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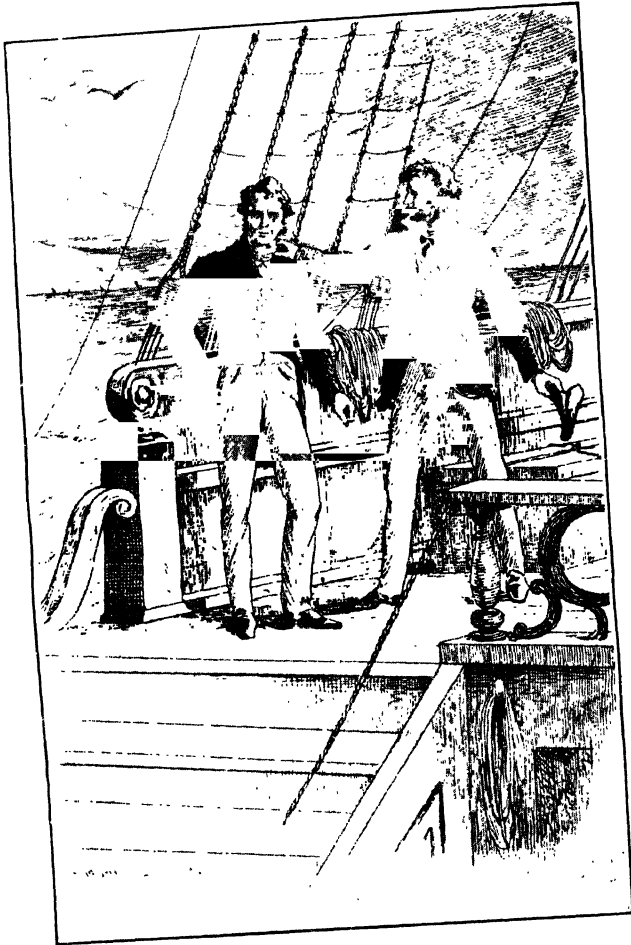
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*“ Have you loved many women in your life? ”  
he asked*

THE WORKS OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY  
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME VII

MODESTE MIGNON

BÉATRIX

COMMISSION IN LUNACY

SEASIDE TRAGEDY

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MODESTE MIGNON

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A SEASIDE TRAGEDY





**MODESTE MIGNON**



## PREFACE

*Modeste Mignon* occupies a very peculiar place in Balzac's works—a place, indeed, which, though for the form's sake more than anything else the author has connected it with the rest of the *Comédie* by some repetition of personages, is almost entirely isolated. I think it has puzzled some devoted Balzacians—so much so, that I have seen it omitted even from lists of his works suitable to “the young person,” in which it surely should have an eminent place. As it is distinctly late—it was written in 1844, and nothing of combined magnitude and first-class importance succeeded it except *Les Parents Pauvres*—it may not impossibly serve as a basis for the expectation that if Balzac, after his re-establishment in Paris as a wealthy personage, had received a new lease of life and vigor instead of a sentence of death, we might have had from him a series of works as different from anything that he had composed before as *Modeste Mignon* is from her sisters.

In saying this, I do not mean to put the book itself in the very first class of its author's work. It is too much of an experiment for that—of an experiment as far as the heroine is concerned, the boldness and novelty of which is likely to be under-estimated by almost any reader, unless he be a literary student who pays strict attention to times and seasons. Even in England (though Charlotte Brontë was planning her at this very time) the willful unconventional heroine was something of a novelty; and when it is remembered how infinitely stricter was the standard of the French *ingénue*, until quite recently, than it ever, even in the depths of the eighteenth century, was in England, the audacity of the conception of *Modeste* may be at least generally appreciated. And it is specially important to observe that though the author puts in Charles Mignon's mouth a vindication of the French process of tying a girl hand and foot and handing her over to the best bidder as a husband, instead of allowing her to choose for herself, *Modeste's* audacity in pursuing the opposite method is crowned with complete success, if not with success

of exactly the kind that she anticipated. Except the case of Savinien de Portenduère and Ursule Mirouët, hers is, so far as I can remember, the only example in the whole *Comédie* of a love-marriage which, as we are told, was wholly successful, without even vacillations on the wife's part or relapses on the husband's. It is true that, with a slight touch of cowardice or concession, Balzac has made Modeste half a German; but this is a very venial bowing in the porch, not the chancel, of the House of Rimmon.

Whether the young lady is as entirely successful and as entirely charming as she is undeniably audacious in conception, is not a point for equally positive pronouncement. Just as it was probably necessary for Balzac, in order not to outrage the feelings of his readers too much, to put that Teutonic strain in Modeste, so he had, in all probability, to exhibit her as capricious, and almost unamiable, in order to attain the fitness of things in connection with so terrible a young person. It is certain that even those who by no means rejoice in pattern heroines, even those who "like them rather wicked," may sometimes think Modeste nasty in her behavior to her family, to Butscha, and, perhaps, to her future husband. She is, for instance, quite wrong about the whip, which she might have refused altogether, but could not with decency accept from one person and refuse from another. But what has just been said will cover this and other petulances and outbursts. So "shoking" a young person (it is very cheerful and interesting to think how much more exactly that favorite *vox nihili* of French speech expresses French than English sentiment) could not but behave "shokingly."

Most of the minor characters are good: Butscha, a difficult and, in any case, slightly improbable personage, is, in his own way, very good indeed. It was probably necessary for Balzac, in turning the usual scheme of the French novel upside down, to provide a rather timid hero for such a masterful heroine; and it must be admitted that Ernest de la Brière is a rather preternaturally good young man. Still, he is not mawkish; and except that he should not have given Modeste quite such a valuable present, he behaves more like a gentleman in the full English sense than any other of Balzac's heroes.

The very full, very elaborate, and very unfavorable portrait of Canalis offers again much scope for difference of mere taste and opinion, without the possibility of laying down a conclusion very positively. Even if tradition were not unanimous on the subject, it would be quite certain that Canalis is a direct presentment of Lamartine, from whom he is so ostentatiously dissociated. And there can, of course, be no two opinions as to the presentment being very distinctly unfavorable—much more so than the earlier introductions of this same Canalis, which are either complimentary or colorless for the most part, though his vanity is sometimes hinted at. I do not know whether Balzac had any private quarrel with the poet, or whether Lamartine's increasing leanings towards Republicanism exasperated the always monarchical novelist. But it is certain that Canalis cuts rather a bad figure here—that Lamartine was actually supposed to have married for money—and that the whole thing has more of the nature of a personal attack than anything else in Balzac, except the outbreak against Sainte-Beuve in *Un Prince de la Bohème*.

Perhaps it should be added that the practice of correspondence between incognitas and men of letters, not unknown in any country, has been rather frequent and famous in France. The chief example is, of course, that interchange of communications between Mérimée and Mlle. Jenny Dacquin, which had such important results for literature, and such not unimportant ones for the parties concerned. Balzac himself rejoiced in a Modeste called Louise, whom, however, he seems never to have seen; and there is little doubt that Lamartine the actual was attacked, as the fictitious Canalis boasts that he was, by scores of such persons. The chief instance I can think of in which such a correspondence led to matrimony was that of Southey and his second wife Caroline Bowles.

