand. Her face was serious. M. Hervart could look at her without distracting her from her dreams.

She made a pretty picture, as she sat there, gentle and, at the same time, wild. Her features, while they still preserved a trace of childishness, were growing marked and definite. She was a woman. How red her mouth was, how voluptuous! M. Hervart caught himself reflecting that that mouth would give most excellent kisses. What a fruit to bite, firm-fleshed and succulent! Rose heaved a sigh, and it was as though a wave had lifted her white dress; all her young bosom had seemed to expand. M. Hervart had a vision of roseate whiteness, soft and living; he desired it as a child desires the peach he sees on the wall hidden under its long leaves. He took the pleasure in this desire that he had sometimes taken in standing before Titian's Portrait of a Young Lady. The obstacle was as insurmountable: Rose, so far as he was concerned, was an illusion.

"But that makes no difference," he said to himself, "I have desired her, which isn't chaste of me. If I had been in love with her, I should not have had that kind of vision. Therefore I am not in love with her. Fortunately!"

Rose was thinking of nothing. She was just

letting herself be looked at. Having been examined, she smiled gently, a smile that was faintly tinged with shyness. Flying suddenly to the opposite extreme, she burst out laughing and, holding on with both hands to the knotted trunk, leaned backwards. Her hat fell off, her hair came undone. She sat up again, looking wilder than ever. M. Hervart thought that she was going to run away, like Galatea; but there was no willow tree.

"I don't care," she said as M. Hervart handed her the hat; "my hair will have to stay down. It's all right like that. Pins don't hold on my head."

"Pins," said M. Hervart, "pins rarely do hold on women's heads."

She smiled without answering and certainly without understanding. She was smiling a great deal this morning, M. Hervart thought.

"But her smile is so sweet that I should never get tired of it. Come now, I'll tell her that...."

"I love your smile. It's so sweet that I should never get tired of it."

"As sweet as that? That's because it's so new. I don't smile much generally."

It was enough to move any man to the depths of his being, M. Hervart murmured spontaneously:

"I love you, Rose."

Frankly, and without showing any surprise, she answered:

"So do I, my dear."

At the same time she shook her skirt on which a number of ants were crawling.

"This sort doesn't bite," she said. They're nice...."

"Like you. (What a compliment! How insipid! What a fool I'm making of myself!)"

"There's one on your sleeve," said Rose. She brushed it off.

"Now say thank you," and she presented her cheek, on which M. Hervart printed the most fraternal of kisses.

"It's incomprehensible," he thought. "However, I don't think she's in love. If she were, she would run away. It is only after the decisive act that love becomes familiar...."

"If we want to go to Cherbourg," said Rose, "we must have lunch early."

They moved away; soon they were out of the wood and had entered the hardly less un-

kempt garden. It was sunny there, and they crossed it quickly. She walked ahead. M. Hervart picked a rose as he went along and presented it to her. Rose took it and picked another, which she gave to M. Hervart, saying:

"This one's me."

M. Hervart had to begin pondering again. He was feeling happy, but understood less and less.

"She behaves as though she were in love with me.... She also behaves as though she weren't. At one moment one would think that I was everything to her. A little later she treats me like a mere friend of the family .... And it's she who leads me on.... I have never seen that with flirts.... Where can she have learnt it? Women are like the noblemen in Moliere's time: they know everything without having been taught anything at all."

M. Hervart, weighed down in mind, but light of heart, went up to his room, so as to be able to meditate more at ease. First of all he smartened himself up with some care. He plucked from his beard a hair, which, if not

quite silver, was certainly very pale gold. He scented his waistcoat and slipped on his finger an elaborately chased ring.

"It may come in useful when conversation begins to flag."

He was about to begin his meditations, when somebody knocked at the door. Luncheon was ready.

M. Des Boys, despite the disturbance of his plans, seemed pleased. A drive, he declared, would do him good. He needed an outing; besides he had a right to one.

"I have just finished the ninth panel of my life of Saint Clotilde. It is her entry into the monastery of Saint Martin at Tours."

M. Hervart manifested an interest in this composition, which he had admired the previous evening before it had been given the final touches. He hoped to see it soon in its proper frame, with the other panels in Robinvast church.

"There are going to be twelve in all," said M. Des Boys.

"People will come and see them as they do the Life of St. Bruno that used to be at the Chartreux and is now in the Louvre."

"So I hope."

"But they won't come quite so much."

"Yes, Robinvast is rather far. But then who goes to the Louvre? A few artists, a few aimless foreign sightseers. Nobody in France takes an interest in art."

"Nobody in the world does," said M. Hervart, "except those who live by it."

"What about those who die of it?" asked Rose.

Mme Des Boys looked at her daughter with some surprise:

"I have never heard that painting was a dangerous industry."

"When one believes in it, it is," said M. Hervart.

"What, not dangerous?" said M. Des Boys. "What about white lead?"

"One must believe," said Rose, looking at M. Hervart.

"This just shows," M. Des Boys went on, "what the public's point of view in this matter is. My wife's marvellously absurd remark exactly represents their feelings."

There followed a series of pointless anecdotes on Mme Des Boys' habitual absence of

mind. M. Hervart very nearly forgot to laugh: he was thinking of what Rose had just said.

"Rose," said M. Des Boys, "ask Hervart if we weren't believers when we went around the Louvre. We were in a fever of enthusiasm. Hervart is my pupil; I formed his taste for beauty. Unluckily I left Paris and he has turned out badly. I remain faithful, in spite of everything."

"But," said M. Hervart, "faithfulness only begins at the moment of discovering one's real vocation."

Rose seemed to have given these words a meaning which M. Hervart had not consciously intended they should have. Two eyes, full of an infinite tenderness, rested on his like a caress.

"It's as though I had made a declaration," he thought. "I must be mad. But how can one avoid phrases which people go and take as premeditated allusions?"

However, he found the game amusing. It was possible in this way to speak in public and to give utterance to one's real feelings under cover of the commonplaces of conversation.

Rose had given him the example; he had followed her without thinking, but this docility was a serious symptom.

"I am lost. Here I am in process of falling in love."

But like those drunkards who, feeling the moment of intoxication at hand, desire to control themselves, but must still obey their cravings because they have been so far weakened by the very sensation that now awakens them to a consciousness of their state, M. Hervart, while deciding that he ought to struggle, yielded.

He drank off a whole glass of wine and said:

"It is easy to make a mistake at one's first entry into life, and to go on making it long after. I am still very fond of art, but I was never meant to do more than pay her visits. We are friends, not a married couple. I have built my house on other foundations; it may be worth much or little, but I live in it faithfully. One can only stick to what one loves. To keep a treasure, you must have found it first."

He had spoken with passion.

"What eloquence!" said M. Des Boys.

All of a sudden, Rose began to laugh, a laugh so happy, so full of gratitude, that M. Hervart could make no mistake about its meaning.

"You're being laughed at, my poor friend," M. Des Boys went on.

At this mistake, Rose's laughter redoubled. It became gay, childish, uncontrollable.

"This is something," said Mme Des Boys, "which will console you, I hope. But what a little demon my daughter is!"

Out of pity for her mother, Rose made an effort to restrain herself. She succeeded after two or three renewed spasms and said, addressing herself to M. Hervart:

"What do you think of the little demon? Are you afraid?"

"More than you think."

"So am I; I'm afraid of myself."

"That's a sensible remark," said Mme Des Boys. "Come now, behave."

The home-made cake being approved of, she began giving the recipe. A meal rarely passed without Mme Des Boys' revealing some culinary mystery.

The carriage drove past the windows, and

lunch ended almost without further conversation. Rose had become dreamy. M. Hervart's conclusion was:

"Our affair has made the most terrifying progress in these few seconds."

CHAPTER III

HE went on with his meditations in the little wagonette which carried them to Couville station. Rose was sitting opposite; their feet, naturally, came into contact.

M. Des Boys, who owned several farms, stopped to examine the state of the crops. In some of the fields the corn had been beaten down. He got up on the box beside the driver to ask him whether it was the same throughout the whole district. He was very disquieted.

M. Hervart stretched out his legs, so that he held the girl's knees between his own. She smiled. M. Hervart, a little oppressed by his emotions, dared not speak. He took her hand and kissed it.

All of a sudden, Rose exclaimed: "We have forgotten the microscope!"

"So we have! our pretext. What will become of us?"

"But do we need a pretext, now?"

M. Hervart renewed the pressure of his prisoning knees. That was his first answer.

"We're conspirators, Rose," he then said. "It's serious."

"I hope so."

"We have been conspirators for a long time."

"Since this morning, yes."

She blushed a little.

"From that moment," M. Hervart went on, "when you said, 'One must believe'."

"I said what I thought."

"It's what I think too."

"In this way," he said to himself, "I say what I ought to say without going too far. Oh, if only I dared!"

Meanwhile, he was disturbed by the thought of the microscope.

"I shall buy one," he said, "and leave it with you. It will be of use to me when I come again."

"Stop," said Rose; her voice was low, but its tone was violent. "When you talk of coming again, you're talking of going away."

M. Hervart had nothing to answer. He got

out of the difficulty by renewing the pressure of his legs.

They reached the little lonely station. The train came in, and a quarter of an hour later they were in Cherbourg.

M. Des Boys at once announced his intention of going to see the museum. He wanted to look at a few masterpieces, he said, so that he might once more compare his own art with that of the great men. M. Hervart protested. For him, a holiday consisted in getting away from museums. Furthermore, he regarded this particular collection, with its list of great names, as being in large part apocryphal.

"If the catalogue of the Louvre is false, as it is, what must the catalogue of the Cherbourg museum be like?" he asked.

M. Des Boys shrugged his shoulders:

"You have lost my esteem."

And he affirmed the perfect authenticity of the Van Dycks, Van Eycks, Chardins, Poussins, Murillos, Jordaenses, Ribeiras, Fra Angelicos, Cranachs, Pourbuses and Leonardos which adorned the town hall.

"There's no Raphael," said M. Hervart,

"and there ought to be a Velasquez and a Titian and a Correggio."

M. Des Boys replied sarcastically:

"There's a Natural History museum."

And with a wave of the hand, he disappeared round the corner of a street.

One would thing everything in this dreary maritime city had been arranged to disguise the fact that the sea is there. The houses turn their backs on it, and a desert of stones and dust and wind lies between the shores and the town. To discover that Cherbourg is really a sea port, one must climb to the top of the Roule rock. M. Hervart had a desire to scale this pinnacle.

"It's a waste of time," said Rose, "let's go up the tower in the Liais gardens."

Side by side, they walked through the dismal streets. Rose kept on looking at M. Hervart; she was disquieted by his silence. She took his arm.

"I didn't dare offer it to you," he said.

"That's why I took it myself."

"I do enjoy walking with you like this, Rose."

But as a matter of fact he was most em-

barrassed. This privilege was at once too innocent and too free. He wondered what he should do to keep it within its present bounds.

"If this is going on... And to think it only started this morning...."

He reassured himself by this most logical piece of reasoning:

"Either I do or I don't want to marry her; in either case I shall have to respect her.... That's evident. Being neither a fool nor a blackguard, I have nothing to fear from myself. The civilized instinct will certainly be stronger than the natural instinct; I'm very civilized...."

They were lightly clad. As he held her arm, he could feel its warmth burning into his flesh.

"Distressing fact! in love you can never be sure of anything or anybody, least of all of yourself. I'm helpless in the hands of desire. And then, at the same time as my own, I must calm down this child's overexcited nerves. Nerves? No, feelings. Feelings lead anywhere.... What a fool I am, making mental sermons like this! I am spoiling delicious moments."

A house like all the others, a carriage door,

a vaulted passage—and behold, you were in a great garden, where the brilliance and scent of exotic flowers burst from among the palm-trees, more intoxicating to their senses than the familiar scents and colours of the copse at Robinvast. Within the high walls of this strange oasis, the air hung motionless, heavy and feverish. The flowers breathed forth an almost carnal odour.

"What a place to make love in," thought M. Hervart.

He forgot all about Rose; his imagination called up the thought of Gratienne and her voluptuousness. He shut out the sun, lit up the place with dim far away lamps, spread scarlet cushions on the grass where a magnolia had let fall one of its fabulous flowers, and on them fancied his mistress.... He knelt beside her, bent over her beauty, covering it with kisses and adoration.

"This garden's making me mad," said M. Hervart aloud. The dream was scattered.

"Here's the tower," said Rose. "Let's go up. It will be cool on top."

She too was breathing heavily, but from uneasiness, not from passion. It was cool within

the tower. In a few moments Rose, now freed from her sense of oppression, was at the top. She had quite well realized that M. Hervart, absorbed in some dream of his own, had been far away from her all the last part of their walk. Rose was annoyed, and the appearance of M. Hervart, rather red in the face and with eyes that were still wild, was not calculated to calm her. She felt jealous and would have liked to destroy the object of his thought.

M. Hervart noticed the little movement of irritation, which Rose had been unable to repress, and he was pleased. He would have liked to be alone.

He went and leaned on the balustrade and, without speaking, looked far out over the blue sea. Seeing him once more absorbed by something which was not herself, Rose was torn by another pang of jealousy; but this time she knew her rival. Women have no doubts about one another, which is what always ensures them the victory, but Rose now pitted herself against the charm of the infinite sea. She took up her position very close to M. Hervart, shoulder to shoulder with him.

M. Hervart looked at Rose and stopped looking at the sea.

His eyes were melancholy at having seen the ironic flight of desire. Rose's were full of smiles.

"They are the colour of the infinite sea, Rose."

"It's quite pleasant," thought M. Hervart, "to be the first man to say that to a young girl.... In the ordinary way, women with blue eyes hear that compliment for the hundredth time, and it makes them think that all men are alike and all stupid.... It's men who have made love so insipid.... Rose's eyes are pretty, but I ought not to have said so.... Am I the first?..."

M. Hervart felt the prick, ill defined as yet, of jealousy.

"Who can have taught her these little physical complaisances? She has no girl friends; it must have been some enterprising young cousin.... What a fool I am, torturing myself! Rose has had girl friends, at Valognes at the convent. She has them still, she writes to them.... And besides, what do I care? I'm not in love; it's all nothing

more than a series of light sensations, a pretext for amusing observations. . . ."

The afternoon was drawing on. They had to think of the commissions which Mme Des Boys had given them. . . . It was time to go down.

"How dark the staircase is," said Rose. "Give me your hand."

At the bottom, as though to thank him for his help, she offered her cheek. His kiss settled on the corner of her mouth. Rose recoiled, warned of danger by this new sensation that was too intimate, too intense. But in the process of moving away, she came near to falling. Her hands clutched at his, and she found herself once more leaning towards M. Hervart. They looked at one another for a moment. Rose shut her eyes and waited for a renewal of the burning touch.

"I hope you haven't hurt yourself."

She burst out laughing.

"That," said M. Hervart to himself, "is what is called being self controlled. And then she laughs at me for it. Such are the fruits of virtue."

They went into almost all the shops in the

Rue Fontaine, which is the centre of this big outlandish village. M. Hervart bought some picture postcards. The castles in the Hague district are almost as fine and as picturesque as those on the banks of the Loire. He would have liked to send the picture of them to Gratienne, but he felt himself to be Rose's prisoner. For a moment, that put him in a bad temper. Then, as Rose was entering a draper's shop, he made up his mind; the post office was next door.

"I should like your advice," said Rose. "I have got to match some wools."

But he had gone. She waited patiently.

The castles were at last dropped into the box and they continued their course. The walk finished up at the confectioner's.

One of M. Hervart's pleasures was eating cakes at a pastry cook's, and the pleasure was complete when a woman was with him. He was a regular customer at the shop in the Rue du Louvre, at the corner of the square; he went there every day and not always alone.

Entering the shop with Rose, he imagined himself in Paris, enjoying a little flirtation, and the thought amused him. Rose was as happy

as he. Smiling and serious, she looked as though she were accomplishing some familiar rite.

"She would soon make a Parisian," M. Hervart thought, as he looked at her.

And in an instant of time, he saw a whole future unfolding before him. They would live in the Quai Voltaire; she would often start out with him in the mornings on her way to the Louvre stores. He would take her as far as the arcades. She would come and pick him up for luncheon. On other days, she would come into his office at four o'clock and they would go and eat cakes and drink a glass of iced water; and then they would walk slowly back by the Pont Neuf and the Quays; on the way they would buy some queer old book and look at the play of the sunlight on the water and in the trees. Sometimes they would take the steamer or the train and go to some wood, not so wild as the Robinvast wood, but pleasant enough, where Rose could breathe an air almost as pure as the air of her native place ....

There was not much imagination in this dream of M. Hervart's, for he had often real-

ized it in the past. But the introduction of Rose made of it something quite new, a pleasure hitherto unfelt.

"By the end of my stay I shall be madly in love with her and very unhappy," he said to himself at last.

A little while later they met M. Des Boys, who was looking for them. While they were waiting at the station for the train, M. Hervart examined his duplicate postcards of the castles.

"Why shouldn't we go and look at them?" said Rose, glancing at her father.

He acquiesced:

"It will give me some ideas for the restoration of Robinvast, which I think of carrying out."

All that he meant to do was simply to set the place in order. He would have the mortar re-pointed without touching the ivy, and while preserving the wildness of the park and wood, he would have paths and alleys made.

"Art," he said sententiously, "admits only of a certain kind of disorder. Besides, I have to think of public opinion; the disorder of my garden will make people think what I am let-

ting my daughter grow up in the same way . . . ."

There was, in these words, a hint of marriage plans. Rose perceived it at once.

"I'm quite all right as I am," she said, "and so is Robinvast."

"Vain little creature!"

"Don't you agree with me?" said Rose, turning to M. Hervart with a laugh that palliated the boldness of her question.

"About yourself, most certainly."

"Oh, there's nothing more to be done with me. The harm's done already; I'm a savage. I'm thinking of the wildness of Robinvast; I like it and it suits my wildness."

"All the same," said M. Hervart, whose hands were covered with scratches, "there are a lot of brambles in the wood. I've never seen such fine ones, shoots like tropical creepers, like huge snakes. . . ."

"I never scratch myself," said Rose.

But it was not without a feeling of satisfaction that she looked at M. Hervart's hands, which were scarred with picking blackberries for her. She whispered to him:

"I'm as cruel as the brambles."

"Defend yourself as well as they do," M. Hervart replied.

It had been only a chance word. No doubt, M. Des Boys thought of marrying his daughter, but the project was still distant. No suitor threatened. M. Hervart was pleased with this state of affairs; for, having fallen in love at ten in the morning, he was thinking now, at seven, of marrying this nervous and sentimental child who had offered the corner of her mouth to his clumsy kiss.

The evenings at Robinvast were regularly spent in playing cards. Trained from her earliest youth to participate in this occupation, Rose played whist with conviction. She managed the whole game, scolded her mother, argued about points with her father and kept M. Hervart fascinated under the gaze of her gentle eyes.

As soon as he sat down at the card table, he was conscious of this fascination, which, up till then, had worked on him without his knowledge. He remembered now that each time a chance had brought him face to face with Rose, he had felt himself intoxicated by a great pleasure. It was a kind of possession;

spectators feel the same at the theatre, when they see the actress of their dreams. He reflected too that his own pleasure, almost unconscious though it had been, must have expressed itself by fervent looks....

"Her heart responded little by little to the mysterious passion of my eyes.... I have nice eyes too, I know; they are my best feature.... My pleasure is easily explained; full face, Rose is quite divine, though her profile is rather hard. Her nose, which is a little long, looks all right from the front; her face is a perfect oval; her smile seems to be the natural movement of her rather wide mouth, and her eyes come out in the lamp light from their deep setting, like flowers.... I have often stood in the same ecstasy before my lovely Titian Venus; it's true that she displays other beauties as well, but her face and her eyes are above all exquisite...."

"Don't make signs at one another!"

This observation, which had followed a too obvious exchange of smiles, amused Rose enormously; for she had been thinking very little of the game at the moment. She bowed

her head innocently under the paternal rebuke.

They played extremely badly and lost a great number of points.