The history of *Modeste Mignon* is short and simple. It was first given to the public in the spring and summer of 1844 by the *Journal des Débats*, and before the end of the year it appeared in four volumes, published by Roux and Cassanet. It had here seventy-five chapter divisions, with headings. In 1845, scarcely a twelvemonth after its first appearance, it took its place in the *Comédie*.



## MODESTE MIGNON

*To a Polish Lady.*

*Daughter of an enslaved land, an angel in your love, a demon in your imagination, a child in faith, an old man in experience, a man in brain, a woman in heart, a giant in hope, a mother in suffering, a poet in your dreams, and Beauty itself withal—this work, in which your love and your fancy, your faith, your experience, your suffering, your hopes, and your dreams, are like chains by which hangs a web less lovely than the poetry cherished in your soul—the poetry whose expression when it lights up your countenance is, to those who admire you, what the characters of a lost language are to the learned—this work is yours.*

*De Balzac.*

**I**N the beginning of October 1829, Monsieur Simon-Babylas Latournelle, a notary, was walking up the hill from le Havre to Ingouville arm in arm with his son, and accompanied by his wife. By her, like a page, came the notary's head-clerk, a little hunchback named Jean Butscha. When these four persons—of whom two at least mounted by the same way every evening—reached the turn in the zigzag road (like what the Italians call a Cornice), the notary looked about him to see whether anyone might overhear him from some garden terrace above or below, and as an additional precaution he spoke low.

“Exupère,” said he to his son, “try to carry out in an intelligent manner, without guessing at the meaning, a little maneuver I will explain to you; and even if you have a suspicion, I desire you will fling it into the Styx which every notary or law-student ought to keep handy for other people's secrets. After paying your respects, homage, and devoir to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame



Dumay, and to Monsieur Gobenheim, if he is at the Chalet, when silence is restored, Monsieur Dumay will take you aside; look attentively—I allow you—at Mademoiselle Modeste all the time he is talking to you. My worthy friend will ask you to go out for a walk and return in about an hour, at about nine o'clock with a hurried air; try to seem quite out of breath, then whisper in his ear, but loud enough for Mademoiselle Modeste to hear: 'The young man is coming!'

Exupère was to start for Paris on the following day to begin his law studies. It was this prospect of departure which had led Latournelle to propose to his friend Dumay that his son should play the assistant in the important conspiracy which may be suspected from his instructions.

"Is Mademoiselle Modeste suspected of carrying on an intrigue?" asked Butscha timidly of his mistress.

"Hsh—Butscha!" replied Madame Latournelle, taking her husband's arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of the Registrar of the lower Court, considers herself justified by her birth in describing her family as *parliamentary*. These pretensions account for the efforts made by the lady, whose face is rather too red and rough, to assume the majesty of the tribunal whose verdicts are recorded by her father. She takes snuff, holds herself as stiff as a post, gives herself airs of importance, and looks exactly like a mummy that has been galvanized into life for a moment. She tries to give her sharp voice an aristocratic tone, but she no more succeeds in that than in concealing her defective education. Her social value is indisputable when you look at the caps she wears, bristling with flowers, the false fronts plastered on her temples, and the gowns she chooses. How could the shops get rid of such goods if it were not for such as Madame Latournelle?

This worthy woman's absurdities might have passed almost unremarked, for she was essentially charitable and pious, but that Nature, which sometimes has its little jest by turning out these grotesque creations, gave her the figure of a drum-major so as to display the devices of her provincial mind. She has never been out of le Havre, she believes in the infallibility of le Havre, she buys everything at le Havre, and gets

her dresses there; she speaks of herself as Norman to the finger-tips, she reverences her father, and adores her husband. Little Latournelle was bold enough to marry this woman when she had attained the post-matrimonial age of thirty-three, and they contrived to have a son. As he might anywhere have won the sixty thousand francs which the Registrar had to settle, his unusual courage was set down to a wish to avoid the irruption of the Minotaur, against which his personal attractions would hardly have guaranteed him if he had been so rash as to set his house on fire by bringing home a pretty young wife. The notary had, in fact, simply discerned the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnès—her name was Agnès—and remarked how soon a wife's beauty is a thing of the past to her husband. As to the insignificant youth to whom the Registrar gave his Norman name at the font, Madame Latournelle was so much astonished to find herself a mother at the age of thirty-five years and seven months, that she would even now find milk to suckle him withal if he needed it—the only hyberbole which can give a notion of her maternal mania.

“How handsome my boy is!” she would say to her little friend Modeste Mignon, without any ulterior motive, as she looked at him on their way to church, her beautiful Exupère leading the way.

“He is like you,” Modeste Mignon would reply, as she might have said, “What bad weather!”

This sketch of the woman, a mere accessory figure, seems necessary when it is said that Madame Latournelle had for three years past been the chaperon of the young girl for whom the notary and his friend Dumay were laying one of those snares which, in the *Physiologie du Mariage*, I have called mouse-traps.

As for Latournelle, imagine a good little man, as wily as the purest honesty will allow, but whom every stranger would take for a rogue at first sight of the singular face, to which everyone at le Havre is accustomed. Weak eyes, always red, compel the worthy lawyer to wear green spectacles to protect them. Each eyebrow, thinly marked with down, projects about a line beyond the brown tortoise-shell rim of the glasses, thus making a sort of double arch. If you never happen to

have noticed in some passer-by the effect of these two semicircles, one above the other, and divided by a hollow, you cannot conceive how puzzling such a face may be; especially when this face is pale and haggard, and ends in a point like that of Mephistopheles, which painters have taken from the cat, and this is what Babylas Latournelle is like. Above those vile green spectacles rises a bald skull, with a wig all the more obviously artificial because it seems endowed with motion, and is so indiscreet as to show a few white hairs straggling below it all round, while it never sits straight on the forehead. As we look at this estimable Norman, dressed in black like a beetle, on two legs like pins, and know him to be the most honest soul living, we wonder, but cannot discover, what is the reason of such contradictory physiognomies.

Jean Butscha, a poor, abandoned foundling, of whom the Registrar Labrosse and his daughter had taken charge, had risen to be head-clerk by sheer hard work, and was lodged and fed by his master, who gave him nine hundred francs a year. With no appearance of youth, and almost a dwarf, he had made Modeste his idol; he would have given his life for her. This poor creature, his eyes, like two slow matches under thickened eyelids, marked by the smallpox, crushed by a mass of woolly hair, encumbered by his huge hands, had lived under the gaze of pity from the age of seven. Is not this enough to account for him in every way? Silent, reserved, exemplary in his conduct, and religious, he wandered through the vast expanse marked on the map of the realm of Love, as Love without Hope, the barren and sublime wilderness of Longing. Modeste had nicknamed this grotesque clerk "The Mysterious Dwarf." This led Butscha to read Walter Scott's romance, and he said to Modeste—

"Would you like to have a rose from your Mysterious Dwarf in case of danger?"