At the change of partners they were separated; but separation united them the better, for their knees soon came together under the table. The game, under these conditions, became delicious. Rose did her best to beat her lover and at the same time, delighting in the sense of contrast, caressed him under the table. Life seemed to her very delightful.

She was a little feverish and it was late before she went to sleep, to dream of this wonderful day when she had so joyously reached the summit of her desires. She was loved; that was happiness. She did not for a moment think of wondering whether she were herself in love. She had no doubts on the state of her heart.

M. Hervart's reflections were somewhat different. They also were extremely confused. Women live entirely in the present; men much more in the future—a sign, it may be, that their nature is not so well or organized. M.

Hervart was making plans. He went to sleep. in the midst of his scheming, exhausted by his inability to make so much as one plan that should be tenable.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN he came down fairly early next morning, he found M. Des Boys, who was usually invisible till lunch time, walking in the garden with his daughter. He was gesticulating, largely. M. Hervart was alarmed.

But they were not talking of him. M. Des Boys was planning a long winding alley and was showing Rose how it would run. After consulting M. Hervart, who was all eagerness in agreeing, he decided that they should start their tour of the castles that very day.

At the same time he sent for workmen to come the next day and wrote to Lanfranc, the architect of Martinvast, a friend of whom he had lost sight for a good many years. Lanfranc lived at St. Lo, where he acted as clerk of the works to the local authorities. M. Hervart was also acquainted with him.

Meanwhile, M. Des Boys forgot his painting and stayed in the garden nearly the whole

morning. Rose was annoyed. She had counted on repeating their yesterday's walk among the hollies and brambles, among the fox-gloves and through the bracken. She dreamed of how she would take this walk every day of her life, believing that she would find it eternally the same, as moving and as novel.

M. Hervart, though he was grateful for this diversion, could not help feeling certain regrets. He missed Rose's hand within his own.

For a moment, as they were walking along the terrace, they found themselves alone, at the very spot where the crisis had begun.

Quickly, they took one another's hands and Rose offered her cheek. M. Hervart made no attempt, on this occasion, to obtain a better kiss. It was not the occasion. Perhaps he did not even think of it. Rose was disappointed. M. Hervart noticed it and lifted the girl's hands to his lips. He loved this caress, having a special cult for hands. He gave utterance to his secret thought, saying:

"How is it that I have never yet kissed your hands?"

Pleased, without being moved, Rose confined herself to smiling. Then, suddenly, as

an idea flashed through her mind, the smile broke into a laugh, which, for all its violence, seemed somehow tinged with shyness. Grown calmer, she asked.

"I'd like to know...to know...I'd like to know your name."

M. Hervart was nonplussed.

"My name? But... Ah, I see...the other one."

He hesitated. This name, the sound of which he had hardly heard since his mother's death, was so unfamiliar to him that he felt a certain embarrassment at uttering it. He signed himself simply "Hervart." All his friends called him by this name, for none had known him in the intimacy of the family; even his mistresses had never murmured any other. Besides, women prefer to make use of appellations suitable to everyone in general, such as "wolf," or "pussy-cat," or "white rabbit."—M. Hervart, who was thin, had been generally called "wolf."

"Xavier," he said at last. Rose seemed satisfied.

She began eating blackberries as she had done the day before. And M. Hervart, just as

he had done yesterday, opened his magnifying glass; he counted the black spots on the back of a lady-bird, *coccinella septempunctata;* there were only six.

In the palm of her little hand, well smeared already with purple, Rose placed a fine blackberry and held it out to M. Hervart. As he did not lift his head, but still sat there, one eye shut, the other absorbed in what he was looking at, she said gently, in a voice without affection, a voice that was deliciously natural:

"Xavier!"

M. Hervart felt an intense emotion. He looked at Rose with surprised and troubled eyes. She was still holding out her hand. He ate the blackberry in a kiss and then repeated several times in succession,

"Rose, Rose..."

"How pale you are!" she said, equally moved.

She stepped back, leant against the wall. M. Hervart took a step forward. They were standing now, looking into one another's eyes. Very serious, Rose waited. M. Hervart said:

"Rose, I love you."

She hid her face in her hands. M. Hervart

dared not speak or move. He looked at the hands that hid Rose's face.

When she uncovered her face, it was grave and her eyes were wet. She said nothing, but went off and picked a blackberry as though nothing had happened. But instead of eating it, she threw it aside and, instead of coming back to M. Hervart, she walked away.

M. Hervart felt chilled. He stood looking at her sadly, as she smoothed the folds of her dress and set her hat straight.

When she reached the corner by the lilac bushes, Rose stopped, turned round and blew a kiss then, then, taking flight, she disappeared in the direction of the house.

The scene had lasted two or three minutes; but in that little space, M. Hervart had lived a great deal. It had been the most moving instant of his life; at least he could not remember having known one like it. At the sound of that name, Xavier, almost blotted from his memory, a host of charming moments from the past had entered his heart; he thought of his mother's love, of his first declaration, his first caresses. He found himself once more at the

outset of life and as incapable of mournful thoughts as at twenty.

His whole manner suddenly changed. He hoisted himself on to the terrace and, sitting on the edge in the dry grass, lit a cigarette and looked at the world without thinking of anything at all.

CHAPTER V

THEIR rapid intimacy did not leave off growing during the following days. M. Des Boys never left the workmen who were making the new paths and from moment to moment he would call his daughter or M. Hervart soliciting their approval.

In the afternoons they would go and look at one of the castles in the neighborhood.

They saw Martinvast, towers, chapel, Gothic arches, ingeniously adapted so as to cover, without spoiling their lines, the flimsy luxury of modern times. Tourlaville, though less old, looked more decayed under its cloak of ivy. M. Hervart admired the great octagonal tower, the bold lines of the inward-curving roofs. They saw Pepinvast, a thing of lace-work and turrets, florid with trefoils and pinnacles. They saw Chiflevast, a Janus, Gothic on one side and Louis XIV on the other.

Nacqueville is old in parts; the main block seems to be contemporary with Richelieu; as

a whole, it is imposing, a building to which each generation has added its own life without hiding the distant origins.

Vast, which looks quite modern, occupies a pleasing site by the falls of the Saire. It seemed more human than the others, whose hugeness and splendour they had admired without a wish to possess. Here one could give play to one's desire.

"All the same," said M. Hervart, "it looks too much like a big cottage."

M. Des Boys resolved to have a cascade at Robinvast. It was a pity that he had nothing better than a stream at his disposal.

They returned by La Pernelle, from which one can see all the eastern part of the Hague, from Gatteville to St Marcouf, a great sheet of emerald green, bordered, far away, by a ribbon of blue sea.

They made a halt. Rose picked some heather, with which she filled M. Hervart's arms. The eagerness of the air lit up her eyes, fired her cheeks.

"Isn't it lovely, my country?"

A cloud hid the sun. Colour paled away from the scene; a shadow walked across the

sea, quenching its brilliance; but southward, towards the isles of St Marcouf, it was still bright.

"A sad thought crossing the brow of the sea," said M. Hervart. "But look..."

Everything had suddenly lit up once again.

Rose blew kisses into space.

They had to go back towards St. Vast, where they had hired the carriage. Thence, travelling by the little railway which follows the sea for a space before it turns inland under the apple trees, they arrived at Valognes.

They dined at the St. Michel hotel. M. Des Boys was bored; he had begun to find the excursion rather too long. But there were still a lot of fine buildings to be looked at, Fontenay, Flamanville... However, those didn't mean such long journeys.

"We have still got to go," said he, "to Barnavast, Richemont, the Hermitage and Pannelier. That can be done in one afternoon."

They did not get back to Robinvast till very late. The darkness in the carriage gave M. Hervart his opportunity; his leg came into contact with Rose's; under pretext of steadying

the bundle of heather which Rose was balancing on her knee, their hands met for an instant.

Mme Des Boys was waiting for them, rather anxiously. She kissed her daughter almost frenziedly. Enervated, Rose burst out laughing, said she wanted something to drink and, having drunk, expressed a wish for food.

"That's it," said M. Hervart. "Let's have supper."

He checked himself:

"I was only joking; I'm not in the least hungry."

But Rose found the idea amusing; she went in search of food, bringing into the drawing-room every kind of object, down to a bottle of sparkling cider she had discovered in a cupboard.

"Hervart's a boy of twenty-five," said M. Des Boys, as he watched his friend helping Rose in her preparations. "I shall go to bed."

"At twenty-five," said Hervart, "one doesn't know what to do with one's life. One has all the trumps in one's hand, but one plays one's cards at haphazard, and one loses."

"Does he talk of playing, now?" said M. Des

Boys, who was half asleep. Rose burst out laughing.

"Are you really going to bed?" asked Mme Des Boys; she looked tired. "I suppose I must stay here."

But she was soon bored. It was half past twelve. She tried to get her daughter to come.

"Ten minutes more, mother."

"All right, I'll leave you. I shall expect you in ten minutes."

M. Hervart got up.

"I give you ten minutes. Be indulgent with the child. All this fresh air has gone to her head."

M. Hervart felt embarrassed. A week ago such a tete-a-tete would have seemed the most innocent and perhaps, too, the most tedious of things.

"I really don't know what may happen. I must be serious, cold; I must try and look tired and antique. . . ."

As soon as she heard her mother's footsteps in the room above the drawing-room, Rose came and sat down close to M. Hervart, put her hands on the arm of his chair. He looked at her, and there was something of madness in

his eyes. He turned completely and laid his hands upon the girl's hands. They moved, took his and pressed them, gently. Then, without having had the time to think of what they were doing, they woke up a second later mouth against mouth. This kiss exhausted their emotion. With the same instinctive movement both drew back, but they went on looking at one another.

Decidedly, she was very pretty. She, for her part, found him admirable, thinking:

"I belong to him. I have given him my lips. I am his. What will he do? What shall I do? . . . ."

That was just what M. Hervart was wondering—what ought he to do?

"What caresses are possible, what won't she object to? I should like to kiss her lips again . . . . Her eyes? Her neck? Which of the Italian poets was it who said: 'Kiss the arms, the neck, the breasts of your beloved, they will not give you back your kisses. The lips alone.' But I shall have to say something. Of course, I ought to say: 'Je vous aime.' But I don't love her. If I did, I should have said: 'Je

t'aime!' and I should have said it without thinking, without knowing.

"Rose, I love you."

She shut her eyes, laid her head on the arm of the chair; for she was sitting on a low stool.

It was the ear that presented itself. M. Hervart kissed her ear slowly, savouring it, kiss by kiss, like an epicure over some choice shell-fish.

"She lets me do what I like. It's amusing ...."

He kissed his way round her ear and halted next to the eye, which was shut.

"How soft her eyelid is!"

His lips travelled down her nose and settled at the corner of her mouth. Tickled by their touch, she smiled.

When he had thoroughly kissed the right side, she offered him the left; then, giving her lips to him frankly, she received his passionate kiss, returned it with all her heart, and got up.

She smiled without any embarrassment. She was happy and very little disturbed.

"There," she said to herself. "Now I'm married."

CHAPTER VI

THE paths were now visible. One of them, in front of the house, made an oval round a lawn, which looked, at the moment, like a patch of weeds, with all sorts of flowers in the uneven grass—buttercups, moon-daisies, cranes-bill and centaury; there were rushes, too, and nettles, hemlock and plants of lingwort that looked like long thin girls in white hats.

Encoignard, the gardener from Valognes, was contemplating this wildness with a melancholy eye:

"It will have to be ploughed, M. Des Boys, or at least well hoed. Then we'll sift the earth we've broken up, level it down and sow ray-grass. In two years it will be like a carpet of green velvet."

Eyeing the landscape, he went on:

"Lime trees! You ought to have a segoya here and over there an araucaria. And what's that? An apple-tree. That's quite wrong.

We'll have that up and put a magnolia grandiflora there. You want an English garden, don't you? An English garden oughtn't to contain anything but exotic plants. Lilacs and roses... Why not snow-ball trees? Ah, there's a nice spotted holly. We might use that perhaps."

"I don't want anyone to touch my trees," said Rose, who had drawn near.

"She's right," said M. Des Boys.

"Think of pulling up lilacs," Rose went on, "pulling up rose-trees."

"But I mean to put prettier flowers in their place, Mademoiselle."

"The prettiest flowers are the ones I like best."

She picked a red rose and put it to her lips, kissing it as though it were something sacred and adored.

M. Des Boys looked at his daughter with astonishment.

"Well, M. Encoignard, we must do what she wants. Hervart, what do you think about it?"

"I think that one ought to leave nature as unkempt as possible. I also think that one ought to love the plants of the country where

one lives. They are the only ones that harmonize with the sky and the crops, with the colour of the rivers and roads and roofs."

"Quite right," said M. Des Boys.

"Xavier, I love you," Rose whispered, taking M. Hervart's arm.

The inspection of the garden was continued, and it was decided that M. Encoignard's collaboration should be reduced to the ordinary functions of a plain docile gardener. One or two new plants were admitted on condition that the old should be respected.

M. Hervart had got up early and had been strolling about the garden for some time past. He had spent half the night in thought. All the women he had loved or known had visited his memory with their customary gestures and the attitudes they affected. There was that other one who seemed always to have come merely to pay a friendly call; it needed real diplomacy to obtain from her what, at the bottom of her heart, she really desired. Between these two extremes there were many gradations. Most of them liked to give themselves little by little, playing their desire against their sense of shame. M. Hervart flattered himself

that he knew all about women; he knew that the woman who lets herself be touched will let herself be wholly possessed.

"A woman," he said to himself, "who has been as familiar as Rose has been, or even much less familiar, ought to be one who has surrendered herself. Perhaps she might make me wait a few days more, but she would belong to me, she would let her eyes confess it and her lips would speak it out. Such a woman would even be disposed to hasten the coming of the delightful moment, if I had not the wit to prepare it myself. Rose, being a young girl and having only the dimmest presentiments of the truth, does not know how to hasten our happiness; otherwise she most certainly would hasten it. She belongs, then, to me. The question to be answered is this: shall I go on smelling the rose on the tree, or shall I pluck it?"

The poetical quality of this metaphor seemed to him perhaps a little flabby. He began to speak to himself, without actually articulating the words, even in a whisper, in more precise terms.

"Well, then, if I take her, I shall keep her. I have never thought of marrying, but it's no

good going against the current of one's life. It may be happiness. Shall I lay up this regret for my old age: happiness passed close to me, smiling to my desire, and my eyes remained dull and my mouth dumb? Happiness? Is it certain? Happiness is always uncertain. Unhappiness too. And the fusing of these two elements makes a dull insipid mixture."

This commonplace idea occupied him for a while. Every joy is transient, and when it has passed one finds oneself numb and neutral once again.

"Neutral, or below neutral? A woman of this temperament? I can still tame her? Yes, but what will happen ten years hence, when she is thirty? Ah, well, till then. . . !"

M. Des Boys carried off Encoignard into his study. Left alone, Rose and M. Hervart had soon vanished behind the trees shrubberies, had soon crossed the stream. They almost ran.

"Here we are at home," said Rose and, very calmly, she offered her lips to M. Hervart.

"She's positively conjugal already," thought M. Hervart.

Nevertheless, this kiss disturbed his equa-

nimity, the more so since Rose, in gratitude no doubt to M. Hervart for his defence of her old garden, kept her mouth a long time pressed to his. She was growing breathless and her breasts rose under her thin white blouse. M. Hervart was tempted to touch them. He made bold, and his gesture was received without indignation. They looked at one another, anxious to speak, but finding no words. Their mouths came together once more. M. Hervart gently pressed Rose's breast, and a small hand squeeed his other hand. It was a perilous moment. Realising this, M. Hervart tried to put an end to the contact. But the little hand squeeezd his own more tightly and in a convulsive movement her knee came into contact with his leg. The tension was broken. Their hands were loosened, they drew away from one another, and for the first time after a kiss, Rose shut her eyes.

M. Hervart felt a pain in the back of his neck.

He began thinking of that season of Platonic love he had once passed at Versailles with a virtuous woman, and he was frightened; for that passion of light kisses and hand-pressures

had undermined him as more violent excesses had never done.

"What will become of me?" he thought. "This is a case of acute Platonism, marked by the most decisive symptoms. All or nothing! Otherwise I am a dead man."

He looked at Rose, meaning to put on a chilly expression; but those eyes of hers looked back at him so sweetly!

His thoughts became confused. He felt a desire to lie down in the grass and sleep, and he said so.

"All right, lie down and sleep. I'll watch over you and keep the flies away from your eyes and mouth. I'll fan you with this fern."

She spoke in a voice that was caressingly passionate. It was like music. M. Hervart woke up and uttered words of love.

"I love you, Rose. The touch of your lips has refreshed my blood and brought joy to my heart. When I first touched you, it was as though I were clasping a treasure without price. But tell me, my darling, you won't take back this treasure now you have given it?"

M. Hervart was breathing heavily. Rose shook her head and said, "No, I won't take it

back;" and to prove that she meant it, she leaned towards him, as though offering her bosom; M. Hervart lightly touched the stuff of her blouse with his lips.

Seeing her lover's lack of alacrity, Rose, without suspecting the mystery, at least guessed that there was a mystery.

"No doubt," she thought, "love needs a rest every now and then. We will go for a little walk and I'll talk to him of flowers and insects. We should do well, perhaps, to go back to the garden, for it would be very annoying if they took it into their heads to come and look for us." They got up and walked round the wood, meaning to go straight back to the house.

M. Hervart seemed to be in an absent-minded mood. He was holding Rose's hand in his, but he forgot to squeeze it. His thoughts were, none the less, thoughts of love. He looked about him as though he were searching for something.

"What are you looking for? Tell me; I'll look too."

M. Hervart was looking for a nook. He inspected the dry leaves, peeped into every nook

and bower of the wood. But he felt ashamed of his quest.

"Yet," he thought, "I must. I love her and these innocent amusements are really too pernicious. Shall I go away? That would be to condemn myself to a melancholy solitude, with, perhaps, bitter consolations. Marry her, then? Certainly, but it can't come off to-morrow, and we are too much aquiver with desire to wait patiently. And suppose, when we are engaged, we have to submit ourselves to the law of the traditional sentimentality.... No, let us be peasants, children of this kindly earth. Let us, like them, make love first, at haphazard, where the paths of the wood lead us; then, when we are certain of the consent of our flesh, we will call our fellow men to witness."

He went on looking and found what he wanted, but when he had found, he started searching again, for he was ashamed of himself.

"Perhaps," he thought, answering his own objections, "one may have to behave like a cad in order to be happy. What, shall I submit myself to the prejudices of the world at the moment when life offers to my kisses a virgin

who is unaware of them? I will have the courage of my caddishness."

Time passed and his eyes examined the heaps of leaves with decreasing interest. His imagination returned pleasantly to the joys of a little before, and he longed to be able to lay his trembling hand once more on Rose's breast and to drink her breath in a kiss.

M. Hervart was recovering all his self-possession. He concluded:

"Well, it's a very curious adventure and one that will increase the sum of my knowledge and of my pleasures."

Rose, feeling the pressure of his fingers, had the courage, at last, to look at him. He smiled and she was reassured.

"You won't leave me, will you?" she said. "Promise. When we are married we'll live wherever you like, but till then, I want you near me, in my house, in my garden, my woods, my fields. Do you understand?"

"Child, I love you and I understand that you love me too."

"Why 'too'? I loved you first; I don't like that word; it expresses a kind of imitation."

"It's true," said M. Hervart. "We fell in

love simultaneously. But the convention is that the man falls in love first and the woman does no more than consent to his desires."

"What can you want that I don't want myself?"

"Delicious innocence!" thought M. Hervart.

He went on:

"But perhaps I want still more intimacy, complete surrender, Rose."

"But am I not entirely yours? I want you in exchange, though, Xavier, I want you, all of you."

M. Hervart did not know what to say. He became quite shy. This charming ingenuousness troubled his imagination more than the images of pleasure itself.

"She doesn't know," he thought. "She hasn't even dreamed of it. What chastity and grace!"