Modeste hurled the soul of her adorer down into its mud hovel again by one of the terrible looks which young women fling at men whom they do not like. Butscha had called himself *le clerc obscure* (the obscure clerk), not knowing that the pun dated back to the origin of coats-of-arms; but he, like his master's wife, had never been away from le Havre.

It is perhaps necessary, for the benefit of those who do not know that town, to give a word of explanation as to whither the Latournelle family were bound, the head-clerk evidently being included. Ingouville is to le Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill with the town spread at its foot; with this difference, however—that the sea and the Seine surround the town and the hill; that le Havre is permanently limited by inclosing fortifications; and finally that the mouth of the river, the port and the docks, form a scene quite unlike that offered by the fifty thousand houses of Paris.

At the foot of Montmartre an ocean of slates displays its rigid blue waves; at Ingouville you look down on what might be moving roofs stirred by the wind. This high ground, which, from Rouen to the sea, follows the course of the river, leaving a wider or narrower margin between itself and the water, contains treasures of picturesque beauty with its towns, its ravines, its valleys, and its meadows, and rose to immense value at Ingouville after 1818, from which year dates the prosperity of le Havre. This hamlet became the Auteuil, the Ville-d'Avray, the Montmorency of the merchants, who built themselves terraced villas on this amphitheater, to breathe the sea air sweetened by the flowers of their magnificent gardens. These bold speculators rest there from the fatigues of the counting-house, and the atmosphere of the closely packed houses, with no space between them—often not even a courtyard, the inevitable result of the growth of the population, the unyielding belt of the ramparts and the expansion of the docks.

And, indeed, how dreary is the heart of the town, how glad is Ingouville! The law of social development has made the suburb of Graville sprout into life like a mushroom; it is larger now than le Havre itself, clinging to the foot of the slope like a serpent. Ingouville, on the ridge, has but one street; and, as in all such places, the houses looking over the Seine have an immense advantage over those on the opposite side of the road, from which the view is shut out, though they stand like spectators, on tiptoe, to peep over the roofs. Here, however, as everywhere else, compromises have been exacted.

Some of the houses perched on the top occupy a superior position, or enjoy a right of view which compels their neighbor to keep his buildings below a certain height. Then the broken rocky soil has cuttings here and there for roads leading up the amphitheater, and through these dips, some of the plots get a glimpse of the town, the river, or the sea. Though it is not precipitous, the high ground ends rather suddenly in a cliff; from the top of the street, which zigzags up the steep slope, coombes are visible where villages are planted: Saint-Adresse, two or three Saints-who-knows-who, and coves where the sea roars. This side of Ingouville, almost deserted, is in striking contrast to the handsome villas that overlook the Seine valley. Are the gales a foe to vegetation? Do the merchants shrink from the expense of gardening on so steep a slope? Be this as it may, the traveler by steamboat is startled at finding the coast so bare and rugged to the west of Ingouville—a beggar in rags next to a rich man sumptuously clothed and perfumed.

In 1829, one of the last houses towards the sea—now, no doubt, in the middle of Ingouville—was called, perhaps is still called, the Chalet. It had been originally a gatekeeper's lodge, with a plot of garden in front. The owner of the villa to which it belonged—a house with a paddock, gardens, an aviary, hothouses, and meadows—had a fancy to bring this lodge into harmony with the splendor of his residence, and had it rebuilt in the style of an English cottage. He divided it by a low wall from the lawn, graced with flowers, borders, and the terrace of the villa, and planted a hedge close to the wall to screen it. Behind this cottage, called the Chalet in spite of all he could do, lie the kitchen garden and orchards. This Chalet—a chalet without cows or dairy—has no fence from the road but a paling, of which the wood has become invisible under a luxuriant hedge.

Now, on the other side of the road, the opposite house has a similar paling and hedge. Being built under special conditions, it allows the town to be seen from the Chalet.

This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the owner of the villa. And this is why. The creator of this residence, where every detail loudly proclaimed, "Here mil-

lions are displayed!" had extended his grounds into the country solely, as he said, not to have his gardeners in his pocket. As soon as it was finished, the Chalet could only be inhabited by a friend.

Monsieur Mignon, the first owner, was greatly attached to his cashier, and this story will prove that Dumay fully returned the feeling; he therefore offered him this little home. Dumay, a stickler for formalities, made his master sign a lease for twelve years at three hundred francs a year; and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying, "Consider, my dear Dumay, you are binding yourself to live with me for twelve years."

In consequence of events to be here related, the estates of Monsieur Mignon, formerly the richest merchant in le Havre, were sold to Vilquin, one of his opponents on 'Change. In his delight at taking possession of the famous Villa Mignon, the purchaser forgot to ask for this lease to be canceled. Dumay, not to hinder the sale, would at that time have signed anything Vilquin might have required; but when once the sale was completed, he stuck to his lease as to a revenge. He stayed in Vilquin's pocket, in the heart of the Vilquin family, watching Vilquin, annoying Vilquin, in short, Vilquin's gad-fly. Every morning, at his window, Vilquin felt a surge of violent vexation as he saw this gem of domestic architecture, this Chalet which had cost sixty thousand francs, and which blazed like a ruby in the sunshine.

An almost exact comparison! The architect had built the cottage of the finest red bricks, pointed with white. The window frames are painted bright green, and the timbers a yellow brown. The roof projects several feet. A pretty fretwork balcony adorns the first floor, and a veranda stands out like a glass cage from the middle of the front. The ground-floor consists of a pretty drawing-room, and a dining-room divided by the bottom landing of the stairs, which are of wood designed and decorated with elegant simplicity. The kitchen is at the back of the dining-room, and behind the drawing-room is a small room which, at this time, was used by Monsieur and Madame Dumay as their bedroom. On the first floor the architect has planned two large bedrooms, each with

a dressing-room, the veranda serving as a sitting-room; and above these, in the roof, which looks like two cards leaning against each other, are two servants' rooms, each with a dormer window, attics, but fairly spacious.

Vilquin had the meanness to build a wall on the side next the kitchen garden and orchard. Since this act of vengeance, the few square yards secured to the Chalet by the lease are like a Paris garden. The outbuildings, constructed and painted to match the Chalet, back against the neighboring grounds.

The interior of this pleasant residence harmonizes with the exterior. The drawing-room, floored with polished iron-wood, is decorated with a marvelous imitation of Chinese lacquer. Myriad-colored birds, and impossibly green foliage, in fantastic Chinese drawing, stand out against a black background, in panels with gilt frames. The dining-room is completely fitted with pine-wood carved and fretted, as in the high-class peasants' houses in Russia. The little ante-room, formed by the landing, and the staircase are painted like old oak to represent Gothic decoration. The bedrooms, hung with chintz, are attractive by their costly simplicity. That in which the cashier and his wife slept is wainscoted, like the cabin of a steamship. These shipowners' vagaries account for Vilquin's fury. This ill-starred purchaser wanted to lodge his son-in-law and his daughter in the Cottage. This plan, being known to Dumay, may subsequently explain his Breton obstinacy.

The entrance to the Chalet is through a trellised iron gate, with lance-heads, standing some inches above the paling and the hedge. The little garden, of the same width as the pompous lawn beyond, was just now full of flowers—roses, dahlias, and the choicest and rarest products of the hothouse flora; for another subject of grievance to Vilquin was that the pretty little hothouse, Madame's hothouse as it was called, belongs to the Chalet, and divides the Chalet from the Villa—or connects them, if you like to say so. Dumay indemnified himself for the cares of his place by caring for the conservatory, and its exotic blossoms were one of Modeste's chief pleasures. The billiard-room of Vilquin's villa, a sort of passage room, was formerly connected with this con-

servatory by a large turret-shaped aviary, but after the wall was built which blocked out the view of the orchard, Dumay bricked up the door.

“Wall for wall!” said he.

“You and Dumay have both gone to the wall!” Vilquin’s acquaintance on ’Change threw in his teeth; and every day the envied speculator was hailed with some new jest.

In 1827 Vilquin offered Dumay six thousand francs a year and ten thousand francs in compensation if he would cancel the lease; the cashier refused, though he had but a thousand crowns laid by with Gobenheim, a former clerk of his master’s. Dumay is indeed a Breton whom fate has planted out in Normandy. Imagine the hatred for his tenants worked up in Vilquin, a Norman with a fortune of three million francs. What high treason to wealth to dare prove to the rich the impotence of gold! Vilquin, whose depression made him the talk of le Havre, had first offered Dumay the absolute freehold of another pretty house, but Dumay again refused. The town was beginning to wonder at this obstinacy, though many found a reason for it in the statement “Dumay is a Breton.”

In fact, the cashier thought that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon would be too uncomfortable anywhere else. His two idols dwelt here in a temple worthy of them, and at least had the benefit of this sumptuous cottage, where a dethroned king might have kept up the majesty of his surroundings, a kind of decorum which is often lacking to those who have fallen. The reader will not be sorry perhaps to have made acquaintance with Modeste’s home and habitual companions; for, at her age, persons and things influence the future as much as character does, if indeed the character does not derive from them certain ineffaceable impressions.

By the Latournelles’ manner as they went into the Chalet, a stranger might have guessed that they came there every evening.

“Already here, sir?” said the notary, on finding in the drawing-room a young banker of the town, Gobenheim, a relation of Gobenheim-Keller, the head of the great Paris house. This young fellow, who was lividly pale—one of



those fair men with black eyes, in whose fixed gaze there is something fascinating—who was as sober in speech as in habits, dressed in black, strongly built, though as thin as a consumptive patient, was a constant visitor to his former master's family and the cashier's house, far less from affection than from interest; whist was played there at two sous a point, and evening dress was not insisted on; he took nothing but a few glasses of *eau sucrée*, and need offer no civilities in return. By his apparent devotion to the Mignons he got credit for a good heart; and it excused him from going into society in le Havre, from useless expenditure, and disturbing the arrangements of his domestic life. This youthful devotee of the Golden Calf went to bed every evening at half-past ten, and rose at five in the morning. Also, being certain of secrecy in Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could analyze in their presence various knotty questions, benefit by the notary's gratuitous advice, and reduce the gossip on 'Change to its true value. This sucking gold-eater (Gobe-or, a witticism of Butscha's) was of the nature of the substances known to chemistry as absorbents. Ever since disaster had overwhelmed the house of Mignon, to which he had been apprenticed by the Kellers to learn the higher branches of maritime trade, no one at the Chalet had ever asked him to do a single thing, not even a simple commission; his answer was known beforehand. This youth looked at Modeste as he might have examined a penny lithograph.

"He is one of the pistons of the huge machine called Trade," said poor Butscha, whose wit betrayed itself by little ironies, timidly uttered.

The four Latournelles greeted, with the utmost deference, an old lady dressed in black, who did not rise from the armchair in which she sat, for both her eyes were covered with the yellow film produced by cataract. Madame Mignon may be painted in a sentence. She attracted attention at once by the august expression of those mothers whose blameless life is a challenge to the strokes of fate, though fate has taken them as a mark for its shafts, who form the large class of Niobes. Her white wig, well curled and well put

on, became her cold white face, like those of the burgo-masters' wives painted by Mirevelt. The extreme neatness of her dress—velvet boots, a lace collar, a shawl put on straight—bore witness to Modeste's tender care for her mother.

When a minute's silence—as predicted by the notary—reigned in the pretty room, Modeste, seated by her mother, for whom she was embroidering a kerchief, was for a moment the center of all eyes. This inquisitiveness, concealed under the commonplace questions always asked by callers, even those who meet every day, might have betrayed the little domestic plot against the girl, even to an indifferent person; but Gobenheim, more than indifferent, noticed nothing; he lighted the candles on the card-table. Dumay's attitude made the situation a terrible one for Butscha, for the Latournelles, and, above all, for Madame Dumay, who knew that her husband was capable of shooting Modeste's lover as if he were a mad dog. After dinner, the cashier had gone out for a walk, taking with him two magnificent Pyrenean dogs, whom he suspected of treason, and had, therefore, left with a farmer, formerly a tenant of Monsieur Mignon's; then, a few minutes before the Latournelles had come in, he had brought his pistols from their place by his bed, and had laid them on the chimney-shelf, without letting Modeste see it. The young girl paid no attention to all these arrangements—strange, to say the least of it.

Though short, thick-set, and battered, with a low voice, and an air of listening to his own words, this Breton, formerly a lieutenant in the Guard, has determination and presence of mind so plainly stamped on his features, that, in twenty years, no man in the army had ever tried to make game of him. His eyes, small and calmly blue, are like two specks of steel. His manners, the expression of his face, his mode of speech, his gait, all suit his short name of Dumay. His strength, which is well known, secures him against any offense. He can kill a man with a blow of his fist; and, in fact, achieved this doughty deed at Botzen, where he found himself in the rear of his company, without any weapon, and face to face with a Saxon.

At this moment, the man's set but gentle countenance was sublimely tragical; his lips, as pale as his face, betrayed convulsive fury subdued by Breton determination; his brow was damp with slight perspiration, visible to all, and understood to be a cold moisture. The notary knew that the upshot of all this might be a scene in an assize court. In fact, the cashier was playing a game for Modeste's sake, where honor, fidelity, and feelings of far more importance than any social ties, were at stake; and it was the outcome of one of those compacts of which, in the event of fatal issues, none but God can be the judge. Most dramas lie in the ideas we form of things. The events which seem to us dramatic are only such as our soul turns to tragedy or comedy, as our own nature tends.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, charged with keeping watch over Modeste, both had an indescribable artificial manner, a quaver in their voice, which the object of their suspicions did not notice, she seemed so much absorbed by her work. Modeste laid each strand of cotton with an accuracy that might be the envy of any embroiderer. Her face showed the pleasure she derived from the satin stitch petal that put the finish to a flower. The hunchback, sitting between Madame Latournelle and Gobenheim, was swallowing tears and wondering how he could get round to Modeste, and whisper two words of warning in her ear. Madame Latournelle, by placing herself in front of Madame Mignon, had cut off Modeste, with the diabolical ingenuity of a pious prude. Madame Mignon, silent, blind, and whiter than her usual pallor, plainly betrayed her knowledge of the ordeal to which the girl was to be subjected. Now, at the last moment, perhaps she disapproved of the stratagem, though deeming it necessary. Hence her silence. She was weeping in her heart. Exupère, the trigger of the trap, knew nothing whatever of the piece in which chance had cast him for a part. Gobenheim was as indifferent as Modeste herself seemed to be—a consequence of his nature.