He answered:

"I belong to you, Rose, with all my heart ...."

"What were you thinking of a moment ago? You seemed far away."

"I was just feeling happy."

"You must have had such a lot of happinesses since you began life, Xavier. You have given happiness, received it..."

"I have just lived," said M. Hervart.

"Yes, and I'm only a girl of twenty."

"Think of being twenty!"

"If you were twenty, I shouldn't love you."

M. Hervart answered only by a smile which he tried to make as young, as delicate as possible. He knew what he would have liked to say, but he felt that he could not say it. Besides, he wondered whether Rose and he were really speaking the same language.

"This conversation is really absurd. I tell her that I want her to surrender herself to me, and she answers—at least I suppose that's what she means—that she has given me her heart. Obviously, she has no idea of what might happen between us.... What do these little caresses mean to her? They're just marks of affection.... All the same there was surely desire in her movements, her kisses, her eyes. And her body trembled at the urgent touch of my lips. Yes, she knows what

love is. How ridiculous! All the same, if we go to work cleverly. . . ."

"You mustn't believe, Rose," he said out loud, "that I have ever yet had occasion to give my heart. That doesn't always happen in the course of a life; and when it does happen, it happens only once. . . . A man has plenty of adventures in which his will is not concerned . . . . Man is an animal as well as a man. . . ." because of their innocence. . . .

"And what about women?"

"The best people agree," said M. Hervart, "that woman is an angel."

Rose burst out laughing at this remark, apparently very innocently, and said:

"I can't claim to be an angel. It wouldn't amuse me to be one, either. Angels—why, father puts them in his pictures. No, I prefer being a woman. Would you love an angel?"

M. Hervart laughed too. He explained that young girls had a right to being called angels, because of their innocence. . . .

"When one is in love, is one still innocent?"

"If one still is, one doesn't remain so long."

They could say no more. They had come back to the stream and here they caught sight

of M. Des Boys showing his domains to two unknown gentlemen, one of whom seemed to be of his own age, while the other looked about thirty.

CHAPTER VII

MHERVART soon recognized in one of the visitors a friend of old days, Lanfranc, the architect. The young man, as he found out, was Lanfranc's nephew, pupil and probable successor. He was further informed that the two architects were installed in the old manor house of Barnavast, the restoration of which they had undertaken on behalf of Mme Suif, widow of that famous Suif who gave such a fine impulse to the art of mortuary and religious sculpture. Lanfranc, who had patched and painted every church in Normandy, had for twenty years bought his materials at Suif's and the widow had always appreciated him. Hence this job at Barnavast which would round off his fortune, make it possible for him to return to Paris and achieve a place in the Institute.

As soon as they had settled down in the shade of the chestnut trees on the rustic seat,

Lanfranc began telling the story of Mme Suif, a story that was well known to everyone. Rose listened attentively. The moment Lanfranc could collect a friendly audience he always told the story of Mme Suif. It was, in some degree, his own story too. Mme Suif had been his mistress, then he had married, then he had resumed relations with her and had, with the cooling of their passion, remained her friend.

"Ah! If I hadn't been so childish as to marry for love, I would marry Mme Suif's millions to-day, for Mme Suif would be grateful to any man who would relieve her of her name. Being an architect of churches and ancient monuments, I could hardly get divorced, could I? But of course she may be willing to call herself Mme Leonor Varin. For she looks at my nephew with no unfavorable eye."

"Thanks, I don't want her," said Leonor, blushing.

Rose had looked at him and he had suddenly felt quite ashamed of his secret cupidity.

Leonor, who was nearly thirty, looked older from a distance and younger from close at hand. He was large, rather massive and slow

in his movements. But when one came near him one was surprised at the sentimental expression of his eyes, surprised at the youthful appearance of a beard that still seemed to be newly sprouting, at the awkwardness of his gestures and, when he spoke, the abrupt shyness of his speech; for he could hardly open his mouth without blushing. It is true that the moment after he would frown and contract his whole face into an expression of harshness. But the eyes remained blue and gentle in this frowning mask. Leonor was a riddle for everybody, including himself. He liked pondering, and when he thought of love it was to come to the conclusion that his ideal hovered between the day dream and the debauch, between the happiness of kissing, on bended knees, a gloved hand and the pleasure of lying languidly in the midst of a troop of odalisques of easy virtue. He had no suspicion that he was like almost all other men. He was afraid of himself and contemptuous too, when he caught himself thinking too complacently of Mme Suif's millions, those millions that would give immediate satisfaction to his vices and, later on, to his sentimental aspirations.

He looked at Rose in his turn, but Rose did not drop her eyes. Meanwhile, M. Hervart was growing bored.

"Mme Suif," said Lanfranc, "is still quite well preserved. For instance. . . ."

"Rose dear," interrupted M. Des Boys, "doesn't your mother want you?"

"Oh, no, I'm sure she doesn't. Mother would only find me in the way."

"Your father is right, Rose," said M. Hervart, glad to make trial of his authority.

She did not dare oppose her lover's wish, but she felt angry as she rose to go.

"Acting like my master already!" she thought. "I should so like to listen to M. Lanfranc. . ."

She dared not add: ". . . and to look at this M. Leonor and be looked at by him and, still more, to hear them talk of Mme Suif. What was he going to say? Oh, I do want to know!"

She entered the house, came out again by another door and hid herself in a shrubbery from which she could hear their voices quite clearly.

"It's not only her shoulders," M. Lanfranc

was saying, "they're not the only things about her that tempt one. She's forty-five, but her figure is still good and not too excessively run to flesh. As a whole she is certainly a bit ample, but at the Art School one could still make a very respectable Juno of her. I've seen worse on the model's throne..."

"Time," said M. Hervart, "often shows angelical clemency. He pardons women who have been good lovers."

"And still are," said Lanfranc.

"There's no better recreation than love," said Leonor. "No sport more suited to keep one fit and supple."

M. Hervart looked in surprise at this dim young man who had so unexpectedly made a joke. Anxious to shine in his turn, he replied.

"No one has ever dared to put that in a manual of hygiene. What a charming chapter one could make of it, in the style of the First Empire: 'Love, the preserver of Beauty.'"

"A pretty subject too for the Prix de Rome," said Lanfranc.

"Seriously," broke in M. Des Boys, "I believe that the thing that so quickly shrivels up virtuous women is chastity."

"Virtuous women!" said Lanfranc, "they're meant to reproduce the species. When they have had their children, and that must take place between twenty and thirty, their rôle is finished."

"The only thing left for them to do," said M. Des Boys, "is to concoct philters to keep us young."

The others looked at him interrogatively; he laughed.

"You will see, or rather you'll taste, and you will understand. I wish you all as good a magician as Mme Des Boys."

"True," said M. Hervart, understanding him at last," she has a real genius for cookery. Dinners of her planning are regular love-potions."

"You'll realise that when you get back to Paris."

"Yes, when I get back to Paris. I am taking a holiday here," said M. Hervart, pleased at this mark of confidence. He even added, so as to guard against possible suspicions:

"A holiday from love is not without a certain melancholy."

Rose had found it all very amusing, but

when her father began speaking she stopped listening. Leonor, pleased at having made a witty remark and afraid of not being able to think of another, had got up and was walking about the garden. Rose looked at him. The sight of this young animal interested her. And what curious words about love had issued from that mouth! So love was an exercise like tennis, or bicycling, or riding! What a revelation! And the most singular fancies took shape in her mind as she followed with her eyes the now distant figure of this ingenious and decisive young man.

"How do people play the game of love," she wondered, "real love? Xavier teaches me nothing. He knows all about it though, more probably than this young Leonor, but he takes care not to tell me. He treats me like a little girl, while he makes fun of my innocence. Oh! it's gentle fun, because he loves me; but all the same he rather abuses his superior position. A sport, a sport..."

Quitting the shrubbery, she went and sat down on an old stone bench in a lonely corner, from which she could keep a watch between the trees on all that was happening in the

neighborhood. She was fond of this nook and in it, before M. Hervart's arrival, she had spent whole mornings dreaming alone. She laughed at the childishness of those dreams now.

"It always seemed to me," she thought, "that the branches were just about to open, making way for some beautiful young cavalier .... Without saying a word, he would bring his horse to a stop at my side, would lean down, pick me up, lay me across the saddle and off we should go. Then there was to be a mad furious, endless gallop and in the end I should go to sleep. And in reality I used to wake up as though from a sleep, even though I hadn't dropped off. Nothing happened but this dumb ride in the blue air, and yet, when I came to myself, I felt tired..... How often I have dreamed this dream! How often have I seen the lilac plumes bending to make way for my lovely young knight and his black horse! The horse was always black. I remember very little of the face of the Perseus who delivered me, for a few hours at least, from the bondage of my boring existence .... A sport? That was indeed a sport!

What did he do with his Andromeda, this Perseus of mine? I've never been able to find out. What do Perseuses do with their Andromedas?"

To this question Rose's tireless imagination provided, for the hundredth time, a new series of answers. The imagination of a young girl who knows and yet is ignorant of what she desires has an Aretine-like fecundity.

Into all these imaginations of hers Rose now introduced the complicity of M. Hervart. Even at the moment when she was on the look-out for Leonor's return, it was really of M. Hervart that she was thinking. Leonor was to be nothing more than a stimulant for her heart and her nerves, a musical accompaniment to something else. The stimulation which the young man's arrival had brought to her went to the profit of M. Hervart.

"Xavier," she murmured, "Xavier. . . ."

Xavier, meanwhile, was congratulating himself that this paternal intervention had spared Rose's ears the hearing of those over-frank remarks of M. Lanfranc. The architect would of course have toned down his language; but

is it good that a young girl should learn the use that wives make of marriage? He said:

"M. Lanfranc, keep an eye on your language at table. Don't forget that we have a young girl with us."

"Yes," said M. Des Boys, "I sent her away from here, but that would hardly be possible during luncheon."

"Girls," said Lanfranc, "understand nothing."

"They guess," said M. Hervart.

M. Des Boys had no opinions on maiden perspicacity, but he desired to conform to custom and allow his daughter to listen only to the choicest conversation.

"Well, then," said Lanfranc, "let us profitably employ these moments while we are alone." His lively blue eyes lit up his tanned face.

The conversation had deviated once more in the direction of Mme Des Boys' administrative merits.

"One meets so many different kinds of women," said M. Hervart. "The best of them is never equal to the dream one makes up about them."

"Silly commonplace," he thought. "What answer will he make to that?"

"I don't dream," said Lanfranc, "I search. But I scarcely ever find. Adventures have always disappointed me. That's why Paris is the only place for love affairs. One can find plenty of pleasant romances there with only one chapter—the last."

"Your opinion of women ceases to astonish me then!"

"His opinion is very reasonable," said M. Des Boys. "You talk as though you were still twenty-five, Hervart."

He reddened a little.

"Me! Oh no, thank God! I'm forty."

And seeing the appropriateness of the occasion, he added:

"You're jealous of my liberty, but I am becoming afraid that I may lose it."

"Are you thinking of marriage?" asked Lanfranc.

"Perhaps."

"Mme Suif would suit you very well. Leonor is being coy about her. . . ."

Irritated by so much vulgarity, M. Hervart got up and walked into the garden. Rose and Leonor were strolling there together.

CHAPTER VIII

ROSE had laid her plans in such a fashion that the young man had found her in his path. Not to see her was too deliberately to avoid her. If he saw her, he had to take off his hat. And this was what had happened. Rose had answered his salutation by a word of welcome; conversation had then passed to the old house at Barnavast, finally to Mme Suif. But Leonor was discreet and vague, so much so that at one of Rose's questions the conversation had switched off on to sentimental commonplaces. But, for Rose, nothing in the world was commonplace yet.

"Isn't she rather old to marry again?" she asked.

"Ah, but Mme Suif is one of those whose hearts are always young."

"Then there are some hearts that grow old more slowly than others?"

"Some never grow old at all, just as some have never been young."

"All the same, I see a great difference, when I look around me, between the feelings of young and old people."

"Do you know many people?"

"No, very few; but I have always seen a certain correspondence between people's hearts and faces."

"Certainly; but a general truth, although it may represent the average of particular truths, is hardly ever the same as a single particular case selected by chance...."

Rose looked at Leonor with a mixture of admiration and shame: she did not understand. Leonor perceived the fact and went on:

"I mean that there are, in all things, exceptions. I also mean that there are rules which admit of a great number of exceptions. It even happens in life, just as in grammar, that the exceptional are more numerous than the regular cases. Do you follow?"

"Oh, perfectly."

"But that," he concluded, emphasizing his words, "does not prevent the rule's being the

rule, even though there were only two normal cases as against ten exceptions."

Rose liked this magisterial tone. M. Hervart had, for some time, done nothing but agree with her opinions.

"But how does one recognize the rule?" she went on.

"Rules," said Leonor, "always satisfy the reason."

Rose looked at him in alarm; then, pretending she had understood made a sign of affirmation.

"Women never understand that very well," Leonor continued. "It doesn't satisfy them. They yield only to their feelings. So do men, for that matter, but they don't admit it. So that women accused of hypocrisy and vanity have less of these vices, it may be, than men .... At any rate the rule is the rule. The rule demands that Marguerite should give up..."

"Who's Marguerite?"

"Mme Suif."

"Do you know her well?"

Leonor smiled. "Am I not the nephew and lieutenant of her architect? The rule, then,

would demand that Marguerite should give up love; and the rule further demands, Mademoiselle, that you should begin to think of it."

"The rule is the rule," said Rose sententiously, suppressing the shouts of laughter that exploded silently in her heart.

"The rule's not so stupid after all," she thought. "I don't ask anything better than to obey it...."

At this moment M. Hervart came face to face with them at the turn of a path. Rose welcomed him with a happy smile, a smile of delicious frankness.

"Good," thought M. Hervart, "he isn't my rival yet. My rôle for the moment is to act the part of the man who is sure of himself, the man who possesses, dominates, the lord who is above all changes and chances...."

And he began to talk of his stay at Robinvast and of the pleasure he found in the midst of this rich disorderly scene of nature.

"But you," he said, "have come to put it in order. You have come to whiten these walls, scrape off this moss and ivy, cut clearings through these dark masses, and you will make M. Des Boys a present of a brand-new castle

with a charming and equally brand-new park."

"Who's going to touch my ivy?" exclaimed Rose, indignantly.

"Why should it be touched," said Leonor. "Isn't ivy the glory of the walls of Tourlaville? Ivy—why, it's the only architectural beauty that can't be bought. At Barnavast, which is in a state of ruin, we always respect it when the wall can be consolidated from inside. To my mind, restoration means giving back to a monument the appearance that the centuries would have given it if it had been well looked after. Restoration doesn't mean making a thing look new; it doesn't consist in giving an old man the hair, beard, complexion and teeth of a youth; it consists in bringing a dying man back to life and giving him the health and beauty of his age."

"How glad I am to hear you talk like this," said Rose. "I hope M. Lanfranc shares your ideas."

"M. Lanfranc is completely converted to my ideas."

"My father will do nothing without consulting me, but I shall feel more certain of getting my way if you are my ally."

"I will be your ally then."

"Yours is a sensible method," said M. Hervart. "You may know that I am the keeper of the Greek sculpture at the Louvre. I entered that necropolis at a time when the old system of restoration had begun to be abandoned. They were oscillating between two methods—re-making or doing nothing. The second has prevailed. You will have noticed that our marbles can be divided into two groups: those which have no antiquity but in the name, and those which have no antiquity except in the material. In old days, when they had found a bust, they manufactured a new head for it, new arms and new legs; then they wrote underneath: 'Artemis (restored), Minerva (restored), Nymph with a bow (restored)', according to the fancy of the cast-maker or as they were guided by a somnolent archaeology. I think that they certainly filled some gaps in this way. If the system had gone on being followed, we should doubtless be in possession at the present time of a complete Olympus; while as it is there are plenty of empty places left in the assembly of our gods. Since we decided to do nothing, our galleries have grown rich in

curious anatomical odds and ends—legs and hands that look like those exvoto offerings that used, as a matter of fact, to hang in Greek sanctuaries; heads that look as though they had, like Orpheus's head, been rolled by storms among the pebbles of the sea; busts so full of holes that they seem to have served as targets for drunken soldiers. In short nothing comes to us now but fragments—fragments of great archaeological interest, but whose value as works of art is almost nothing. Wouldn't some intermediate method be preferable? By intermediate I mean intelligent. Intelligence is the art of reconciling ideas and producing a harmony. A head of Aphrodite with a broken nose ceases to be a head of Aphrodite. I ask for beauty and they give me a museum specimen. If they want me to admire it, they must make a new nose; if they don't want to make a new nose, then they must divide up the Louvre into two museums, the æsthetic museum and the archaeological museum."

Having finished speaking he looked first of all at Rose, thus showing that he had need, before everything else, of her approbation. Rose's face lit up with happiness. Her eyes

answered, "My dear, I admire you. You're a god."

These movements were understood by Leonor, who had been trying for some few moments to guess what were the relations between Rose and Hervart.

"They are in love," he said to himself. "Hervart has a genius for making love. I am twenty-eight, which is my only point of superiority over him. And even that is very illusory, for it is only women who know something about life, whether through experience or through the confidences of someone else, who pay any attention to a man's age. A woman is as old as her face: a man is as old as his eyes. Hervart has a pair of fine blue eyes, gentle and lively, ardent. But what do I care? I don't desire the good graces of this innocent."

While reflecting thus, he had answered M. Hervart, "I quite agree with you. People tend too much to-day to confound the curious, rare or antique with the beautiful. The æsthetic sense has been replaced by a feeling of respect."

"The process was perhaps inevitable," said M. Hervart. "In any case it suits a democracy.

People have no time to learn to admire, but one can very quickly learn to respect. The intelligence is docile, but taste is recalcitrant."

"But aren't there such things," Rose asked, "as spontaneous admirations?"

"Yes," said Leonor, "there's love."

"Then is admiration the same as love?"

"If they don't yet love, people come very near loving when they admire."

"And is love admiration?"

"Not always."

"Love," said M. Hervart, "is compatible with almost all other feelings, even with hatred."

"Yes," replied Leonor, "that has the appearance of being true, for there are many kinds of love. The love that struggles with hatred can only be a love inspired by interest or sensuality."

"One never knows. I hold that love, just as it is capable of taking any shape or form, can devour all other feelings and install itself in their place. It comes and it goes, without one's ever being able to understand the mechanism of its movements. It lasts two hours or a whole life...."

"You are mixing up the different species," said Leonor. "You must, if we are to understand one another, allow words to keep their traditional sense with all its shades of meaning. Love is at the base of all emotions either as a negative or positive principle; one can say that, and when one has said it one is no forwarder. Do you think there's no point in the way verbal usage employs the words 'passion, caprice, inclination, taste, curiosity' and other words of the kind? It would surely be better to create new shades, rather than set one's wits to work to dissolve all the colours and shades of sensation and emotion into a single hue."

Like a village musician plunged into the midst of a discussion on counterpoint and orchestration, Rose listened, a little disquieted, a little irritated, but at the same time fascinated. They were speaking of something that filled her heart and set her nerves tingling; she did not understand, she felt. She would have liked to understand.

"Xavier will explain it all to me. How silly I look in the middle of the conversations where I can't put in a word."

She pretended to desire a rose out of reach of her hand. M. Hervart darted forward, reached the flower and set to work to strip the branch of its thorns and its superfluous wood and leaves.

"That was not the one I wanted," said Rose.

M. Hervart began again and the girl looked on, happy at having been able to interrupt a serious conversation by a mere whim.

Leonor examined them with a certain irony. Rose noticed his look, felt herself blushing and slipped away.

M. Hervart and Leonor continued their stroll and their chat; but they talked no more about love.

CHAPTER IX

LUNCHEON passed agreeably for Rose. She was the centre of looks, desires and conversation. M. Lanfranc gallanted without bad taste. She would laugh and then, with sudden seriousness, accept the contact of some gesture of M. Hervart's, who was sitting next to her. Leonor confined himself to a few curt phrases, which were meant to sum up the more ingenuous remarks of his fellow guests. He had thought he could treat this girl with contempt, but her eyes, he found, excited him. By dint of trying to seem a superior being, he succeeded in looking like a thoroughly disagreeable one. Rose was frightened of him.