To a spectator in the secret, the contrast between the utter ignorance of one-half of the party, and the tremulous tension of the others, would have been thrilling. In these days, more

than ever, novel-writers deal largely in such effects; and they are in their rights, for nature has at all times outdone their skill. In this case, as you will see, social nature—which is nature within nature—was allowing itself the pleasure of making fact more interesting than romance, just as torrents produce effects forbidden to painters, and achieve marvels by arranging or polishing stones so that architects and sculptors are amazed.

It was eight o'clock. At this season of the year it is the hour of the last gleam of twilight. That evening the sky was cloudless, the mild air caressed the earth, flowers breathed their fragrance, the grinding gravel could be heard under the feet of persons returning from their walk. The sea shone like a mirror.

There was so little wind that the candles on the table burned with a steady flame though the windows were half open. The room, the evening, the house—what a setting for the portrait of this young creature, who at the moment was being studied by her friends with the deep attention of an artist gazing at *Margherita Doni*, one of the glories of the Pitti palace. Was Modeste, a flower enshrined like that of Catullus, worthy of all these precautions?—You have seen the cage: this is the bird.

At the age of twenty, slender and delicately made, like one of the Sirens invented by English painters to grace a Book of Beauty, Modeste, like her mother before her, bears the engaging expression of a grace little appreciated in France, where it is called sentimentality, though among the Germans it is the poetry of the heart suffusing the surface, and displayed in affectation by simpletons, in exquisite manners by sensible girls. Her most conspicuous feature was her pale gold hair, which classed her with the women called, no doubt in memory of Eve, *blondes celestes*, heavenly fair, whose sheeny skin looks like silk paper laid over the flesh, shivering in the winter or reveling in the sunshine of a look, and making the hand envious of the eye. Under this hair, as light as marabout feathers, and worn in ringlets, the brow, so purely formed that it might have been drawn by compasses, is reserved and calm to placidity, though bright with thought;

but when or where could a smoother one be found, or more transparently frank? It seems to have a luster like pearl. Her eyes, of grayish blue, as clear as those of a child, have all a child's mischief and innocence, in harmony with the arch of eyebrows scarcely outlined, as lightly touched in as those painted in Chinese faces. This playful innocence is accentuated by nacreous tones, with blue veins round the eyes and on the temples, a peculiarity of those delicate complexions. Her face, of the oval so often seen in Raphael's Madonnas, is distinguished by the cool, maidenly flush of her cheeks, as tender as a China rose, on which the long lashes of her transparent eyelids cast a play of light and shade. Her throat, bent over her work, and slender to fragility, suggests the sweeping lines dear to Leonardo. A few freckles, like the patches of the past century, show that Modeste is a daughter of earth, and not one of the creations seen in dreams by the Italian School of Angelico. Lips, full but finely curved, and somewhat satirical in expression, betray a love of pleasure. Her shape, pliant without being frail, would not scare away motherhood, like that of girls who seek to triumph through the unhealthy pressure of stays. Buckram, steel, and stay-lace never improved or formed such serpentine lines of elegance, resembling those of a young poplar swayed by the wind. A pearl-gray dress, long in the waist, and trimmed with cherry-colored gimp, accentuated the pure bust and covered the shoulders, still somewhat thin, over a deep muslin tucker, which betrayed only the outline of the curves where the bosom joins the shoulders. At the sight of this countenance, at once vague and intelligent, with a singular touch of determination given to it by a straight nose with rosy nostrils and firmly-cut outlines—a countenance where the poetry of an almost mystical brow was belied by the voluptuous curve of the mouth—where, in the changing depths of the eyes, candor seemed to fight for the mastery with the most accomplished irony—an observer might have thought that this young girl, whose quick ear caught every sound, whose nose was open to the fragrance of the blue flower of the ideal, must be the arena of a struggle between the poetry that plays round the daily rising of

the sun and the labors of the day, between fancy and reality. Modeste was both curious and modest, knowing her fate, and purely chaste, the virgin of Spain rather than of Raphael.

She raised her head on hearing Dumay say to Exupère, "Come here, young man," and seeing them talk together in a corner of the room, she fancied it was about some commission for Paris. She looked at the friends who surrounded her as if astonished at their silence, and exclaimed with a perfectly natural air—

"Well, are you not going to play?" pointing to the green table that Madame Latournelle called the altar.

"Let us begin," said Dumay, after dismissing Exupère.

"Sit there, Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle, placing the table between the clerk and the group formed by Madame Mignon and her daughter.

"And you—come here," said Dumay to his wife, desiring her to stay near him.

Madame Dumay, a little American of six-and-thirty, secretly wiped away her tears; she was devoted to Modeste, and dreaded a catastrophe.

"You are not lively this evening," said Modeste.

"We are playing," said Gobenheim, sorting his hand.

However interesting the situation may seem, it will be far more so when Dumay's position with regard to Modeste is explained. If the brevity of the style makes the narrative dry, this will be forgiven for the sake of hastening to the end of this scene, and of the need, which rules all dramas, for setting forth the argument.

Dumay—Anne-François-Bernard—born at Vannes, went as a soldier in 1799, joining the army of Italy. His father, a president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, had distinguished himself by so much vigor that the country was too hot to hold the son when his father, a second-rate lawyer, perished on the scaffold after the 9th of Thermidor. His mother died of grief; and Anne, having sold everything he possessed, went off to Italy at the age of twenty-two, just as our armies were defeated. In the department of the Var he met

a young man who, for similar reasons, was also in search of glory, thinking the battlefield less dangerous than Provence.

Charles Mignon, the last survivor of the family to whom Paris owes the street and the hôtel built by Cardinal Mignon, had for his father a crafty man, who wished to save his estate of la Bastie, a nice little fief under the Counts of Provence, from the clutches of the Revolution. Like all nervous people in those days, the Comte de la Bastie, now Citizen Mignon, thought it healthier to cut off other heads than to lose his own. This supposed terrorist vanished on the 9th of Thermidor, and was thenceforth placed on the list of *émigrés*. The fief of la Bastie was sold. The pepper-caster towers of the dishonored château were razed to the ground. Finally, Citizen Mignon himself, discovered at Orange, was killed with his wife and children, with the exception of Charles Mignon, whom he had sent in search of a refuge in the department of the Hautes-Alpes. Charles, stopped by these shocking tidings, awaited quieter times in a valley of Mont Genève. There he lived till 1799 on a few louis his father had put into his hands at parting. At last, when he was three-and-twenty, with no fortune but his handsome person—the southern beauty which, in its perfection, is a glorious thing, the type of Antinous, Hadrian's famous favorite—he resolved to stake his Provençal daring on the red field of war, regarding his courage as a vocation, as did many another. On his way to headquarters at Nice he met the Breton.

The two infantrymen, thrown together by the similarity of their destiny and the contrast of their nature, drank of the torrent from the same cup, divided their allowance of biscuit, and were sergeants by the time peace was signed after the battle of Marengo.