"How cold he is," she thought. "One could never talk or play with a man so sure of all his movements. He would always win."

Several times, with innocent unconsciousness, she looked at M. Hervart.

"How well I have chosen! Here is a man who is younger than he, nearer my own age, and yet each of his words and gestures brings me closer to Xavier. I feel that it will be always like that. Who can compete with him? Xavier, I love you."

She leaned forward to reach a jug and as she did so whispered full in M. Hervart's face, "Xavier, I love you."

M. Hervart pretended to choke. His redness of face was put down to a cherry stone; Lanfranc gave vent to some feeble joking on the subject.

As luncheon was nearing its end, she said with a perverse frankness:

"M. Hervart, will you come with me and see if everything's all right down in the garden."

"I am having coffee served out of doors," Mme Des Boys explained.

Lanfranc expatiated on the beauties of this country custom.

As soon as they were hidden from view behind the shrubbery, Rose, without a word, took M. Hervart by the shoulders and offered him her lips. It was a long kiss. Xavier clasped the girl in his arms and with a passion

in which there was much amorous art, drank in her soul.

When he lifted his head, he felt confused:

"I have been giving the kiss of a happy lover, when what was asked for was a betrothal kiss. What will she think of me?"

Rose was already looking at the rustic table. When M. Hervart rejoined her, she greeted him with the sweetest of smiles.

"Was that what she wanted then?" M. Hervart wondered.

"Rose," he said aloud, "I love you, I love you."

"I hope you do," she replied.

"Oh, how I should like to be alone with you now!"

"I wouldn't. I should be afraid."

This answer set M. Hervart thinking: "Does she know as much about it as all that? Is it an invitation?"

His thought lost itself in a tangle of vain desires. But for the very reason that the moment was not propitious, he let himself go among the most audacious fancies. His eyes wandered towards the dark wood, as though in search of some favourable retreat. He made

movements which he never finished. Raising himself from his chair, he let himself fall back, fidgeted with an empty cup, searched vainly for a match to light his absent cigarette. The arrival of Leonor calmed him. His fate that day was to embark on futile discussions with this young man, and he accepted his destiny.

Everyone was once more assembled. The conversation was resumed on the tone it had kept up at luncheon; but Rose was dreaming, and M. Hervart had a headache. It was all so spiritless, despite the enticements of M. Lanfranc, that M. Des Boys lost no time in proposing a walk.

"If you want us," said Leonor, "to draw up a plan for the transformation of your property, you must show it to us in some detail. Is this wood to be a part of your projected park? And what's beyond it? Another estate, or meadows, or ploughed fields? What are the rights of way? Do you want a single avenue towards Couville? One could equally well have one joining the St. Martin road...."

"Do you intend to lay waste this wood?" asked Rose. "It's so beautiful and wild."

"My dear young lady," said Leonor, "I in-

tend to do nothing; that is to say, I only intend to please you. . . ."

"Do what my daughter wants," said M. Des Boys. "You're here for her sake."

"For her sake," Mme Des Boys repeated.

"Oh, well," said Leonor, "we shall get on very well then."

"So I hope," said Rose.

"I am at your orders," said Leonor.

"Come on then," said Rose.

With these words she got up, throwing M. Hervart a look which was understood. But as M. Hervart rose to his feet, Mme Des Boys approached him:

"I have something very interesting to tell you."

M. Hervart had to let Rose and Leonor plunge alone into the wood in which he had, during these last few days, experienced such delightful emotions. Mme Des Boys took him into the garden.

"I have a question to ask you," she said. "First of all, is architecture a serious profession?"

"Very," said M. Hervart.

"But do people make really a lot of money at it?"

"Lanfranc, who was a beggar when I first knew him, is probably richer than you are to-day. Leonor will go even further, I should think, for he seems an intelligent fellow and knows a lot about his business."

"You're not speaking out of mere friendship for him?"

"Not at all. Far from it; to tell you the truth I'm not very fond of either of them."

"But they're thorough gentlemen and very good company."

"Certainly, Lanfranc especially."

"Isn't he amusing? His nephew is more severe, but I prefer it."

"So do I."

"I'm glad to see that you agree with me."

She continued after a moment's reflection, "He would be an excellent husband for Rose."

M. Hervart did not reply. He had grown pale and his heart had begun beating violently. His thoughts were in confusion; his head whirled.

"What do you think of the idea?" Mme Des Boys insisted.

He withheld his answer, for he knew that his voice would seem quite changed. He murmured, "Hum," or something of the sort, something that simply meant that he had heard the question.

But bit by bit he recovered. The happy idea came to him that Mme Des Boys was a nullity in the family and had little influence over her daughter.

"Nothing that she says has any importance. I'll agree with her."

"I entirely agree with you," he pronounced.

"My daughter's a curious creature," went on Mme Des Boys, "but your approbation will perhaps be enough to convince her. You have a great deal of influence over her."

"I?"

"She's very fond of you. It's obvious."

"I'm such an old friend," said M. Hervart courageously.

His cowardice made him blush.

"Why shouldn't I confess? Why not say, 'Yes, she does like me, and I like her, why not?' Isn't my desire evident? Can I go away, leave her, do without her?..." But to all these

intimate questions M. Hervart did not dare to give a definite answer.

"What I should like is that the present moment should go on for ever...."

"They have hardly spoken to one another, and yet," Mme Des Boys continued, "I seem to see between them the beginnings of...what? ...how shall I put it?..."

"The beginnings of an understanding," prompted M. Hervart with ironic charity. "Why not love? There's such a thing as love at first sight."

"Oh, Rose is much too well bred."

The silliness of this woman, so reasonable and natural, none the less, in her rôle of mother, exasperated M. Hervart even more than the insinuations to which he had been obliged to listen. Ceasing, not to hesitate, but to reflect, he said abruptly:

"I shall be very sorry to see her married."

Mme Des Boys pressed his hand:

"Dear friend! yes, it will make a big difference in our home."

She went on, after a moment's hesitation:

"Not a word about all this, dear Hervart; you understand. And now I think that the

tete-a-tete has perhaps gone on long enough; it would be very nice of you if you'd go and join them."

M. Hervart, impatient though he was, made his way slowly through the meanders of the little copse. Like Panurge, he kept repeating to himself, "Marry her? or not marry her?"

His head was a clock in which a pendulum swung indefatigably. He sat down on the little bench where, for the first time, he had felt the girl's head coming gently to rest on his shoulder. He wanted to think.

"I must come to a decision," he said to himself.

Leonor had noticed that, from the moment their walk had begun, Rose was on the alert at the slightest noise.

"She expects him. That means he'll come. So much the better. I care very little about this schoolgirl. We're alone now; no more compliments. I'm simply a landscape gardener at the orders of Mlle Rose Des Boys. What a name!..."

He looked at the girl.

"After all, the name isn't so ridiculous as one might think. She is so fresh, she looks so

pure. How curious they are, these innocent beings who go through life with the grace of a flower blossoming by the wayside.... But let's get on with our job...."

"The taste of the day, mademoiselle, inclines towards the French style of garden. Some compromise, at least, is necessary between the sham naturalness of the English park and the rigidity of geometrical designs ...."

"Tell me what your compromise is."

"But I don't know the ground yet."

"It isn't big, you know. In a quarter of an hour you will have an idea of the place as a whole."

Leonor continued his dissertation on the art of the garden for a little, but he was perfectly aware that he was not being listened to. Finally he said:

"Nature must obey man; but a reasonable man only asks of her that she should allow herself to be admired or to be loved. Those who wish to admire are inclined to impose certain sacrifices upon her. Those who love ask less and are content, provided they find an easy access to the sites that please them. But I

should imagine that women demand more. They want nature to be tamer, they want to see her utterly conquered; they want landscapes in which you can see the mark of their power. . . ."

"What a curious conversation," Rose said to herself. "Here's an architect who would get on my nerves if I had to pass my life in his company. . . ."

This idea made her think more urgently of M. Hervart. She turned her head, questioning the narrow alleys where the sunlight filtered through in little drops.

"She's thinking of her dear Xavier," thought Leonor. "What subject can I think of to hold her attention? Obviously, my remarks have so far interested her very little."

A man, however cold he may voluntarily make himself, however self-controlled he may be by nature, is scarcely capable of going for a walk alone with a young woman without wishing to please. He is equally incapable of keeping his presence of mind sufficiently to be able to look at himself acting and not to make mistakes. But how can one please? Can it be done by rule, particularly with a young girl?

Women are hardly capable of anything but total impressions. They do not distinguish, for instance, between cleverness and intelligence, between facility and real power, between real and apparent youthfulness. If one pleases them, one pleases in one's entirety, and as soon as one does please them, one becomes their sacred animal. Leonor had an inspiration. Instead of expounding his own ideas on gardens, he set to work to repeat, in different terms, what Rose had said that morning:

"What I have been expounding," he said, "doesn't seem to interest you much. But you see, I must do my job, which is to back up M. Lanfranc. Personally, I agree with you. If there are weak spots in your house, the nearest mason can put on the necessary plaster, stone and mortar. As for the garden and the wood, I should do nothing except make a few paths so that I might walk without fear of dew or brambles."

"Now you're being sensible. Very well then, I shall tell my father that I shall make arrangements with you alone. You will come back here and we will do nothing, almost nothing."

"I shall come back with pleasure and I shall do nothing; but if I have not made you dislike me, I shall consider that I have done a great deal."

"But I don't dislike you. When people agree with me, I never dislike them."

"But how can people fail to agree with you, when you say such sensible things?"

"Oh, that's very easy. M. Hervart doesn't dispense with disagreement. He contradicts me, laughs at me."

"Good," thought Leonor, "she's in love with Hervart; then she likes being contradicted and even laughed at a little. Or perhaps she's lying, so as to make me believe that Hervart is indifferent to her. Let's try and get a rise."

"At his age that sort of thing is permissible."

"That's why I don't get cross."

"And besides, he's very nice."

"Oh, so nice; I'm very fond of him."

"It doesn't take," though Leonor. "Hervart, to her, is a god and we might go on talking till to-morrow without her understanding a single one of my insinuations or ironies."

He went on nevertheless, picking out all the spiteful things that can be said with politeness.

"Old bachelors often have manias. . . ."

"That's what I often tell him. For instance, his taste for insects. . . . But it amuses him so."

"She's invulnerable," said Leonor to himself.

"And then he knows life. He has lived so much."

"That's true. Sometimes, when he's speaking to me, I feel as though a whole world were opening before me."

"He knows all there is to be known, the arts and the sciences, friendship and love, men, women. . . . He's seen a lot of them and of every variety."

This time it was Rose who paused a moment to reflect, then:

"That's why I have such immense confidence in him. It's a real happiness for me that he should come and spend his holidays here. I have learnt more in these few weeks than in all the other years of my life."

Leonor looked at Rose. He felt a powerful emotion, for to be loved like this seemed to him the height of felicity. He had never be-

lieved that it was possible to inspire a young girl with such ingenuous confidence. And how frank she was! What a divine simplicity!

"How does one make oneself so much loved? What's his secret? Ah, if only I dared ask more! But now, I don't even want to try and violate an intimacy, so charming to contemplate. I am looking at happiness, and it's such a rare sight."

He glanced at Rose once more.

"And with all that she's very pretty. How graceful she is under this aspect of wildness! What suppleness of form! Everything, down to her complexion, gilded and freckled, like an apple, by the sun, looks lovely in these country surroundings. How well a wife like this would suit me; for I belong to this country and am destined to live here. Why couldn't Hervart have stayed among his Parisian women?"

"He must be very fond of you," he went on, "and I envy his happiness in being allowed to be your friend. I shall come back, since you so desire, but I would rather not come back."

"Why?"

"Because I don't want to displease you."

"But it won't displease me; far from it. Do explain."

"If I come back, perhaps I shan't have the strength of mind not to grow fond of you, and that will make you angry."

"But why? How odd you are! Make yourself a friend of the house. I shall be very pleased."

"But then I shan't be able to like you as you like M. Hervart."

"Oh! I don't think that would be possible."

"And you won't like me as you like him."

She broke into such ingenuous laughter that Leonor assured himself that she had not understood anything of his insinuations. However, he was wrong, and her laughter proved it. She had laughed just because the idea had suddenly come to her that another man might have played Xavier's part in what had happened. The idea seemed to her comic and she had laughed. But the idea had come, and that was a great point.

It was such a great point that in her turn she looked at Leonor, and this time she did not laugh; but she had no time to make any

comparison, for at the same moment she pricked up her ears and said, "There he is."

M. Hervart did not arrive till quite an appreciable time had passed, and Leonor said to himself:

"She scents her lover as a pointer scents the game. Love is extraordinary."

He abandoned himself to reflection, astonished at having learnt so many things in half an hour's walk with a young and simple-hearted girl.

Rose was staring with all her eyes in the direction from which the sound of rustling leaves had come. Leonor stooped down behind her and kissed the hem of her skirt.

CHAPTER X

WHILE he was alone, M. Hervart had done his best to take a decision, as he had promised himself to do; but decisions had fluttered like capricious butterflies round his head and would not let themselves be caught. He was neither surprised nor vexed at the fact.

"Rose," he said to himself at last, "will do all I want."

This certitude was enough for him. The moment he had a will, Rose would acquiesce.

"Provided my will agrees with hers, that's obvious. Now Rose's wish is to become Mme Hervart. Dear little thing, she's in love with me. . . ."

He dwelt complacently on this idea, but a moment later it alarmed him and he felt himself a prisoner. A hundred times over he repeated:

"I must have done with it. I will speak to

Des Boys this evening, to-morrow morning at latest.... He will laugh at me. But that's all. He will have to give in afterwards. My will, Rose's will... I shall carry her off and take her to Paris. Is it my first adventure? If it's the last it will at least be a splendid one."

He pictured to himself all the details of this romantic enterprise. He would, of course, reserve a compartment in the train so as to insure a propitious solitude. It would not be at night, but in the evening. After an amusing little supper and some thrilling kisses, Rose would go to sleep on his shoulder and from time to time he would touch her breast, kiss her eyelids. She would be, at this moment, at once his wife and his mistress, the woman who has given herself, but whom one has not yet taken, a beautiful fruit to be looked at and delicately handled before it is at last relished. What an exquisite creature of love she would be! How docile her curiosity! What a pupil, like clay in the hands of the sculptor. An elopement? Why not a marriage tour? No, no elopements! no romantic nonsense! Des Boys will give me his daughter when I want...."

But suddenly he had a curious vision. He was standing on the platform of Caen station, amusing himself by peeping indiscreetly into the carriages, and what did he see?—Rose and Leonor huddled together, mouth against mouth. The train moved on, and he was left standing there, looking at the red light disappearing in the smoke....

He got up, full of jealousy; he ran, then slowed down, listening for possible words, questioning the silence. Without his knowing exactly why, Rose's laugh, heard through the leaves of the wood,, reassured him. He saw Leonor stoop down and rise again holding a little pink flower in his hand.

"*Sherardia arvensis,*" he said, taking the flower. "It has no business to grow here. Its place is in the field next door. *Arvensis,* you see, *arvensis.* But there are lots of plants that lose their way."

"He knows everything," said Rose. "You see, he knows everything."

Léonor who had understood the allusion, did not answer. He walked away, under the pretense of continuing his botanical researches in the wood.

"If love were born at this moment in my heart, it would be most untimely, it would have chosen its place very unfortunately. Does he love as he is loved? That is what I should like to know. Is he capable of perseverance? Who knows? It may be, Rose, that you will one day lie weeping in my arms."

All three of them made their way back, Leonor walking a little ahead. M. Hervart kept silence, for what he had to say demanded secrecy, and commonplace words were impossible. Rose did not notice the silence; she herself did not think of talking. She was happy, walking close to her lover. Sometimes, furtively, she stretched out her hand and squeezed one of his fingers. M. Hervart allowed his left arm to hang limply on purpose. Leonor did not turn round once, and Rose was grateful to him for that. M. Hervart, who felt that his secret had been guessed, would have preferred a less deliberate, a less suspicious discretion.

"What have these architects come to do here?" he wondered. "It looks as though it had all been arranged by the Des Boys with a view to getting off their daughter. Will they

come back? Leonor certainly will. And shall I be able to stay?"

His perplexities began again. When Rose's hand touched his own, he felt himself her prisoner, her happy slave. As soon as the contact was removed, he was seized by ideas of flight and liberty. He would like to have called Leonor, flung Rose into his arms and made off across country.

"I have never been so much disturbed by any amour. It's the question of marriage. What complications! I hate this fellow Leonor. But for him... But for him? But is he the only man in the world? If I don't take her, it will be somebody else." Suddenly he drew closer to Rose and whispered frenziedly in her ear a stream of tender and violent words, "Rose, I love you, I desire you with all my being, I want you.

Rose started, but these words responded so exactly to her own thoughts that she was only surprised by their suddenness. First she blushed, then a smile of happy sweetness lit up her face and her eyes shone with life and desire.

They soon rejoined Lanfranc and M. Des

Boys, who were confabulating over a glass of wine. A few minutes later the architects got into their carriage.

At the moment when the groom let go the horse's head, Leonor turned round. Rose realized that the gesture was meant for her; she slightly shrugged her shoulders.

"I am going to do a little painting," said M. Des Boys.

"I caught sight of an interesting beetle at the top of the garden," said M. Hervart.

"I'm going up to my room," said Rose.

Five minutes later the two lovers had met again near the bench on which M. Hervart had meditated in vain.

Without saying a word, Rose let herself fall into her lover's arms. Her drooping head revealed her neck, and M. Hervart kissed it with more passion than usual. His mouth pushed aside the collar of her dress, seeking her shoulder.

"Let us sit down," she said at last, when she had had her fill of her lover's mild carresses. And taking his head between her hands, she in her turn covered him with kisses, but mostly on the eyes and on the forehead. Desiring a

more tender contact, he took the offensive, seized the exquisite head and after a slight resistance made a conquest of her lips. There was always, when they were sitting down, a little struggle before he reached this point, although, for she had often, when they were walking, offered him her lips frankly. On the bench it was more serious, because it was slower and because the kiss irradiated more easily throughout her body.

"No, Xavier, no!"

But she surrendered. For the first time, M. Hervart, having loosened her bodice, touched the soft flesh of her breast, fluttering with fear and passion. He kissed her violently, and when the kiss was slow in coming she provoked it, amorously. A simultaneous start put an end to their double pleasure; and there, sitting close to one another, were a pair of lovers, at once happy and ill satisfied. One of them was wondering if love had not completer pleasures to offer; and the other was saying, what a pity that one is a decent man!

At the moment M. Hervart considered himself very reserved. Later, when he had recovered his presence of mind a little more, he felt

certain scruples, for he was delicate and subject to headaches as a result of indecisive pleasures. He felt proud of the at least partial domination, which he could, at scabrous moments, exercise over his nervous centres with his well-constructed, well-conditioned brain.

"Do you love your husband, little Rose?"

"Oh, yes!"

She roused her self to utter this exclamation with energy. M. Hervart felt no further indecision. Furthermore, he began almost at once to give a new direction to his thoughts. He wanted something to eat; Rose acquiesced. As she was slow in getting up he wanted to pick her up in his arms; but his arms, grown strangely weak, were unequal to the light burden. M. Hervart felt, too, that his legs were not as solid as they might have been. He would have liked to eat and at the same time to lie down in the grass. He let himself fall back on the bench.

"You look so tired," said Rose, inventing every kind of tenderness. "Stay her, I'll bring you some cakes and wine."

But he refused and they went back together.

Cheered by a little sherry and some brioches,

M. Hervart asked for music. Rose, inexpert though she was, soothed her lover with all the melodies he desired. She even sang to him. The songs were all romances.

"Joys of the young couple," he said to himself, half dozing. "A picture by Greuze. Nothis lacking except the little spaniel dog and the paternal old man looking in at the window and shedding a few quiet tears 'inspired by momory' at the sight of this ravishing scene. There, I'm laughing at myself, so that I can't be quite so badly done for as might have been thought. Not so close a prisoner, either."

"Go and see my father," said Rose, leaving a verse half sung. "I'll come and find you there later."

And she went on with her music.

"More and more conjugal, for I shall obey her after having, of course, gone over and kissed her in the neck. Dear child, she's waiting for the surprise, shivering at it already ...."

Everything went off as M. Hervart had predicted, but there was something more. Rose turned round and said, after offering her lips:

"Go along, my darling, and mind you ad-

mire his painting a lot, more than yesterday."

"Yes, my love."

"How charming it all is!" he said to himself as he knocked at the studio door. "Delightful family conspiracies. Shall I be able to play this part for long? Suppose I announce my intentions to my venerable friend. Obviously, there can be no more hesitation. Come on!"

They talked of Ste. Clotilde. M. Hervart was loud in his praise both of the historical knowledge as well as the pictorial skill of the master of Robinvast, and at every word he uttered he felt a longing to make the conversation touch on the conjugal virtues of that honourable queen. Then the desire passed.

Dinner time came. Afterwards, as usual, they played a game of whist. M. Hervart retired to bed with pleasure and, wearied by his kisses and his thoughts, went to sleep full of the contentment that comes from a pleasant fatigue.

"I shall have to warn Rose," he said to himself as soon as he woke, rather late, next morning, "of her mother's schemes. They might make her fall into some trap."

He soon found an opportunity. In the morn-

ing their kisses were more reserved, still somnolent. They frittered away the time pleasantly. M. Hervart would sometimes make a serious examination of some rare insect: Rose worked at her embroidery with conviction. They did not venture into the wood, because of the dew, but remained in the neighbourhood of the house. At this hour of the day M. Hervart was always particularly lucid. He discoursed on a hundred different topics and Rose listened, without daring to interrupt, even when she did not understand. She enjoyed the sound of his voice much more than the sense of his words.

Rose was not surprised to learn of her mother's schemes. She confessed, furthermore, that she had divined in M. Varin's attitude the existence of quite definite intentions. It was therefore decided that M. Hervart should make his request that very day in order to forestall circumstances. Rose spoke so resolutely and her words were so lyrical that M. Hervart felt all his absurd hesitations melt away within him. She knew her parents' income and gave the figure, very straightforwardly, like the practical woman she was. M.

Des Boys had an income of sixty thousand francs of which, she imagined, he hardly spent half. There was no doubt that he would willingly give the greater part of the other half to his only daughter. As she had also calculated, though with less certainty, the value of M. Hervart's fortune, she concluded decisively:

"We shall have from thirty to forty thousand francs a year."

M. Hervart calculated the figures again with the details that were known to him personally and found the estimate correct. His admiration for Rose was increased.

"She has all the virtues: an aptitude for love and the sense of domestic economy: intelligence and very little education: health without a striking beauty. Finally, she adores me and I love her."

At the first insinuations of his friend M. Des Boys smiled and said:

"I thought as much. My daughter has received but the vaguest education. Her mother is incapable. As for me, I am interested only in art. She needs a serious husband, a husband, that is to say, who is not in his first

youth. If she wants you, take her. I'll go and ask her."

M. Hervart was on the point of saying there was no need. But luckily he checked himself and M. Des Boys questioned his daughter.

"I should like to," she said.

M. Des Boys returned.

"She said, 'I should like to.' She said it without enthusiasm, but she said it. Now go and arrange things yourselves. I shall go on with my painting."

M. Hervart admired Rose still more for her astute answer.

The girl was waiting for him as he came towards her, serious, scarcely smiling, but beautified by the profound emotion that she could scarcely contain. She gave him her hand, then her forehead; and when M. Hervart drew her into his arms, she burst into tears.

CHAPTER XI

MEANWHILE Leonor had received a wound which he could not support with patience. A hundred times a day he thought of Rose. He was not in love with the woman, he was in love with her love. He saw her as she had appeared to him in the wood at Robinvast, with her whole desire, her whole will, her whole body turned innocently toward M. Hervart and he felt no jealousy; on the contrary, he admired the ingenuous force of so confiding, so powerful a love. By having been able to inspire such a love M. Hervart evoked in him an almost superstitious respect; he would willingly have helped him in his amour.

"I should like to know him," he said to himself naively; "I should ask him for advice and lessons. I should beg him to reveal his secret to me."

He would spend hours dreaming on this theme: to be loved like that. In these matters,

the most intelligent easily become childish. The Ego is a wall that limits the view, rising higher in proportion as the man is greater. There is, however, a certain degree of greatness from which, when a man reaches it, he can always look over the top of the wall of his egoism; but that is very rare. Leonor was not a rare character; he was simply a man a little above the ordinary, capable of originality and of learning from experience, clever at his profession, apt at forming general ideas, sometimes refined and sometimes gross, a peasant rather than a man of the world, a solitary, cold of aspect, full of contradictions, ironic or ingenuous by fits, tormented by sexual images and sentimental ideas.

He was not one of those in whom a budding love, even a love of the head, abolishes the senses. The more he dreamed about Rose, the more disquietingly tense grew his nerves. His desire did not turn towards her; he caught himself one evening spying on the wife of the Barnavast keeper, who was showing her legs as she bent over the well. It made him feel rather ashamed; for this big Norman peasant woman, so young and fresh, could boast, he

imagined, of nothing more than á peasant's cleanliness—wholly exterior, and he would only, could only tolerate woman in the state of the nymph fresh risen from the bath, like the companions of Diana.

Besides, he noticed that Lanfranc was making up to this good creature and doing it in all seriousness. Sure of giving him satisfaction by taking himself off for a few days, he drove to Valognes and took the Paris train.

Leonor, without making pretentions to conquests, would have liked to have certain kinds of adventures. He wanted to find one of those women whom some careless husband, whether through avarice or poverty, deprives of the joy of fashionable elegance or who, adorned by a lover's prodigalities, dreams of giving for nothing the present which they none the less very gladly sell. He had experienced these equivocal good graces in the days when he lived in Paris. He had even succeeded, during the space of eighteen months, in enchanting a very agreeable little actress who fitted marvelously into the second category, and he remembered how he had taken in a very pretty and very poor young middle-class woman who had

surrendered herself to him because he had given himself out to be a rich nobleman. At the moment his mistress was Mme de la Mesangerie, a local beauty; but he had never really possessed her as he desired.

What Grand Turk ever ruled over such a harem? Paris, the cafés, the concert halls, the theatres, the stations, the big shops, the gardens, the Park! The women belong to whoever takes them; none belongs to herself. None leaves her home in freedom and is sure of not returning a slave. Leonor had no illusions with regard to the results of his sensual quest. He knew very well that he would captivate none but willing slaves, slaves by profession, slaves by birth. But the hunt, if the game came and offered itself graciously to the hunter, would still have its attraction—that of choice; the fun would be to put one's hand on the fattest partridge.

"No," he said to himself, as he walked down the Avenue de l'Opera, "this child from Robinvast shall not obsess me thus, hour by hour. Any woman, provided she is acceptable to my senses, will deliver me from this silly vision. Is there such a thing as love without carnal de-

sire? It would be contrary to physiological truth. If I love Rose, it means that I desire her.... If I desire her, it means that I have physical needs. Once these needs are satisfied, I shall feel no desire for any woman and I shall stop thinking of this silly girl. Hervart can do what he likes with her; I shan't mind; and, after all, will the satisfaction which he derives from her be so different from that which some unknown woman will lavish so generously on me? A little coyness, does that add a spice? The sensation of a victory, a favour is better. Shall I obtain a favour? Alas, no. But by paying for it one can have the most perfect imitations. Ah! why am not I at Barnavast, gauging cubes of masonry, with glimpses of Placide Gerard's podgy thighs? Now, I know just what will happen .... Does one ever know? It's only eleven in the morning and I've got a week before me."

Still pursuing his stroll and his reflections, he entered the Louvre stores. Here, provincials and foreigners were parading their requirements and their astonishments. One heard all the possible ways of pronouncing French badly. It was an exhibition of pro-

vincial dialects. He jumped on moving platforms and staircases, passed down long files of stoves and lamps, went down again, traversed an ocean of mockery, went upstairs, found leather goods, whips and carriage lanterns, tumbled into lifts, was caught once more in a labyrinth of endless drapery, and after having wandered for some time among white leather belts, garters and umbrellas, he found himself face to face with Mme la da Mesangerie, who blushed.

"Is it a stroke of luck?" he wondered.

Perhaps it was, for she said to him very quickly:

"I'm alone. My husband has just gone back. I was going to wire to you."

Then in a lower voice:

"Well, here you are! I don't ask how it happened. Shall we profit by the opportunity?"

"It seems to me that I was looking for you without knowing."

"I have two days," she said, "at least two days."

They left the shop, making their plans, which were very simple.

"Let's go," she said, "and shut ourselves up at Fontainebleau for a couple of days."

"No, at Campiégne. It's more of a desert."

She wanted to start on the spot. Her provincial prudery seemed suddenly to have flown away. She was no longer the calm mistress who had never yielded except to the most passionate entreaties. The proud-hearted woman was turning into the lover, full of tenderness, a little reckless.

As he packed his bag, Leonor felt very happy, though still very much surprised. He decided, however, that he would ask no equivocal questions. The woman he was looking for, and whom he would not have found, had just fallen into his arms. What was more, he knew this woman, he was in love with her, though without passion; he had derived from her furtive but delicious pleasures. She inspired him, in a word, with the liveliest curiosity: he trembled at the thought that he was now to see her in all her natural beauty.

"Is she as beautiful as she is elegant? Suppose I were to find a farm-girl under the dress of the great lady."

Less than an hour after their meeting, they

were together in the refreshment room of the Gare du Nord. They had time to eat a hasty luncheon, then the train carried them off.

"I'm quite mad," she said, kissing Leonor's hands. "What an adventure! It's I who have thrown myself at your head."

"I have thrown myself so often at your knees!"

"Very well, let it be understood that I am yielding to an old entreaty—and to my own desire, my darling boy, for I love you. Haven't I done what you would have liked often enough? But do you think I didn't want to as much as you? A woman has so little freedom, especially in a country place. How many women are there who would dare do what I have done, even that little? Getting lost when we were out shooting—that was all right for once. How frightened I was when you got into my railway carriage, against orders, one evening at Condé.... Many's the afternoon I've spent dreaming of you, you wicked boy.... There, you make me quite shameless. I'm glad."

And she took Leonor's head between her hands, kissing it all over, at haphazard.

Leonor had often seen her kissing her little boy or her dog like that.

Hortense was thirty. She owed her name to certain Bonapartist sentiments which, in her family, had survived by a few years the events of 1870. Certain elegant habits of thought and manners had also been preserved. Her father, M. d'Urville had been one of the actors of Octave Feuillet's comedies, in this same Compiégne where they were now arriving. At the age when girls begin to forget that there are such things as dolls, she had read the complete works of this shy passionate writer; her mother did not forbid her to look at the *Vie Parisienne,* in which her happy frivolity had never seen anything that might be dangerous for a well-bred girl. And so, when she married, Hortense knew that though marriage may be a garden surrounded by a wall, there are ladders to climb over this wall; the only things she thought of in her husband were rank, fortune and the conventions. Her first lover had been a young officer, with whom, as with Leonor, she had lost her way hunting; only with him it had been stag-hunt. Leonor had participated only at an ordinary shoot, M. de

la Mesangerie, in view of the present hard times, having broken up his pack of hounds. That affair had been of the most fugitive character. Afterward she had received the advances of M. de la Cloche, a once celebrated member of the Chamber of Deputies; but M. de la Cloche voted the wrong way, and under the cloak of political reasons M. de la Mesangerie closed his doors to him, in spite of his wife, who concealed a real though momentary despair. Finally M. Leonor Varin came to stay at La Mesangerie to superintend certain repairs to the fine Louis XIII house. In this chilly young man, so cold and yet so romantic, as well as sensual, Hortense had found a more durable love, which greatly increased her happiness. Under a very skilfully calculated reserve, she adored Leonor who had, on his side, always shown himself obedient, respectful, adroit and tender. She realized that the furtive pleasures which she was able to give him without compromising herself did not altogether satisfy her lover. She too, in whom the avid sensuality of the woman of thirty had begun to wake, desired pleasures of a less rapid and more complicated nature. Leonor's kisses and

the words he whispered had little by little filled her imagination with images which she wanted to see in real life. How often she had thought of running away! Two days in Paris! And now her husband had given her these two days himself.

When she said, "I'm glad" she was confessing to the existence of a happiness in which it still seemed imposible wholly to believe. She pressed herself close to Leonor.

"Is it true? Are we really both of us here, alone and free?"

In a whisper she added, her bosom heaving with precipitate waves, "I shall be yours, absolutely yours, at last."

"All mine, all?" asked Leonor touching her mouth with his own.

"I belong to you."

She had the wisdom to withdraw, and looking out of the window she asked:

"Where are we?"

"We are coming near our happiness," said Leonor.

They crossed the Oise, calm and gentle; then came the first houses of Compiègne and in a

moment the station. They felt a strange emotion.

She did not wish to go to the Bell Hotel. A cab took them quickly to the Stag. Leonor was paying it off, but Hortense, wiser than her lover, kept it to do a round in the forest. She was pitiless and laughed, but with passion in her laughter; she changed her clothes and came down again.

They passed, without seeing it, before that elegant casket of stone which is the town hall. Following the fringe of the Great Park they reached the Tremble hills, where oaks and chestnut trees emerge, like the sails of ships, above the green ocean of bracken. They got down from the carriage with the intention of losing themselves for a moment in this bitter-smelling sea. The woman's white dress and fair hair left a luminous track as she advanced, for she was flying, like a laughing nymph before the hoarse laughter of the faun.

"It was about time," she said when the carriage picked them up to take them on to the Beaux-Monts.

"Time? what do you mean?"

"Yes," she went on, "I was too entranced

.... We'll come back. Would you like to? We'll come back every year.... One needs a lot of virtue to resist the persuasions of the forest."

"Virtue," said Leonor, "consists in being able to defer one's pleasure or one's happiness .... I should like to see you in this scented sea, a nymph, a dryad, a siren...."

"Do you want to?... You're driving me crazy."

The climb up the slope of the Beaux-Monts calmed their nerves. The carriage, which had come round by the circular road, was waiting for them at the top. They stood for a little while looking at the mist-grey distances.

They drove back by the Soissons road; they looked at nothing now and, since it had grown cool, they drew closer together and sat with clasped hands.

Leonor was thinking of the curious chances that had transported him, in a day or two, from Barnavast into the forest of Compiègne and had changed his profession from architecture to love. In spite of the fact that it seemed absurd and almost indelicate, he be-

gan, sitting in this carriage with his mistress's hand in his, to think of his walk with Rose.

"Rose is the cause of it all. It is she who brought me here, not you, poor darling, who sit dreaming at my side. It is she who made me hungry for the kisses I reserve for you—kisses that any other woman might have received in your place.... Yes, squeeze my hand, you may do it, for I really think I love you. I love you more than chance, I love you more than the woman I was looking for, because you are the woman I found. Besides the perfume of your soul will make sweet your mine. In love, egotism is a homage; it is also pursue your own pleasure without thinking of mine. In love, egoism is a homage; it is also a sign of confidence."

The moment came. Silence fell with the night. She strove to hide her shyness under an impudent smile.

"Must I be a statue to please you? Am I a statue?"

"Your beauty would enchant me," he said, "even if it were not you. Statue, are you made of marble?"

"You know I'm not."

She called to mind, though the moment seemed most inapposite, her husband's pudicity, his discreet entries into the conjugal chamber, the timidity of his caresses, the decency of his words, and the sudden savagery after his almost brotherly conversation. M. de la Mesangerie had explained to her that the final formality was necessary for the procreation of children. "God," he added, "has so ordered it, and we must bless his divine providence." He seemed to regret the obligation of going so far and, whether through natural or acquired foolishness, or whether through hypocrisy, he encouraged his wife to believe that sensual pleasures were contemptible. "They are," he even said, "a means and not an end." Following these principles, he had deprived her of them as soon as her first child seemed imminent. M. de la Mesangerie was very pious and prided himself on the possession of a most enlightened and methodical religion.

"That's the way," she said to herself, as she looped up her hair, "to train up a wife for adultery."

Under the pretext of sticking a pin into her hair, she stood admiring herself in front of the

glass, and at the same time, at the risk of offending her lover, who shouldn't have doubted the fact, she said, "You're the only person who has seen me like this, you and I . . . ."

When Leonor went to sleep she knelt beside his adored body and pious words came to her lips: she had found the living god at last.

They had two days. They decided to finish the last hours at Paris and they returned to shut themselves up in a hotel in the Rue de Rivoli. Hortense was indefatigable.

"What shall we do to recapture this?" she asked.

The idea of taking a little house at Carentan seemed to them a good one. Mme de la Mesangerie would always have the pretext of going to see her mother at Carquebut; her husband accompanied her there only once a year.

"Yes," said Leonor; "there's the time between two trains, one hour; then one misses one train. That makes two hours. Plenty of things can be done in two hours."

"Lovers learn the art of using every moment."

To Hortense it seemed as though she had be-

gun a new life, her real life. She began consulting time-tables, fitting in her connections. Then she tossed the booklet aside, saying:

"Bah! It would be much simpler to get divorced."

"Your husband's virtue stands in the way, my dear."

She did not insist. Nevertheless, at this moment, she would have abandoned everything—family, children, house, fortune, honour—to follow Leonor and become the wife of a little architect with a still uncertain future. And then she would be the niece of Lanfranc, whose mother used to sell cakes to the children in the Place Notre-Dame at Saint-Lô! She had bought them from her when she was ten. Her aristocratic instinct revolted, but she looked at Leonor and reflected that the demigods were born of the peasant girls of Attica. She pursued her idea.

"Your mother must have been very beautiful."

"Who told you so? It's quite true."

She wished to go to the station alone, refused to be seen off.

"When shall I see you? You're not going to stay on in Paris?"

"No."

Leonor kept his word. He saw Hortense starting for the station, with red eyes, and an hour later he left in his turn.

CHAPTER XII

SATIATED, languid with that fatigue which is a blessing to the body and a joy for the lightened brain, Hortense was thinking. She was not sorry to be returning home. The journey—what better pretext could there be for the headaches which demand darkness and silence, or long morning hours in bed, for siestas?

"I must sleep off my love, as drunkards say that one must sleep off one's wine. But what a horrid comparison! I shall dream deliciously. My lover, I have only to shut my eyes to see you, happy in my happiness, and to feel your dear caresses. Tell me, are you pleased with me? What must I do to be still more your mistress? Yes, I ought not to have gone away; I ought to have stayed with you, at your orders, forgetting everything that is not you. You should have run and overtaken me, kept me, locked me up! But listen, I shall go

and see you every week. Oh! how gladly I shall tell lies? How pleasant it will be for me to look M. de la Mesangerie in the face while he reads around my eyes only the innocent fatigue of a long journey!"

The delirium of the senses invaded all her life. She scarcely remembered the events that had preceded her trip to Compiègne. She spent more than an hour wondering if there were round about St. Lô, or in the forest of Cerisy, any of these oceans of bracken. She could not think of any; but she would look...

M. de la Mesangerie, who was waiting for her at the station, thought she looked tired. She was not tired; she was in a state of hallucination. However, she had enough presence of mind to reproach her husband for having deserted her. Thus, she haden't dare fix definitely on the furniture which they had almost chosen together; she had spent two days of indecision in the Louvre stores, tiring every one, including herself.

"You must go back there by yourself,"she said, "it will be your punishment."

M. de la Mesangerie was flattered. But

there was another misfortune: the toys for the children had been forgotten. Hortense felt rather ashamed when she confessed this; she also inwardly regretted such an oversight.

"I am a lover, but I am also a mother."