When war broke out again, Charles Mignon got leave to be transferred to the cavalry, and then lost sight of his comrade. The last of the Mignons of la Bastie was, in 1812, an officer of the Legion of Honor, and Major of a cavalry regiment, hoping to be reinstated as Comte de la Bastie and made Colonel by the Emperor. Then, taken prisoner by the Russians, he was sent with many more to

Siberia. His traveling companion was a poor lieutenant, in whom he recognized Anne Dumay, with no decoration, brave indeed, but hapless, like the millions of rank-and-file with worsted epaulettes, the web of men on which Napoleon painted the picture of his Empire. In Siberia, to pass the time, the lieutenant-colonel taught his comrade arithmetic and writing, for education had seemed unimportant to his Scævola parent. Charles found in his first traveling companion one of those rare hearts to whom he could pour out all his griefs while confiding all his joys.

The Provençal had, ere this, met the fate which awaits every handsome young fellow. In 1804, at Frankfort-on-the-Main, he was adored by Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and married her with all the more enthusiasm because she was rich, one of the beauties of the town, and he was still only a lieutenant with no fortune but the most uncertain prospects of a soldier of that time. Old Wallenrod, a decayed German baron—bankers are always barons—was enchanted to think that the handsome lieutenant was the sole representative of the Mignons of la Bastie, and approved the affections of the fair Bettina, whom a painter—for there was a painter at Frankfort—had taken for his model of an ideal figure of Germany. Wallenrod, who already thought of his grandsons as Comtes de la Bastie-Wallenrod, invested in the French funds a sufficient sum to secure to his daughter thirty thousand francs a year. This dower made a very small hole in his coffers, seeing how small a capital was required. The Empire, following a practice not uncommon among debtors, rarely paid the half-yearly dividends. Charles, indeed, was somewhat alarmed at this investment, for he had not so much faith in the Imperial Eagle as the German baron had. The phenomenon of belief, or of admiration, which is only a transient form of belief, can hardly exist in illicit companionship with the idol. An engineer dreads the machine which the traveler admires, and Napoleon's officers were the stokers of his locomotive when they were not the fuel. Baron von Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild then promised to help the young people. Charles loved Bettina Wallenrod as much as she loved him, and that is saying



a great deal; but when a Provençal is fired, anything seems natural to him in the matter of feeling. How could he help worshipping a golden-haired woman who had stepped out of a picture by Albert Dürer, an angel of good temper, with a fortune famous in Frankfort?

So Charles had four children, of whom only two daughters were alive at the time when he poured out his sorrows on the Breton's heart. Without knowing them, Dumay was fond of these two little girls, the effect of the sympathy so well understood by Charlet, who shows us the soldier as fatherly to every child. The elder, named Bettina Caroline, was born in 1805; the second, Marie Modeste, in 1808. The unhappy lieutenant-colonel, having had no news of those he loved, came back on foot in 1814, with the lieutenant for his companion, all across Russia and Prussia. The two friends, for whom any difference of rank had ceased to exist, arrived at Frankfort just as Napoleon landed at Cannes. Charles found his wife at Frankfort, but in mourning; she had had the grief of losing the father who adored her, and who longed always to see her smiling, even by his deathbed. Old Wallenrod did not survive the overthrow of the Empire. At the age of seventy-two he had speculated largely in cotton, believing still in Napoleon's genius, and not knowing that genius is as often the slave of events as their master.

The last of the Wallenrods, the true Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, had bought almost as many bales of cotton as the Emperor had sacrificed men during his tremendous campaign in France.

"I am tying in cotton" (I am dying in clover), said this father to his daughter, for he was of the Goriot species, trying to beguile her of her grief, which terrified him, "and I tie owing nothing to nobody,"—and the Franco-German died struggling with the French language his daughter loved.

Charles Mignon, happy to have saved his wife and daughters from this double shipwreck, now returned to Paris, where the Emperor made him Lieutenant-Colonel of the Cuirassiers of the Guard, and Commander of the Legion of Honor. The Colonel at last was General and Count, after Napoleon's first success; but his dream was drowned in torrents of blood at

Waterloo. He was slightly wounded, and retired to the Loire, leaving Tours before the troops were disbanded.

In the spring of 1816 Charles realized the capital of his thirty thousand francs a year, which gave him about four hundred thousand francs, and decided on going to make his fortune in America, leaving a country where persecution already pressed hardly on Napoleon's soldiers. He went from Paris to le Havre, accompanied by Dumay, whose life he had saved in one of the frequent chances of war, by taking him behind him on his horse in the confusion that ended the day of Waterloo. Dumay shared the Colonel's opinions and despondency. Charles, to whom the Breton clung like a dog, for the poor infantryman worshiped the two little girls, thought that Dumay's habits of obedience and discipline, his honesty and his attachment, would make him a servant not less faithful than useful. He therefore proposed to him to take service under him in private life. Dumay was very happy to find himself adopted into a family with whom he hoped to live like mistletoe on an oak.

While awaiting an opportunity of sailing, choosing among the ships, and meditating on the chances offered in the various ports of their destination, the Colonel heard rumors of the splendid fortunes that the peace held in store for le Havre. While listening to a discussion between two of the natives, he saw a means of making his fortune, and set up forthwith as a shipowner, a banker, and a country gentleman. He invested two hundred thousand francs in land and houses, and freighted a ship for New York with a cargo of French silks bought at Lyons at a low figure. Dumay sailed on the vessel as his agent. While the Colonel was settling himself with his family in the handsomest house in the Rue Royale, and studying the science of banking with all the energy and prodigious acumen of a Provençal, Dumay made two fortunes, for he returned with a cargo of cotton bought for a mere song. This transaction produced an enormous capital for Mignon's business. He then purchased the villa at Ingouville, and rewarded Dumay by giving him a small house in the Rue Royale.

The worthy Breton had brought back with him from New

York with his bales a pretty little wife, who had been chiefly attracted by his nationality as a Frenchman. Miss Grummer owned about four thousand dollars, twenty thousand francs, which Dumay invested in his Colonel's business. Dumay, now the *alter ego* of the shipowner, very soon learned book-keeping, the science which, to use his phrase, distinguished the sergeant-majors of trade. This guileless soldier, whom fortune had neglected for twenty years, thought himself the happiest man in the world when he saw himself master of a house—which his employer's munificence furnished very prettily—of twelve hundred francs a year of interest on his capital, and of three thousand six hundred francs in salary. Never in his dreams had Lieutenant Dumay hoped for such prosperity; but he was even happier in feeling himself the hub of the richest merchant's house in le Havre.

Madame Dumay had the sorrow of losing all her children at their birth, and the disasters of her last confinement left her no hope of having any; she therefore attached herself to the two Mignon girls as affectionately as Dumay, who would not have loved his own children so well. Madame Dumay, the child of agriculturists, accustomed to a thrifty life, found two thousand four hundred francs enough for herself and her housekeeping. Thus, year by year, Dumay put two thousand and some hundred francs into the Mignon concern. When the master made up the annual balance, he added to the cashier's credit a bonus in proportion to the business done. In 1824 the sum to the cashier's account amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. Then it was that Charles Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, a title that was never mentioned, crowned his cashier's joy by giving him a lease of the Chalet, where we now find Modeste and her mother.