For the first time the possibility of a conflict between two tendencies of her heart occurred to her. A few minutes' shopping in the town repaired her omissions, and meanwhile opportunity to send a post-card to Barnavast. After that she abandoned herself, with a certain pleasure, to the re-discovery of familiar landscapes: they were not so different as she might have thought.

Leonor went back with no lyrical ideas in his head, but none the less very well satisfied.

"I have a mistress of the very kind I wanted. Libertinage and sentiment. The mixture has a very piquant savour. But I didn't believe her capable of so much boldness. She would never have dared in her own surroundings. People only become themselves out of their native surroundings: they either die or else they develop according to their own physiological logic. Breton girls, out of whom Paris sometimes makes such agreeable little

drabs, are dreamy little prudes in the shade of their village belfry. Hortense is, as was said of Marion, "naturally lascivious;" she might have died without knowing the art of fruitfully employing this precious temperament. She seemed so awkward and shame-faced when she abandoned herself at those first meetings of ours. She loves me. But mayn't she perhaps love me too much? Leave her husband! No, she must remain my secret."

He was in a very good humor, and took an interest in the trees and rivers and houses that he passed. The monotony of the apple orchards and the fields of cows did not bore him in the least. Having nothing to desire, he was enjoying the mere process of living.

He stopped at Carentan to look for a house in which he could hide a bed, failed to find one but discovered a very decent furnished room. The skipper of an English coasting steamer occupied it sometimes, but the people would be happy to have a more sober tenant Everything smelt strongly of whiskey. He made the bargain, had the room cleaned, paid well and made no concealment of his intentions. "Oh yes," they answered, "the other tenant

used to bring them back with him too. It's all right provided there's no noise."

"*Them,* he thought; that's what she'll be for these people. Just one of them.

He left them and strolled along the shore to Grandcamp, thinking of nothing but the little sensations of the moment. He was not one of those who complain that the sea-side is fringed with houses, that there are shelters where one can take refuge from wind and rain, iced drinks to melt the salt out of one's throat, board and lodgings and the movement of a second-rate, but sometimes curious, humanity. These little boys destined to become gross males, little girls whom time will turn into pretentious young ladies and rich middle class brides—what pretty and delicate animals they are! Much more amusing than little dogs or kittens! He had often pondered on the mystery of intelligence among children. How is it that these subtle creatures are so quickly transformed into imbeciles? Why should the flower of these fine graceful plants be silliness?

"But isn't it the same with animals, and especially among the animals that approach our

physiology most closely? The great apes, so intelligent in their youth, become idiotic and cruel as soon as they reach puberty. There is a cape there which they never double. A few men succeed; their intelligence escapes shipwreck, and they float free and smiling on the tranquillized sea. Sex is an absinthe whose strength only the strong can stand; it poisons the blood of the commonalty of men. Women succumb even more surely to this crisis. Those who have been intelligent in their critical age is past. In both sexes there are two successive crisis: the sexual crisis and the sensual crisis. The first comes at a fixed period for the individuals of the same race and the same environment. The second generally coincides with the completion of growth, with the state of physiological perfection. Sometimes, when decline is beginning, a third crisis occurs, which is like the first, inasmuch as it almost always brings with it a condition of sentimentality. Hervart, I feel almost sure, is going through this crisis now; Hortense and I are at the second; Rose is undergoing the first."

Leonor, like many of his contemporaries,

despised his profession. He was an architect, but his desire was to write scientific works, showing that physiology is the base of all the so-called psychical phenomena. All the acts which men call virtuous or vicious were, he considered, made inevitable by the state of the organs and the disposition of the nervous system. Nothing made him want to laugh so much as the pretentions of cold-blooded women who make a merit of their chastity; and he was amazed, after so much scientific data, at the way in which men went on considering the explosions of the organism as voluntary or involuntary. The influence of conscience on human conduct seemed to him null. He had demonstrated this to one of his friends, a master in an ecclesiastical school, by means of a grandfather clock which stood in his study. "What you call conscience, "he said, "is the weight that works the striking apparatus. But I can take off that weight and the clock will go on making the hours without striking them. "This friend had confessed that his own very real chastity was entirely involuntary: women roused no desire in him. He had once made the experiment and had obtained, after the

greatest difficulty, only a most disappointing result. "I believe, " he added, "that most of my colleagues are like me. Some of them, more favoured by nature, employ their faculties in secret; another has a private vice; and I know one who is a danger for children. For the most part we are chaste by the will of nature herself. Debauchery would be a torture for me. I am only interested in mathematics."

Leonor, however, had no intention of succumbing to the embraces of the sensual crisis.

"Let me profit by this monetary disposition, but let me preserve at the same time a certain spirit. I musn't compromise either my physical, intellectual or social fortune. Within these limits I can give myself body and soul to this midsummer madness. Hortense is a a perfect violin; I will be her devoted bow. And between her hands, am not I also a good instrument? Oh! the fools who pass their life fighting against their passions! After that, what happens? When they see that the garden is almost flowerless, they come in melancholy fashion to smell the last rose: the wind passes and they find only a bush of

leaves and thorns! But shouldn't I also ask: after that? May it not be that the only delicious thing in life is the constancy of an unconscious love? I know only too well that I love Hortense, and I know too well why I love her. It is certain that on the day when she appears to me less beautiful I shall leave her. Suppose I let it go at that? Suppose I looked for something else? Is variety as satisfactory as quality? Let's have a look on this beach.... I must make use of my state of mind, that is to say of the pleasing irritation of my nerves...."

Chance is scarcely ever anything more than our aptitude to take advantage of circumstances. On the beach Leonor met a young and pretty woman, a young woman of the sort that one sees so many of, the sort whose dress and figure tell one nothing decisive about a passing glance, have gone on contemplating the melancholy death of the wave at her feet; but he was walking for this very purpose—to meet a woman walking by herself: his desire created the chance. For a moment he was afraid that she was going to make advances, but she passed on. He followed. Skirting

the water all the while, the young woman moved away from the frequented part of the sands. She tried to pick up a ribbon of weed but it escaped her. Léonor reached it. Out of the water, it was a long viscious whip-lash. She thanked him, embarrassed by the present.

"Throw it back, then. It's like most of our desires. As soon as one holds them fast, one would like to throw them back into the sea."

She gave a little laugh, a sad, almost a smothered, laugh.

"Oh! Not always," she said.

They turned back towards the dunes and, seated on the sand, began to talk as though they were old friends.

She looked at him insistently, though appearing to do so. Finally she said:

"You don't look like a nasty man."

"Is that a compliment?"

"In my mouth, yes."

Then, little by little warming up, she talked without stop. It was a flood of words, like the mounting tide, only more rapid. She told him the story of her life. Leonor liked this sort of thing from ladies of equivocal reputations, and he now displayed a keen interest,

putting in little words that inspired confidence. This was what he succeeded in making out:

She lived in Paris and gave herself only to a small number of friends, always the same. The respectability of her life was, therefore, beyond suspicion. Her parents could not complain of having that sort of daughter. They lived in the north, near Boulogne; hence, in order not to meet them or the people from her part of the country, she confined her peregrinations to the seaside resorts of Normandy. Among her friends two were particularly dear. One was a young foreigner, who lived in Paris six months of the year;but he went on sending her money during the summer. The other, though he was older, gave less; she liked him better—being a Parisian, he was clever. He was a civil servant. She would not specify the office for which he worked, but it seemed to be the department of Fine Arts. The first of these friends imagined that she was at Grandcamp, where she had just arrived; for the civil servant she was at Honfleur. That complicated her correspondence a little, but it was better. Besides,

she had had no opportunity of writing to the civil servant for a long time, for he gave signs of life only by an occasional post-card. That seemed to her suspicious and made her sad. When he had last written he was at Cherbourg, but he had given no address.

"He looks like a man who wants to get married. Married! he's not capable of satisfying a woman. All the same, I like him. And besides, I should miss him for other reasons."

This woman, with her commonplace life, her commonplace brain, had an agreeable voice, a delicate face, intelligence in her eyes and a sort of natural elegance. Leonor felt a violent desire for her.

"I am spending several days here," he said.

"So am I."

"Shouldn't we spend them together?"

She gave a pretty laugh, allowed herself to be entreated and accepted, after having once more examined Leonor with a sagacious eye. The proposition accepted, she offered him her lips, looked at the time on a minute watch and got up, saying:

"Let's go and have dinner. We must hurry to get a little table."

Her name was Gratienne. She was a little woman, with a mass of dark hair, and her profile was charming. Leonor was amused by the contrast between this little statuette and the opulent Leda type of Hortense. She had a supple body, fresh and delicately scented; and since she was a professional and ardently shared the pleasures she provoked, he passed several pleasant nights. The days were much less agreeable, for he had to submit to long prolix confidences. There were amusing touches in her stories, but from professional ethics she refrained from ever uttering a proper name, a fact which somewhat confused her anecdotes.

One evening, however, in a moment of distraction or of confidence, she allowed Leonor to turn over her little collection of post-cards.

"Besides," she added, "as you're not a Parisian, the names will tell you nothing."

Leonor looked at ships, mountains, casinos, girls bathing and many other interesting pictures. Some were signed Theobald and came from Austria, others, Paul, and came from the Pyrenees.

"Hullo, Tourlaville castle!"

Without appearing to do so, he examined the writing of the address with care. He did not know the hand. The card was signed H. He passed on. Another of the La Hague castles. This time the signature was Herv.

"Surely it's Hervart."

The name appeared in full at the bottom of Martinvast Castle, with a postscript of 'love and kisses.'

"That must be the civil servant in the Fine Arts Department. Obviously."

For a moment he felt annoyed at being the collaborator, even the casual collaborator, of M. Hervart. He would have preferred someone he did not know. Theobald pleased him better. But all at once he thought of Rose:

"It's curious," he said to himself, "that we should love the same women in all the different styles."

While Gratienne was looking out of the window, he slipped the card of Martinvast castle into his pocket.

CHAPTER XIII

SINCE his marriage had been decided on, M. Hervart seemed very happy. Rose's confidence in him had grown still greater and with it their intimacy. He hesitated now about only one thing: what date should he fix? Rose, without admitting the fact, wanted to be married as soon as possible, so that she might know the end of the story. Women, however, are broken in to prolonged patience. She would wait, if Xavier decided that they ought to wait. To obey Xavier was to her a great pleasure.

M. Hervart's latest hesitations were not very comprehensible. His situation, after the winter, would be in no way altered. What was the present obstacle? Gratienne? Of course, he thought himself passionately adored by her, but would she love him less, would she be less hurt a year hence? His ideas about Gratienne, were, moreover, variable. At one

moment he attributed to her the virture of an unhappily married woman who has given herself for love to her heart's choice; at the next going to the opposite extreme, he saw her prostituted to every chance comer. The humble truth escaped him. Expert in these matters though he was, he had never been able to see that Gratienne was a girl who could skilfully reconcile her interests, her pleasures and her sentimental needs, and who completely dissociated these three things. What she loved in M. Hervart was the sensual lover, but she none the less appreciated the rich and serious civil servant in him. For free love is like legal love in this also, that money reinforces sentiment. Thus M. Hervart esteemed Gratienne sometimes more and sometimes less, but he always loved her the same, having, moreover, no visible breach of contract to reproach her with. The thought of deserting Gratienne filled him with distress, not because of the pain he himself would feel, but because of the pain that she most certainly would suffer. Besides, even when he was in a mood to despise Gratienne, he set store by her esteem. However, all of that would come right, he thought,

for the situation was a common one and one of those that have to be solved every day.

"As soon as I have possessed Rose, I shall think no more of Gratienne, that's obvious. And then, why should I break with the charming girl brutally? I don't intend to upset her."

At bottom, it was the thought of marriage itself that was still alarming M. Hervart. He felt the tyrant that they all turn into already rising up beneath the surface of the sweet young girl.

"She loves me, therefore she will be jealous. So shall I perhaps. Or perhaps in a few days I shall dislike her. Shall I please her for long? She loves me because she knows no one else but me."

M. Hervart's health sometimes alarmed him. He would wake up feeling more tired than when he went to bed. The least cold caught him in the throat or in the joints. And when meals were late, his breathing became difficult and he was seized with giddiness.

"I'm a fool. Here am I, getting married at an age when wise men begin unmarrying. Bah! In spite of everything, I'm still tough and I can still tame a woman."

He recalled, with pride, his last rendezvous with Gratienne; he had conquered her, annihilated her, reduced her to a pulp, and himself, strutting like a cock, had crowed over his happy victim.

"Besides, with Rose, I shall be master. I shall be for her the Man and men in general .... By the way, why hasn't Gratienne written to me since I've been here? Of course, I never gave her my address."

That had been the right thing, he first thought; then he reproached himself for it, felt almost remorseful. He hastily concocted a quite affectionate letter, asking for news. There was a letter-box not far away, on the St. Martin road; he went quickly down stairs and ran there with his missive.

On his return he found Rose in the garden. Since their engagement she had been living in a perpetual smile. She entered naively into her destiny, suspecting no further possible obstacle to her happiness. At the same time, by what must have been instinctive coquetry, she had become, not more reserved, but less prompt at their habitual sports. She spoke a great deal of her future house, picturing to

herself their drawing-room furniture, which she pictured from the illustrated catalogues, and the colour of their carpets and curtains. The idea of this furniture horrified M. Hervart, who had a taste for antiques and happy discoveries, which he mixed, without shame, with practical constructions made under his own directions. To-day he found it more difficult than usual to tolerate this housewifely chatter. He was bored.

"Can it be," he wondered, "that I feel nothing but a wholly carnal love for her? What's the use of marrying, if I can't see in her the wife, the mother, the lady of the house as well as the mistress? In that case Gratienne is quite enough for me. Marriage is delightful when one is fresh from school. One finds the happiest establishments among students. They live on one another, in one another. Promiscuity seems an enchantment. One makes one's first acquaintance with the opposite sex; one completes oneself. Later on, all this intimacy is no longer possible; and later still, one is very well content with mere amorous visitations while one awaits the moment when solitude

brings the only instants of appreciable happiness."

M. Hervart brought his meditations to no conclusions, and so the morning passed—Rose choosing imaginary wallpapers and Xavier philosophising in secret on the unpleasantnesses of marriage.

After luncheon, a diabolic idea occurred to him: Why shouldn't he take a definite advance on his conjugal rights? The blood went to his head. He began to breathe a little heavily as he pressed Rose against him. When they were seated, the usual ceremony took place after the usual rebuffs. She allowed her lover's hand to wander. Their mouths, meanwhile, were kissing, drinking one another. After a moment of calm, M. Hervart, on his knees now, took one of Rose's feet in his hand. He caressed the ankle and she made no resistance, when he became more daring, though much moved, still she did not protest, and did no more than whisper, "Xavier! no! No!" Nothing more happened. M. Hervart did not dare. While, feeling very uncomfortable, he was deploring his virtue, Rose fondled him and called him naughty.

"It's curious," he thought, "that they all have the same vocabulary by nature."

He was ashamed. Nothing makes a man ashamed so much as having failed in his purpose, what ever may have been the cause of his failure. He said, a little nervously:

"Let's walk a little. Let's do something."

"What an idiot I am," he thought, as they walked along the Couville road, where there are rocks and a little heather and fox-gloves among the birch-trees; "after all, she's my wife."

On the following days the same manoevre was repeated several times, and M. Hervart always hesitated at the decisive moment.

"Besides," he wondered, "would she let me? I can hardly violate my fiancée, can I? I have taught her nothing she doesn't know. If we came on to untried lessons, how would she take it?..."

He continued: "Dismal pleasures for me. I've had enough of them. It was amusing only the first time."

Finally, one evening when they had gone out alone, a thing which never had happened before, he was a little more daring....

The darkness made Rose receive her lover's caresses more willingly than usual. She was expecting them. The thing which had appeared so bold to M. Hervart obviously seemed already quite natural to her....

"Much more natural, perhaps, than allowing me to touch her breast or the under side of her arm...."

M. Hervart made bold to ask for more .... "Rose! Rose!"

But the girl recoiled. Suppressing a cry, Rose got up and said: "Let's go indoors."

She added, a moment later, "It's wrong Xavier, it's wrong. Respect me."

"What logic," said M. Hervart to himself. "Respect me! But it's true, I made a mistake. With young girls especially one must begin at the end."

The next day they met very early and Rose, refusing to listen to anything he had to say, refusing even to give him a friendly kiss, pronounced the sentence on which she had been meditating:

"I am angry. If you want me to pardon you, go away at once and write to me a week hence that everything's arranged for our mar-

riage. I love you. You will realize that when I am your wife, but not before. I have been willing to play with you and you have tried to abuse the privilege. It's wrong. Go!"

He had to go, she was inflexible.

When M. Hervart got into the express at Sottevast, Rose cried. She had forgiven him, because she loved him. She had forgiven him because he had obeyed.

CHAPTER XIV

FROM 8.57 a. m. till the hour of 6 p. m., when she rang at his door, M. Hervart had precisely one idea, a single one: he must meet Gratienne.

She had been in Paris since the day before and she had just written to him, when she got his telegram from Caen. Her delight was very great. She fulfilled her lover's desire with joy.

"I love you, my old darling!"

M. Hervart spent two days without thinking of Rose except as something very remote. He was thrilled to re-discover the Louvre: he looked at the colonnade before he went in; even the 'fighting Hero' seemed a novelty to him: he went and meditated in front of the crouching Venus, of which he was especially fond. It was there that he had often met Gratienne. How he loved her! What a pleasure it had been to come back to his 'ephebe.'

On the third day after his arrival he received Gratienne's letter forwarded from Robinvast. That disturbed him a little—Rose's writing superimposed on Gratienne's.

"But aren't they superimposed in life? No, I mean, mingled together. Rose is much too ignorant of the way things go to have any suspicion. And besides, I must have got at least ten letters in women's handwriting while I was at Robinvast and I never made any attempt at concealment.... Rose—it's true I went rather far with her. But whose fault was that? If she had resisted my first attacks, I shouldn't have insisted. What an egoist she is!... However, I ought to write to her. No, not to-day. It's my turn to be cross."

During the day he thought several more times of Rose. The scenes in the garden and the wood came back into his mind and unnerved him. Then a question posed itself in his mind: Do I love her? But he would not answer. Others presented themselves yet insistently: How shall I draw back. He did not understand. He had no intention of drawing back. Well then, should the marriage take place? He really didn't know.

"I must have a breathing space. I come back, I have arrears of work and friends to see. Everything must be done properly. For the little dryad of the Robinvast wood, there is only one thing in the world and that is I. For me there are a dozen things, a thousand..."

He rang the bell, gave unnecessary orders, asked futile questions. It was only at about three o'clock that he opened the door to an image which had been prowling round his head since the morning: Gratienne was coming to pick him up at four and they were to go to St. Cloud. That was one of his great pleasures.

"Will Rose be able to understand these profoundly civilized landscapes, this well tamed nature, these hills with their harmonious lines like the body of a lovely sleeping woman?"

M. Hervart felt in very good form. The uncomfortable symptoms which had disquited him in the country had disappeared since his return.... He found in Gratienne a favourable reception and to the realization of his desires. She knew his tastes and she shared them. In short, he promised himself several delightful hours after this familiar outing. However a very disagreeable surprise was in

store for him. After the preludes of passion, when his whole being was bent on realization, M. Hervart had a moment of weakness. Gratienne's skillful tenderness had certainly overcome it, the self-esteem of both parties had been preserved.

In the morning, he thought of Stendhal, carried the volume to his office and read chapter LX of *L'Amour* with the greatest attention. He found nothing there to enlighten him. Gratienne, certainly, did not inspire, and indeed no woman had ever inspired, in him that kind of ill-balanced passion in which the body recoils, alarmed at its own boldness.

"Stendhal no doubt had discovered one of the reasons for an absence of apropos, but he has found only one. And besides, all this doesn't belong to psychology; it is physiology. There's nothing but physiology. Bouret will tell me about it."

Bouret, who knew M. Hervart's life, made him relate, point by point, the whole history of his last year. Finally he said: "Well, it's very simple."

Bouret employed no circumlocutions. He

was clear and brutal. After a moment's reflection he continued.

"The inevitable accompaniment of Platonic love is secret vice. Simple flirtation leads to the same consequences. Double flirtation is secret vice *a deux,* discreet and hypocritical. Triple flirtation, if it exists, would still be secret vice a deux, but avowed, frank. It would perhaps be less dangerous than double flirtation, which is simply realization artifically provoked. No virility can stand that. Women, for another reason less easy to explain, are destroyed by it just like men. Men are fools. If you want a woman, take a woman and behave like a fine animal fulfilling its functions! And above all beware of young girls. Young girls have destroyed the virility of more men than all the Messelinas in the world. Sentimental conversations, furtive kisses and hand-squeezings are almost always accompanied in an impressionable man, especially if he has several months or even a few weeks of chastity behind him, by loss of vigor. Then do you know what happens? One gets used to it. I believe that our organs, despite their close interdependence, have a certain

autonomy. The first thing you must do is to preserve perfect chastity for an indefinite period. Active occupations, fatigue; you must procure sheer brute sleep. Then, in two or three months make a few direct attempts, absolutely direct. If that's all right, you must marry and set your mind to producing children. There."

"Then you condemn me to conjugal duty."

"That's it precisely."

"One should marry a woman one doesn't love."

"That would be true wisdom."

"And be faithful to her."

"Obviously."

"Or else renounce everything."

"I won't go as far as that. Your case isn't desperate. You have fled in time."

"I didn't fly. I was driven away."

"Bless her cruel heart. Tell me, did she permit indiscretions?

"Yes, I should almost have said willingly."

"She will be a dangerous wife."

"She is so innocent!"

"There are no innocent women. They

know by instinct all that we claim to teach them."

"That's just what innocence is."

"Perhaps. But a delicate voluptuary with an innocent and amorous girl is a lost man."

"I begin to realize the fact."

"There are not, "Bouret went on, "several kinds of love. There is only one kind. Love is physical. The most ethereal reverberates through the organism with as much certainty as the most brutal. Nature knows only one end, procreation, and if the road you take does not lead there, she stops you and condemns you at least to some simulacrum; that is her vengeance Every intersexual sentiment tends towards love, unless its initial character be well defined or unless the partners are in a phase of life in which love is impossible... But I am treating you too much as a friend and too little as a patient. You seem to be pensive. You're not as much interested in questions as Leonor Varin. He is my pupil, in the physiology of morals. How is Lanfranc? He doesn't Platonise, doesn't flirt..."

"Oh! no."

"Varin interests me. Do you know him?"

"Very little."

"The loss is yours. One of these days he will become a fine mind, if he gets over the sensual crisis. I'd like to marry him to someone."

"That's your panacea."

"Perhaps it is one, my friend, on condition that marriage is taken seriously. It's only in marriage that one can find stability. By the way, have you seen Des Boys' daughter? He writes to me from time to time. We have remained friends because, though he's a fool, he's a laconic fool. And then he's a very decent sort of fellow and a man to whom I owe my position. He seems to be almost embarrassed with his daughter. He has no connections in the world. What's she like? Pretty?"

"Yes."

"Intelligent? I mean, of course, as far as a woman can be intelligent."

"Yes."

"I think so."

"And now the principal thing—her health?"

"Good as far as one can see."

"Ho, ho! I shall unloose Varin in pursuit of this nymph."

"Unnecessary; he knows her."

"Ah, he knows her?"

M. Hervart got up. He was afraid that some unforeseen question might make him say something silly. Suppose Bouret, who was a friend of Des Boys, guessed something? He tried to think of an ambiguous phrase and found one:

"I spent a day at the Des Boys' with Varin. I don't know if he's a familiar of the house."

And with that he went away.

"What a bad business!" he said to himself as he thought of his health, for the rest was of secondary importance to him now. "No more women! No more Gratienne! No libidinous thoughts! Am I master of my thoughts? Why not a course of pious reading?"

He spent several black days, then gave orders, in one of the galleries of his museum, for one of those untimely upheavals which drive the amateur wild. M. Hervart needed to distract himself. After a week, Gratienne, grown anxious, sent him an express letter. He yielded to the suggestion and that evening

made an attempt which Bouret would have considered premature. However, it succeeded marvellously well and M. Hervart felt new life spring within him.

The next day, as he was in excellent spirits, he wrote to Rose, whose prolonged silence had ended by pricking his self-satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV

ON reaching Barnavast, Leonor had found two letters; which of the two interested him the more he could not tell. One was from M. Des Boys, asking him to come and finish, before the winter, and immediately, if he could, the alterations at Robinvast. A room was ready for him. He had but to give them warning, and they would send for him. The second came from La Mesangerie. It was a diary.

"15th September. What are my children's kisses after the kisses of my lover? It is like the smell of the humble pink after the heady perfume of the rarest flowers....."

"What a fool the woman is," said Leonor inwardly. "Why does she write. She has intelligence, her conversation is agreeable, she has taste, and see what she writes! God, how melancholy!..."

"... But pinks have their charm, just as

they have their own season, and I am happy to come back to them, since their season has returned."

"That," thought Leonor, "is better; it's almost good.... Is Hervart still at Robinvast? I hope not. His holiday wasn't indefinite, I should think. Suppose I wrote to Gratienne?"

"... You flowers that the touch of my Beloved made to blossom in my heart, you perfume my soul, you intoxicate my senses ...."

Intoxicate my senses... Is it necessary to remember myself to Gratienne? I would as soon get my information from another source."

"... intoxicate my senses. My body trembles at the thought of the night at Compiègne, every moment of which is a star that shines in my dreams. I did not know what love was...."

"Who does know what love is?... I don't feel bound to answer that to-day. Now I come to think of it 'I don't know where Gratienne is. She must have left almost at the same time as I did. Let's leave it at that ...."

"... what love was.... I have no desire to meet Hervart again at Robinvast. He bores me. Is she really going to marry this civil servant?. If Rose knew. Yes, but if Rose knew everything, would she think much more of me than of M. Hervart. I am ten years younger than he, that's all; and my mistress is a much heavier millstone about my neck than his. It's easy to get rid of a Gratienne; with someone like Hortense, the process is much more difficult. She may make a scandal, she may kill herself, she may make her husband turn her out and then come and take refuge in my arms.... What then? Besides I love this beautiful woman quite a lot and it would distress me very much if I had to drive her to despair. And then Rose is wildly in love. Let me be reasonable. Where was I? Still at love."

"... what love was, before knowing you; I did not know what pleasure was before our mad night...."

"That's very likely. But I am doubtful about love. Is it love, that frenzy of sensual curiosity that makes us desire to know, in every aspect and in all its mysteries, the longed-for

body? Why not? It is indeed, probably, the best kind of love. Bite, eat, devour! How well they realize it—those who reduce the object of their love to a little bit of bread which they swallow. The Communion—what an act of love! It's marvellous. Bouret would think that foolish, perhaps; but Bouret, right as he is in being a materialist, is wrong in not understanding materialistic mysticism. Can anyone be at once more materialistic and more mystical than those Christians who believe in the Real Presence? Flesh and blood—that's what lovers want too, and they too have to content themselves with a mere symbol."

"... our mad night. It revealed a new world to me. I shall not die, like Joshua, without having seen the earthly paradise."

This phrase, despite its banality, pleased Leonor, who had begun to feel more indulgent towards his mistress.

"To write a long letter like this was a great effort for her, and as it was for me that she made the effort, I should be a cad to laugh at it. That is why it would be as well to read no more. I shall ask her to give me a rendezvous at Carentan. It will give her pleasure and me

too. Afterwards I shall go to Robinvast. Everything fits in well."

The assignation at Carentan was difficult to arrange. Hortense, at first delighted and ready to start, seemed to hesitate. It was too near, the town was too small. But her desire was so strong! What should she do? She hoped to find some pretext for going to Paris alone.

The truth was that, re-established in her surroundings, Hortense did not feel sufficiently bold to flout the rules voluntarily. She was one of those women who are ready to do anything, provided that circumstances determine their will. She could yield on an impulse to an imperious lover, where or when did not matter, as soon as safety was assured; she would profit by a chance, but to create chance, to organize it—that was another matter. Her escapade at Compiègne appeared to her nowas one of those strokes of fortune which life does not grant twice. She dreamed of a new chance meeting with Leonor; but a concerted assignation! At the very thought, she felt herself followed, shadowed; the idea made her quite ill. To be

surprised by her absurd husband—how shameful that would be!

"If Leonor came here we could easily find some means. I could have a headache, one Sunday, stay in my room, be alone in the house; besides, there is luck."

She always entrusted herself to luck. She had never yielded to any of her lovers except on the spur of the moment.

"Might we not recapture," she went on, "something of the night at Compiègne, even in a rapid abandonment?"

Women are ruminants: they can live for months, for years it may be, on a voluptuous memory. That is what explains the apparent virtue of certain women; one lovely sin, like a beautiful flower with an immortal perfume, is enough to bless all the days of their life. Women still remember the first kiss when men have forgotten the last.

Hortense dreamed, Leonor desired. He thought only of yesterday's mistress, when he did think of her, in order to make her the mistress of to-morrow. His sentimentality was material. He crossed the stream from stone to stepping-stone, from reality to reality. In de-

fault of Hortense, he had taken Gratienne, not to satisfy his physical, but his cerebral needs. To live, he had to have the electuary of two or three sensations, always the same, but always fresh. Was he capable of a profound emotion, and would such a love have influenced his physiological habits? He did not know. Faithful to Bouret's theories, he did not think so.

He wrote to Hortense: "I want you to come." She was frightened but happy.

"How he loves me!"

The pleasure of obeying struggled in her with fear. Fear, at certain moments, gave way.

"Since he wants me to come, it is clear that he knows I can come, that there is no danger. And then, he will be there!"

She leaned on Leonor as on a second husband, stronger, more real, though distant. Distant? But wasn't he always present in her thoughts?

One morning her fear gave way altogether. She wrote, set out, arrived.

She was trembling, and she still trembled long after the bolts were shot.

This new festival of love was vain, on ac-

count of her sensibility. Leonor, astonished by a coldness which he imagined he had overcome for ever, attributed it to a failure of tenderness. He knew that women only palpitate with the men they adore, but he thought that they ought always to palpitate. He did not know how capricious these frail organisms are. He did not know that there are women who, their whole life long, pursue the delirious sensations which they are doomed never to find again. He imagined therefore, that he was no longer loved, and he was bitter, for men are readily bitter when their mistress's exaltation is too moderate.

Hortense wept. "Oh, my dream, my beautiful dream!"

Her tenderness had, however, in no way diminished. Leonor had to admit it as he received contritely Hortense's poignant kisses. He asked her pardon, humiliated himself, and for a moment she was happy in the caresses of her lover, but she was still whispering to herself, "Oh, my dream, my beautiful dream!"

After her departure, Leonor coldly informed his landlady that he did not mean to come back; then after a long tedious wait in an inn

parlour, he returned to Barnavast. A letter awaited him, pressing him to come. M. Des Boys begged him, with a kind of anxiety, to fix the day on which they could come and fetch him.

Leonor would have liked, however, to devote some few days to meditation. He had a question to answer, "Does she love me?"

"We shall not meet again at Carentan, that is decided. Besides, it was absurd. What a place to make love in! Her failure was due to her repugnance for the surroundings. It was a sign of her refinement of feeling. And then women have no imagination. To me, everything is a palace; the woman I adore would light up a hovel.... Does she love me?"

But it was in vain that he repeated the question; he could find no answer.

"What a fool I am! I shall see well enough next time. I continue to love her. She is beautiful, she is obedient.... But is that the aim of my life? Suppose she were given me for my own?"

But to this question he could think of no answer either.

Hortense, at the same moment, in the old room she had had before she was married, was going to sleep, sighing, "Oh, my dream, my beautiful dream!"

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Leonor arrived at Robinvast, Rose and her father were sitting in the garden, each of them reading a letter.... From time to time, Rose would raise her eyes and look at the trees; M. Des Boys between two sentences of his letter would examine his daughter. During this last fortnight, she had been pale, sad, out of humour; and her father, absent-minded, but affectionate, had grown anxious. What was going on between the recently engaged couple? But M. Des Boys would never have dared to question his daughter. He was waiting for a confidence, knowing quite well that it would never come; and on her side, Rose was unhappy at having to keep locked up in her heart the troubles that were suffocating her. These two people, shy and secretive towards one another, might have remained like this for years without deciding

to speak the words which would have consoled them.

M. Des Boys had accordingly urged Leonor to come and finish his work.

"It will be a distraction for her," he had thought, "And then, at bottom and in spite of my pledged word, I agree with my wife: Leonor would be a much more suitable husband. What! Can Hervart be making her unhappy already?"

The letter he was reading at this moment put the final touch to his anxiety. It was from Bouret and Leonor was much praised in it. Bouret went on:

"I have seen Hervart and have equally advised him to get married, but for different reasons. Though he is a little younger than we are, he is probably nearer the end. We shall all, alas, see this end confronting us, if we live another fifteen years. Do you understand me? With prudence and diplomacy, Hervart can still drag on a long time, can even recapture brilliant moments; but he has played too much on the fine violin given him by nature. The strings will snap one after the other. As long as one remains a virtuoso, one

can still astonish ears habituated to vulgar exercises; but all the same, a single string is very risky! I have therefore ordered him to marry and, above all, to be faithful to his wife. Fidelity will bring satiety, satiety will bring continence, and continence will perhaps be the true philter. A young wife is not so dangerous as one thinks for a man on the down grade. She is a favourable stimulant and, at the same time, a moderating element. In fine, Hervart may make a very good husband. In any case it's an experiment that interests me. I should be quite capable—if it gives good results, that is, at least a fine child—of yielding myself to an old temptation. I would give up my practice and go and cultivate roses and camelias in some corner of your earthly Paradise, in the Saire valley, where one sees palms among the willow-trees!"

"I had almost forgotten one important point in our hypothesis. The young wife must have a virtuous temperament, without coldness, but also without sensual curiosity; a good reproducing animal, apt in the pleasure of conceiving rather than in the pleasure of love-making; one of those who, after having been blushing

brides, become loving mothers. If he falls on some rebellious woman he is lost. If the instrument which he has to tune and render sensitive gives out no sound or false notes, he will lose courage and return to his old concerts. But if, by chance, his wife should reveal herself as a creature of voluptuousness, his perdition would be still more certain: Hervart would flare up like a faggot and nothing but a handful of ashes would be left. I am not speaking of the adultery which would, in these last two cases, be inevitable. Sometimes it has the effect of re-establishing the balance in a dislocated household; there are excellent conjugal associations in which each party has his or her ideal down town, in a different quarter of the city. But this is a matter of sociology and doesn't interest me. I remain in my domain, which is the human body, its functions, its anomalies. I may add that it is by their ignorance of it that the sociologists think of such nonsense as they do. They are still hard at work—the idiots!—reasoning about averages. They never come down to reality, to the individual. How it is despised, this human body of ours! And yet it is the only truth, the

only beauty, just as it is the only ideal and the only poetry. . . ."

Bouret was inclined to philosophize. His letters almost always passed the range of his correspondents' comprehension. He saw that himself, when he re-read them, and smiled. All that M. Des Boys understood in his friend's dissertation was the passage which concerned Hervart; but that he understood very well. Bouret's reticences produced their ordinary effect: Hervart was considered as a man incapable, condemned without reprieve.

"He's a madman, What does he mean by going and captivating a young girl's heart when he isn't sure of being able to make a wife of her! The Lord knows, women aren't angels; they have corporal sensations; and then maternity, maternity. . . ."

M. Des Boys confided to himself all the scabrous or moral banalities that such a subject could make him think of. Meanwhile, he examined his daughter.

"How shall I explain this to her? I shall make her mother do it."

He continued his meditations; and sometimes he would smile at the evocation of fool-

ish fancies, sometimes his brows contracted and he would feel a mixture of anxiety and anger.

Rose was also reading:

"... but I have been very ill since my arrival here. Some fever, due, it may be, to the delicious excitement of my heart. A great depression has been the result and I now feel a most disquieting lassitude. Alas! the conclusion is sad: we must put off our marriage. It is an infinite pain to me to write this; but I ask myself when it will be possible? Will it ever be possible? No, I won't ask that. It would be terrible. I love you so much! What a happiness it is to walk again with you, in fancy, through the wood at Robinvast! If I was too audacious, you will pardon me, won't you, because of the violence of my love...."

There was a lot more in this style, and a less inexperienced woman than Rose would have felt the artificiality of this amorous eloquence. Not a word of it, certainly, came from the heart. M. Hervart, who was not cruel, had first laid down the principle of his illness and his intention was to draw from it, graduating the deceptions, all its logical conclusions. If

necessary, he had said to himself, Bouret will help me. M. Hervart, who was by nature a man of the last moment and the present sensation, thought of Rose only as one thinks of a sick friend, for whose recovery one certainly hopes, but without anguish of mind. However, the fatuity inevitable in the male sex assured him that he was not forgotten; he flattered himself on having left a wound in the young girl's heart which would never altogether close, and he felt what was almost remorse. To enjoy the egoist's complete peace, he would have consented to a sacrifice; he would have allowed Rose, not forgetfulness, but melancholy resignation.

"Poor child!... But it had to happen. I hope she won't be too unhappy."

The perusal of M. Hervart's letter left Rose sad and charmed:

"Oh, how he loves me! Oh my darling Xavier, you are ill then?"

And she thought of the fianc e's cruel fate:

"He is ill, and I mayn't go and console him."

She was turning towards her father, when he rose to meet Leonor. It was in the presence of the young man and without paying heed to

him that she imparted M. Hervart's news.

"He is ill, he has had a touch of fever ...."

"Fever?" exclaimed M. Des Boys.

"Yes, and afterwards he's been feeling very weak after it."

"Very weak, yes. What then?"

"What then, why our marriage has to be postponed...."

"Of course."

"I'm very anxious."

"So I should imagine."

"Why shouldn't we go and see him?"

"Do you think it would be any use?"

"It would give him such pleasure."

"Does he ask you to do it?"

"No..."

"Well, then."

"He doesn't dare ask."

"Is he as shy as all that?"

This innocent question made her blush.

"I'll speak of it with your mother," M. Des Boys continued. "Meanwhile, let's get on a little with our architecture."

Rose had been so bored since Xavier's departure, she had been so miserable at his long

silence and now she was feeling so anxious, that she accepted her father's proposal without repugnance.

This time they were dealing with the house. There were urgent repairs to be made and useful ameliorations. As they went round, the architect pointed out the weak spots. A whole plan of restoration formed itself in his head.

The days passed. The masons were soon at work. Rose hardly left Leonor's side.

They had news of M. Hervart more than once through the newspapers, for his rearrangements at the Louvre had drawn upon him the epigrams of the press; but he himself remained silent.

In the circumstances M. Des Boys had resolved to say nothing, to leave time to do its work. Later on, when no dangerous memories of her past love remained in Rose's heart, when she should be married, he would confide her the truth, with a smile.

One day Leonor let fall, from the top of a ladder, a pocketbook from which a flood of papers—sketches, bills, letters, picture postcards—escaped. Rose picked them up, without giving them more than the discreetest

glance, when Martinvast castle caught her eye. At the foot of the keep she found M. Hervart's 'love and kisses'. The blood came suddenly to her eyes; she turned the card over and read: "Mademoiselle Gratienne Leboeuf, Rue du Havre, Honfleur." She looked up; Leonor did not seem to have noticed the incident, and with a rapid gesture she folded up the card and slipped it into her bosom.

"Monsieur Leonor you've dropped your pocket-book."

Leonor descended his ladder and thanked her, while Rose walked away. When she had disappeared he noticed with delight that she had stolen Martinvast Castle; then, whistling, he climbed up once more to see his workmen.

Arrived in her room, Rose sat down, trembling.

"I have made a mistake," she said to herself. "It isn't possible. And how could it have come into Leonor's hands?"

She extracted the card from its hiding-place, unfolded it and looked at it, trembling.