Madame Mignon's deplorable condition had its cause in the catastrophe to which Charles's absence was due, for her husband had left her a still handsome woman. It had taken three years of sorrow to destroy the gentle German lady, but it was one of those sorrows which are like a worm lying at the heart of a fine fruit. The sum-total of her woes is easily stated: Two children who died young had stamped a double *ci-gît* on a soul which could never forget. Charles's

captivity in Siberia had been to this loving heart a daily death. The disasters of the great Wallenrod house, and the unhappy banker's death on his empty money-bags, coming in the midst of Bettina's suspense about her husband, was a final blow. The joy of seeing him again almost killed this German floweret. Then came the second overthrow of the Empire, and their plans for emigration had been like relapses of the same fit of fever.

At last ten years of constant prosperity, the amusements of her home-life, the handsomest house in le Havre, the dinners, balls, and entertainments given by the successful merchant, the magnificence of the Villa Mignon, the immense respect and high esteem enjoyed by her husband, with the undivided affection of this man, who responded to perfect love by love equally perfect,—all these had reconciled the poor woman to life.

Then, at the moment when all her doubts were at rest, and she looked forward to a calm evening after her stormy day, a mysterious disaster, buried in the heart of the double household, and presently to be related, came like a summons from misfortune. In 1826, in the midst of a party, when all the town was ready to return Charles Mignon as its deputy, three letters, from New York, London, and Paris, came like three hammer-strokes on the glass house of Prosperity. In ten minutes ruin swooped down with vulture's wings on this unheard-of good fortune, like the frost on the Grande Armée in 1812. In one night which he spent with Dumay over the books, Charles Mignon was prepared for the worst. Everything he possessed, not excepting the furniture, would avail to pay everybody.

"Le Havre," said the Colonel to the Lieutenant, "shall never see me in the mud. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent.—"

"At three, Colonel."

"At nothing, then," said Charles peremptorily. "I make you my partner in my new enterprise. The *Modeste*, which is no longer mine, sails to-morrow; the captain takes me with him. You—I place you in charge of my wife and daughter. I shall never write. No news is good news."

Dumay, still but a lieutenant, had not asked his Colonel by a word what his purpose was.

"I suspect," said he to Latournelle with a knowing air, "that the Colonel has laid his plans."

On the following morning, at break of day, he saw his master safe on board the good ship *Modeste*, bound for Constantinople. Standing on the vessel's poop, the Breton said to the Provençal—

"What are your last orders, Colonel?"

"That no man ever goes near the Chalet!" cried the father, with difficulty restraining a tear. "Dumay, guard my last child as a bull-dog might. Death to anyone who may try to tempt my second daughter! Fear nothing, not even the scaffold. I would meet you there!"

"Colonel, do your business in peace. I understand. You will find Mademoiselle Modeste as you leave her, or I shall be dead! You know me, and you know our two Pyrenean dogs. No one shall get at your daughter. Forgive me for using so many words."

The two soldiers embraced as men who had learnt to appreciate each other in the heart of Siberia.

The same day the *Courrier du Havre* published this terrible, simple, vigorous, and honest leading paragraph:—

"The house of Charles Mignon has suspended payment, but the undersigned liquidators pledge themselves to pay all the outstanding debts. Bearers of bills at date can at once discount them. The value of the landed estate will completely cover current accounts.

"This notice is issued for the honor of the house, and to prevent any shock to general credit on the Havre Exchange.

"Monsieur Charles Mignon sailed this morning in the *Modeste* for Asia Minor, having left a power of attorney to enable us to realize every form of property, even landed estate.

"DUMAY, liquidator for the banking account.

"LATOURNELLE, notary, liquidator for the houses and land in town and country.

"GOBENHEIM, liquidator for commercial bills."

Latournelle owed his prosperity to Monsieur Mignon's kindness; he had, in 1817, lent the notary a hundred thousand francs to buy the best business in le Havre. The poor lawyer, without any pecuniary resources, was by that time forty years old; he had been a head-clerk for ten years, and looked forward to being a clerk for the rest of his days. He was the only man in le Havre whose devotion could compare with Dumay's, for Gobenheim took advantage of this bankruptcy to carry on Mignon's connection and business, which enabled him to start his little banking concern. While universal regret was expressed on 'Change, on the Quays, and in every home; while praises of a blameless, honorable, and beneficent man were on every lip, Latournelle and Dumay, as silent and as busy as emnets, were selling, realizing, paying, and settling up. Vilquin gave himself airs of generosity, and bought the villa, the town-house, and a farm, and Latournelle took advantage of this first impulse to extract a good price from Vilquin.

Everyone wanted to call on Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, but they had obeyed Charles and taken refuge at the Chalet the very morning of his departure, of which at the first moment they knew nothing. Not to be shaken in his purpose by their grief, the courageous banker had kissed his wife and daughter in their sleep. Three hundred cards were left at the door. A fortnight later the most complete oblivion, as Charles had prophesied, showed the two women the wisdom and dignity of the step enjoined on them.

Dumay appointed representatives of his master at New York, London, and Paris. He followed up the liquidation of the three banking houses to which Mignon's ruin was due, and between 1826 and 1828 recovered five hundred thousand francs, the eighth part of Charles's fortune. In obedience to the orders drawn up the night before his departure, Dumay forwarded this sum at the beginning of 1828, through the house of Mongenod at New York, to be placed to Monsieur Mignon's credit. All this was done with military punctuality, excepting with regard to the retention of thirty thousand francs for the personal needs of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon. This, which Charles had ordered, Dumay did not

carry out. The Breton sold his house in the town for twenty-thousand francs, and gave this to Madame Mignon, reflecting that the more money his Colonel could command, the sooner he would return.

“For lack of thirty thousand francs a man sometimes is lost,” said he to Latournelle, who bought the house at his friend’s price; and there the inhabitants of the Chalet could always find rooms.

This, to the famous house of Mignon, le Havre, was the outcome of the crisis which, in 1825-26, upset the principal centers of commerce, and caused—if you remember that hurricane—the ruin of several Paris bankers, one of them the President of the Chamber of Commerce. It is intelligible that this tremendous overthrow, closing a civic reign of ten years, might have been a deathblow to Bettina Wallenrod, who once more found herself parted from her husband, knowing nothing of his fate, apparently as full of peril and adventure as Siberian exile; but the trouble that was really bringing her to the grave was to these visible griefs what an ill-starred child is to the commonplace troubles of a family—a child that gnaws and devours its home. The fatal stone that had struck this mother’s heart was a tombstone in the little cemetery of Ingouville, on which may be read:—

### BETTINA CAROLINE MIGNON

AGED TWO-AND-TWENTY

PRAY FOR HER!

1827

This inscription is for the girl who lies there what many an epitaph is for the dead—a table of contents to an unknown book. Here is the book in its terrible epitome, and it may explain the pledge demanded and given in the parting words of the colonel and subaltern.