"It's his writing all right."

She still felt doubtful.

"What's the date?"

She deciphered it without difficulty. "Cherbourg, 31 July, 1903."

"The very day we went to the Liais Garden, the day we went up that tower where I almost fainted with love.... I was so happy!"

She began crying. Through her tears she looked at her hands, turning them, looking at all the fingers one after another. She looked as though she were rediscovering them, taking possession of them once more.

Finally she got up and stamped her foot.

"Very well then, I don't love him any more. There! Good-bye, Monsieur Hervart. You deceived me, I shall never forgive you. And I had such confidence in him; I let myself rest so softly on his heart."

She was still crying.

"Now, I am ashamed...."

And she felt her body, from head to feet, as though to take possession of it also. She would have liked to press it, to wring it so that all the caresses, all the kisses which had sunk into her skin, penetrated her veins, thrilled her nerves, might be drained out of it.

In her already perverted innocence she pictured to herself the mutual caresses of Xavier

and this Gratienne woman. She pictured to herself this woman's body and compared it with her own. Was she more beautiful? In what is one woman's body more beautiful than another's? Xavier had loved to caress her, to crush her in his arms. And used he not to say: "How beautiful you are!" A vision, against which she struggled in vain, showed her Xavier kneeling beside Gratienne and covering her with kisses.

A heat mounted in her breast, her heart contracted; she tried to cry out, half got up, clutched at the air with her hands and fell in a faint.

When she came to herself, she felt very tired and very frightened as well. She looked about her, afraid to discover the reality of the painful vision which had overwhelmed her. Reassured, she breathed again.

"It was a dream, only a dream."

But it seemed as though a spring had suddenly been released in her heart. Throughout her whole being there was a sudden change. Under her maiden breast, grief had taken up its home. She felt it as one feels a piece of gravel in one's shoe. It was something ma-

terial which had insinuated itself into the intimacy of her flesh, causing her, not pain, but a sense of discomfort.

At the same time, all that she habitually loved seemed to her without the faintest interest. She looked with an indifferent eye at this room in which she had dreamt so many dreams, this room that she had arranged, decorated with so much pleasure, so much minute care, this cell she had spun and woven herself to sleep in, like a chrysalis, till the awakening of love should come. The great trees of the wood which she could see from her window, and could never see without emotion, appeared to her patches of insignificant greenery: she noticed, for the first time, that their tops were of uneven height and she was irritated by it. There was a sound of hammering; she leaned out of the window and saw two men splitting a block of granite, and for a moment she wondered what for.

"Oh yes, of course, the repairs.... What does it all matter to me? Ah! where are my dear solitary hours in the old house, imprisoned by its ivy and climbing roses! And now Leonor! I wish he'd go away. He's the cause

of it all. If it hadn't been for his clumsiness, I should never have known the existence of this woman.... But how did he come to have that card in his pocket?"

The idea of a voluntary indiscretion did not occur to her. She had never dreamt that Leonor could feel for her any emotion of tenderness. Besides, no man except Xavier had yet existed in her imagination. There was Xavier on the one hand; and on the other there were the others.

Meanwhile she went on reflecting. Love, jealousy, grief quickened her natural intelligence.

"There were several letters in the pocket-book addressed to M. Varin. That's natural. But why this card addressed to that woman? He must know her too. She must have given it to him because of the view of Martinvast Castle, I suppose...."

She could not succeed in reconstructing the adventure of this post-card. There was some mystery about it, which she soon gave up the hope of solving.

"But all I have to do is to ask M. Leonor. How simple! But then I shall have to tell him

that I stole his postal-card, for I have stolen it! It's not very serious, perhaps, but how shall I dare talk to him about it, how shall I, first of all, confess that I had the bad manners to look at his correspondence? Oh! but a post-card, a picture! And then I shall tell him the truth—it fell under my eyes by chance, and if the card had been turned with the address side upwards, I should certainly not have turned it over. . . ."

What was most repugnant to her was the necessity of speaking of Gratienne, for Leonor was not ignorant of her projected marriage with M. Hervart. She remained undecided, and at once she began to suffer once more; for her grief had spared her a little while she was engaged in her deliberations.

She was so wretched and so tired that when the dinner-bell rang she went down without thinking of her dress, without refreshing her eyes, still red and inflamed with crying.

CHAPTER XVII

LEONOR was on the watch for the effect of his cure. He saw that evening that it had succeeded. Rose looked like a shadow, a dolorous shadow. She forgot to eat, and would sit, looking into the void, her hand on her glass; she did not reply to questions unless they were repeated. Finally, it was obvious that she had been crying.

"The remedy has been a painful one," said Leonor to himself. "Will she bear a grudge against the doctor? Perhaps, but the important thing was to scratch out the unblemished image stamped on her heart. That has been done. Across M. Hervart's portrait, in all directions, from top to bottom, from side to side, there is written now: Gratienne, Gratienne, Gratienne.

"Ah, little swallow of the beach, how precious you have been for me! I will give you a golden necklet to thank, in your person, the supreme

goddess of hearts. Hervart, I envied you once; now I am sorry for you. I despise you too. You had found love, ingenuous and absolute, you had found in a single being, the child, the mistress and the wife, you possessed the smile of innocence and the woman's desire —and you have left it all for Gratienne and her caresses! But no, no invectives; worthy civil servant, I thank you. Yes, but am I much better? My Gratienne is a marquise, to be sure, but I have one just the same. No, I have ceased to have a Gratienne. I shall be loyal. I will fling my old burden into the sea, and at your feet, sad maiden, I shall kneel, heart free."

Nothing happened that evening. Rose preserved her silence, and her attitude towards Leonor was the same as at other times. But she had to make a painful effort to preserve her customary amiability. Leonor wondered, deliberated within himself whether he should speak. Might he not question her, with a distracted air, about the post-card of Martinvast? "He had thought it was with the other papers, but he couldn't find it. Perhaps the wind carried it away."

"No, that would be too direct. She may have suspicions; I shall try to destroy them. I should be lost if she had certainties. But I have no doubts. She will come of her own accord, she will speak first. And I shall look as though I didn't understand; she will have to drag out of me one by one a few ambiguous words."

The days passed. Rose remained in the same melancholy state, ruminating her grief. Still she did not speak, and Leonor foresaw the moment, when, his presence being no longer necessary, he would have to take his leave. The operations on the outside of the house were coming to an end, the weather had made digging impossible and Rose had decided that the interior repairs should be put off till the spring.

Meanwhile Leonor began to suffer in his turn. By living in the same house as Rose he had felt the love, that had to begin with been somewhat chimerical, grow and take root within him. From the moment of their first meeting Rose had aroused in him something like a love of love. He had first been moved by the generosity of an innocent heart giving itself with so noble a violence. Next, he had felt that

vague jealousy which all men feel for one another. He had detested M. Hervart, without being able to keep himself from admiring the spectacle of his happiness. The desire to supplant him had naturally tormented Leonor; but it was one of those desires which one feels sure can never be realized and at which, in lucid moments, one shrugs one's shoulders. Since chance and his own good management had so much modified the logical sequence of things to his own profit, Leonor had begun to tell himself that one should never doubt of anything, that anything may happen and that the impossible is probably the most reasonable thing in the world.

In these few weeks he had become more serious than ever, and above all more calm. His egotism began to be capable of long deviations from its straight course. He knew very well that Rose, if he hazarded a confession, would reply with indifference, perhaps with anger. His plan was to risk a few discreet insinuations on some suitable opportunity.

"I might," he reflected, "put on the melancholy, disenchanted look myself. She is ill, and it would be a case of one sick person seek-

ing some comfort in the eyes of a companion in misfortune.... Comedy! But would it be so much of a comedy? Have I found in life all that I looked for? If I had found it, should I be here dreaming of the capture of a young girl? It's my right, to do that, since I love; all means will be fair which put the resources of my imagination at the service of my heart."

But the opportunity of striking a melancholy, disenchanted attitude never presented itself. Rose considered him more and more as an architect, praised his skill in managing the workmen, and paid no attention to his youth, his cleverness or even to the way he looked at her—and his glances were often penetrating. There were moments when he became discouraged. The memory of Hortense came back to him. They had exchanged a few anodyne letters. She called him to her, but in a weak voice, and it was in uncertain terms that he announced his next visit.

"Dying love is always melancholy," he thought. "The poem would have been beautiful if we had said good-bye after Compiègne. We tried to add a verse, and it has been a fail-

ure. It's a pity. But what will become of her? I still feel some curiosity about her."

At other moments he pictured to himself Gratienne and the elegant manner of her posturing; that roused him for a time. But the image of M. Hervart would seem to come and mingle with that of this agreeable young woman, and the charm would be broken.

Rose's arrival would dispel all these visions. He took a great delight in seeing her walk, enjoying, though with no idea of libertinage, the grace of her movements.

Leonor's departure had already been spoken of. One rainy afternoon, Rose decided to speak. She did it very seriously, without attempting to dissimulate her unhappiness. Between the two there followed a conversation which took the tone of friendly confidences.

After long hesitation she put the question for which Leonor had been waiting with so much anxiety. He had forged several anecdotes with which Rose would doubtless have been satisfied; but when the moment came, rather than hesitate and risk inevitable contradictions, he suddenly decided on a certain degree of frankness.

He said: "The card fell into my hands because I myself have also been entertained by this person. M. Hervart, I must tell you, was not there; he did not know and she shall certainly never know. I had no idea myself that he was the intimate friend of the house. That was why his name struck me, appended as it was to 'best love.'"

"It was 'love and kisses.'"

"Of course, I remember now." And he repeated, with an intonation that aggravated the words, and stamped them on the young girl's bruised heart: "Yes, 'love and kisses'. There were a number of picture post-cards addressed to the same person; there were many signed with the same name or an abbreviation: H., Her., Herv. I was bold enough to take one as a souvenir of my visit. And then... and then.... May I say it, Mademoiselle?"

"Say what you like. Nothing can hurt me any more now."

"Very well; I got hold of this card dishonestly, perhaps, but it was because I was thinking of you.... I was thinking that the man to whom you had just given your hand loved another woman and publicly admitted his

love for her. That seemed to me bad; I suffered for you—you whose delicate and generous feelings I had guessed.... Yes, that distressed me and my idea was, by stealing this proof of a wrong action, to let you know of it, if circumstances allowed me."

"Then you dropped your pocket-book on purpose?"

"I confess. I did. And if that method had failed, I should have tried to find another."

"You hurt me a great deal. All the same, I am grateful to you."

She held out her hand; Leonor pressed it respectfully.

"I have given you less pain now than you would have felt later on. It would have been irremediable then."

"Who knows? I might perhaps have forgiven him afterwards. I shall not forgive before."

"I know M. Hervart fairly well," said Leonor, in a slightly hypocritical voice, "but I know that, despite his age, he is capricious. M. Lanfranc is a spiteful gossip and I won't repeat all he told me. I know enough, and from certain sources, to make me congratulate my-

self on what is perhaps an audacious intervention."

"And what about my father? He has agreed to our marriage."

"Your father lives a long way from Paris. He is kind and trustful. No doubt his friend promised him to make you happy, and he believed him."

"I believed him too. Alas! he had begun to make me happy already."

"Oh! his intentions weren't bad. M. Hervart is not a bad man. He is fickle, inconstant, irresolute."

"I see that only too clearly."

"He's an egoist. All men are egoists, for that matter, but there are degrees. Is he capable of loving a woman whole-heartedly, capable of consecrating his life to weaving daily joys for her? And yet what could be a more perfect dream, when one meets in his path a creature who is worthy of it, one who draws to herself not only love but adoration!"

"I suppose that women like that are rare."

"Those who have known one and desert her are very guilty."

"Say rather that they are very much to be

pitied. But not being one of these women, I didn't ask so much."

"You don't know yourself, Mademoiselle. Oh! if only I had been in M. Hervart's place."

"What would have happened?" asked Rose, without the least emotion, without even the least curiosity.

"How I should have loved you!"

"But he loved me a great deal."

"He didn't love you as you should be loved."

"I don't know. How should I know these things. I believed, that was all. I believed in him."

"He was not worthy of you."

"Perhaps it was I who was unworthy of him, since he loves me no more."

"Unworthy of him, you? Don't you know, then, what this woman is?"

"No, and I don't want to know. Oh! I'm not jealous. I'm humiliated. I feel as though I had been beaten. Jealous? No. I have stopped loving and I shall never love again."

"Don't say that."

"Love doesn't come twice."

"But if one is unhappy the first time?"

"One remains unhappy."

"Happiness always has to be looked for. When one looks for it one finds it."

"Happiness falls from heaven one day; then it goes up again and never descends any more."

"Don't say that. You will be happy."

"It's finished."

"You will be happy as soon as you meet someone you really love with all the force of an ardent and devoted heart."

"Don't let's speak of these things. It hurts me."

"I obey you. I will be silent, but not before telling you that that heart is mine."

Rose looked at him with astonished eyes. She seemed not to understand. Leonor, very much moved, got up, walked towards her and said, in a whisper:

"Rose, I love you."

At these words, Rose started, and when Leonor tried to take her hand, she got up and ran away, crying:

"No, no, no, no."

"How stupid I've been," Leonor said to himself, when he was alone. "Does one declare one's love like this? Here am I on a level

with the lowest heroes of novels. Think of declaring one's love, saying, 'I am hot,' to a woman who is cold. What does it mean to her? Words possess eloquence when the ears expect them. If not, they ring false. They only incline hearts which have already abdicated their will."

Leonor was very sincerely in love with Rose; hence he was very unhappy. He imagined, moreover, that M. Hervart was already completely pardoned. Rose was only awaiting some act of humility to give herself to him again.

"She is hurt in her pride. Her heart is happy, if happiness consisting in loving much more than in being loved. It is a painful pleasure, but none the less a pleasure for her to talk of M. Hervart. . . ."

That evening Léonor had no difficulty in putting on a melancholy and disenchanted look. He felt these two emotions to perfection, and Rose, who could not help looking at him, noticed it.

"Can he really be in love with me," she wondered, "——he?"

The next morning, when she woke up, she

asked herself the same dangerous question. Then suddenly, a wave of red mounted to her head. She had just remembered all the amusements into which her own innocence and M. Hervart's perverse good-nature had led her.

"I am dishonoured," she said to herself. "Am I a maiden?"

This was the first time that she had felt any shame in calling to mind the kisses and caresses in which her heart, rather than her body, had felt pleasure. Though she was unconscious of the transference, the pain which she still felt had, without changing its nature, changed its cause.

When Léonor said good-morning she felt herself blushing and immediately turned her head, to discover an imaginary piece of thread on her skirt.

"So it's to-morrow that we shall have to drive you back," said M. Des Boys.

"If the garden isn't arranged before the winter," said Rose, "we shall have to wait till next autumn."

"Obviously," said Leonor; "one can't transplant in the spring. At least, it's a most delicate operation."

"Well then, stay and let's finish it off," said M. Des Boys.

Leonor stayed.

"Since I have made a declaration and it has been successful, I shall now pay my addresses. Can it be that the old methods are the best?"

CHAPTER XVIII

IN those last autumn days, under the rain of dead leaves, they enjoyed delicious hours. Leonor lived attentively, taking care that no single word of his might shock the young girl. Rose, her eyes always sad, answered with cordial politeness. Their words were measured, insignificant, but they were uttered in a voice full of a secret emotion.

They directed the alterations together, giving no orders without consulting one another; and they were soon agreed about everything, for their only desire was to stand together looking at the workmen. They confined themselves to cutting a few useful paths, transplanting a few bushes and arranging the lawns and flower beds.

The decisive gestures in life are almost always the simplest, the most ingenuous. Discovering a few sprigs of violet under a wall, picking them, offering them to her: that was

the act which won for Leonor his first smile from the girl, a smile that was still vague, a smile in which the soul, so long solicited, showed itself for an instant, as though at a window visited at last by the sun.

One day, while they were holding a lilac that was being transplanted, their hands met. Rose withdrew hers without affectation, but a little later she approached it once more and perhaps that tree, as it was wrenched from the earth, felt a thrill of love passing through its sleeping trunk.

Léonor thought of nothing but the charm of his present life; he analysed himself no more; he made no plots or projects; he breathed pure air, he was opening out.

Though less wretched, Rose still suffered. One evening, when she was undressing to go to bed, she called to mind all the liberties she had permitted. No detail was spared her and it was in vain that her body revolted; along her nerves she felt the now shameful shudder of her former voluptuousness. She threw herself into her bed and soon, in the warmth, the imaginary contacts grew more numerous and

precise. Then, losing her head, she yielded and went to sleep in a trance of pleasure.

Accordingly, in the mornings, she was apt to be a little peevish. Leonor seemed, at these moments, to lose all he gained in the afternoons; but he was not disturbed by it. He knew that characters change according to the time of day, as they change according to the season. Happy in being able to hope for everything, he waited without impatience. Exorcising Rose demanded a whole morning of Leonor's company. The sound of his voice, rather than his words, calmed her possessed spirit. She would end by doubting the very existence of the spell from which she had been released and, by the time lunch was over, she was a child smiling at love.

Some evenings the crisis was very intense. Hardly had she entered her room when she seemed to receive a kind of imperious injunction to look at herself in the glass. Standing there, she would press her shoulders feverishly. Then she felt herself lifted up and carried to her bed, at the mercy of the demon of love. At other times the obsession was less malig-

nant and she was able to attempt some resistance. The fall was slow, gradual and sometimes incomplete. She noticed that she had more peace and more strength on the evenings when she had, by her attitude, encouraged Leonor to make some tenderer utterance, and that fact caused her great joy. For she loved her exorcist; like a sick woman full of confidence, she loved her doctor.

Now she appeared more humble and at the same time almost provocative. She allowed her eyes to rest more often and for a longer time on the young man's face. She even came to studying his face when he was looking, and, though she dropped her eyes quickly at the first alarm, Leonor noticed it.

"She loves me, she loves me. Ah! this time she will listen to me, and perhaps she will speak."

But, by dint of loving innocently, Leonor had become shy; and several days passed in the motions of the eyes and heart. Rose derived great consolation from them. One evening, when the obsession had almost left her in peace and she was about to go to sleep victorious, she suddenly saw herself once more in

the drawing room. Leonor was offering her a marvellous flower of a kind she did not recognize. She took it and when she smelt it felt an inexpressible sweetness slowly penetrate her whole being; she was asleep.

She awoke full of joy, a thing that had not happened since the day of her great grief. She was smiling at Leonor before she had even seen him. They met on the stairs. Leonor heard a door slam, the sound of hurrying feet. He drew back to make passage room. It was Rose. Playfully, as she had already allowed him to do, he made as though to bar her way.

"You shan't pass," he said.

"Very well, I won't pass."

And she fell into the open arms that closed at once round her body—a happy prisoner.

"Do you love me, then? At last?"

"Yes, I love you."

Rose never once remembered that it was thus she had fallen into M. Hervart's arms in the staircase of the tower. She forgot in its entirety the first advanture of her poor abused heart and her troubled senses. When M. Hervart's name was pronounced in her presence, it

recalled to her those studious walks at Robinvast, with that old friend of her father's who told her the anecdotes of entomology.

M. Des Boys, as he had resolved, revealed to his daughter what he called the misfortunes of M. Hervart. And so, when she heard that he was to marry Mme Suif, she allowed herself an honest smile of commiseration. That happened in the third year of their marriage; they were spending the season at Grandcamp, where, without knowing her, she often rubbed shoulders with a young woman who had played a decisive part in her history.

Leonor was wandering one morning on this same beach where Gratienne had attracted him; but he was not thinking of Gratienne, who as it happened was looking at him, from a distance, with interest. He was thinking of Hortense, of whose death he had seen the announcement in a local paper; of Hortense, who had written him, on the eve of his marriage, a letter so moving in its proud resignation that it had almost made him weep; of Hortense whom he had loved and who perhaps had died because of his happiness.

When he came back, Rose received him as a

lover is received. She had found in marriage the attentions which her nature demanded. She was happy.

The End