A young man, extremely handsome, named Georges d’Estourny, came to le Havre on the common pretext of seeing the sea, and he saw Caroline Mignon. A man of some pretense to fashion, and from Paris, never lacks some introduc-

tions; he was therefore invited by the intervention of a friend of the Mignons to an entertainment at Ingouville. He fell very much in love with Caroline and her fortune, and schemed for a happy issue. At the end of three months he had played every trick of the seducer, and run away with Caroline. The father of a family who has two daughters ought no more to admit a young man to his house without knowing him than he should allow books or newspapers to lie about without having read them. The innocence of a girl is like milk which is turned by a thunder-clap, by an evil smell, by a hot day, or even by a breath.

When he read his eldest daughter's farewell letter, Charles Mignon made Madame Dumay set out instantly for Paris. The family alleged the need for a change of air suddenly prescribed by the family doctor, who lent himself to this necessary pretext; but this could not keep the town from gossiping about her absence.

"What, such a strong girl, with the complexion of a Spaniard, and hair like jet!—She, consumptive!"

"Yes—so they say. She did something imprudent——"

"Ah, ha!" cried some Vilquin.

"She came in from a ride bathed in perspiration and drank iced water, at least so Dr. Troussenard says."

By the time Madame Dumay returned, the troubles of the Mignons were an exhausted subject; no one thought anything more of Caroline's absence or the reappearance of the cashier's wife.

At the beginning of 1827 the newspapers were full of the trial of Georges d'Estourny, who was proved guilty of constant cheating at play. This young pirate vanished abroad without thinking any more about Mademoiselle Mignon, whose money value was destroyed by the bankruptcy at le Havre. Before long Caroline knew that she was deserted, and her father a ruined man. She came home in a fearful state of mortal illness, and died a few days afterwards at the Chalet. Her death, at any rate, saved her reputation. The malady spoken of by Monsieur Mignon at the time of his daughter's elopement was very generally believed in, and the medical orders which had sent her off, it was said, to Nice.



To the very last the mother hoped to save her child. Bettina was her darling, as Modeste was her father's. There was something touching in this preference: Bettina was the image of Charles, as Modeste was of her mother. They perpetuated their love in their children. Caroline, a Provençal, inherited from her father the beautiful blue-black hair, like a raven's wing, which we admire in the daughters of the south, the hazel, almond-shaped eyes as bright as a star, the olive complexion with the golden glow of a velvety fruit, the arched foot, the Spanish bust that swells beneath the bodice. And the father and mother were alike proud of the charming contrast of the two sisters.

"A demon and an angel!" people used to say, without ill meaning, though it was prophetic.

After spending a month in tears in her room, where she insisted on staying and seeing no one, the poor German lady came forth with her eyes seriously injured. Before she lost her sight she went, in spite of all her friends, to look at Caroline's tomb. This last image remained bright in her darkness, as the red specter of the last object we have seen remains when we shut our eyes in bright daylight. After this terrible and twofold disaster, Dumay, though he could not be more devoted, was more anxious than ever about Modeste, now an only child, though her father knew it not. Madame Dumay, who was crazy about Modeste, like all women who have no children, overpowered her with her deputy motherhood, but without disobeying her husband's orders. Dumay was distrustful of female friendships. His injunctions were absolute.

"If ever any man, of whatever age or rank, speaks to Modeste," said Dumay, "if he looks at her, casts sheep's eyes at her, he is a dead man. I will blow his brains out and surrender myself to the Public Prosecutor. My death may save her. If you do not wish to see me cut my throat, fill my place unflinchingly when I am in town."

For three years Dumay had examined his pistols every night. He seemed to have included in his oath the two Pyrenean dogs, remarkably intelligent beasts; one slept in

the house, the other was sentinel in a kennel that he never came out of, and he never barked; but the minute when those dogs should set their teeth in an intruder would be a terrible one for him.

The life may now be imagined which the mother and daughter led at the Chalet. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, frequently accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to visit their friends and play a rubber. Conversation would turn on business at le Havre, on the trivial events of country town life. They left between nine and ten. Modeste went to put her mother to bed; they said their prayers together, they talked over their hopes, they spoke of the dearly loved traveler. After kissing her mother, Modeste went to her own room at about ten o'clock. Next morning Modeste dressed her mother with the same care, the same prayers, the same little chat. To Modeste's honor, from the day when her mother's terrible infirmity deprived her of one of her senses, she made herself her waiting-maid, and always with the same solicitude at every hour, without wearying of it, or finding it monotonous. Her affection was supreme, and always ready, with a sweetness rare in young girls, and that was highly appreciated by those who saw her tenderness. And so, Modeste was, in the eyes of the Latournelles and of Monsieur and Madame Dumay, the jewel I have described. Between breakfast and dinner, on sunny days, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk as far as the shore, Modeste assisting, for the blind woman needed the support of two arms.

A month before the scene in which this digression falls as a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had held council with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary, and Dumay, while Madame Dumay was giving Modeste the little diversion of a long walk.

"Listen, my friends," said the blind woman, "my daughter is in love. I feel it; I see it. A strange change has come over her, and I cannot think how you have failed to observe it . . ."

"Bless my stars!" the Lieutenant exclaimed.

“Do not interrupt me, Dumay. For the last two months Modeste has dressed herself with care as if she were going to meet someone. She has become excessively particular about her shoes; she wants her foot to look nice, and scolds Madame Gobain the shoemaker. Some days the poor child sits gloomy and watchful, as if she expected somebody; her voice is short and sharp, as though by questioning her I broke in on her expectancy, her secret hopes; and then, if that somebody has been——”

“Bless my stars!”

“Sit down, Dumay,” said the lady. “Well, then Modeste is gay. Oh! you do not see that she is gay; you cannot discern these shades, too subtle for eyes to see that have all nature to look at. Her cheerfulness betrays itself in the tones of her voice, accents which I can detect and account for. Modeste, instead of sitting still and dreaming, expends her light activity in flighty movements. In short, she is happy! There is a tone of thanksgiving even in the ideas she utters. Oh, my friends, I have learnt to know happiness as well as grief. By the kiss my poor Modeste gives me I can guess what is going on in her mind: whether she has had what she was expecting, or is uneasy. There are many shades in kisses, even in those of a young girl—for Modeste is innocence itself, but it is not ignorant innocence. Though I am blind, my affection is clairvoyante, and I implore you—watch my daughter.”

On this, Dumay, quite ferocious, the notary as a man who is bent on solving a riddle, Madame Latournelle as a duenna who has been cheated, and Madame Dumay, who shared her husband's fears,—all constituted themselves spies over Modeste. Modeste was never alone for a moment. Dumay spent whole nights under the windows, wrapped in a cloak like a jealous Spaniard; still, armed as he was with military sagacity, he could find no accusing clew. Unless she were in love with the nightingales in Vilquin's park, or some goblin prince, Modeste could have seen no one, could neither have received nor given a signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed till she had seen Modeste asleep, hovered about the roads on the high ground near the Chalet with a

vigilance equal to her husband's. Under the eyes of these four Arguses, the blameless child, whose smallest actions were reported and analyzed, was so absolutely acquitted of any criminal proceedings, that the friends suspected Madame Mignon of a craze, a monomania. It devolved on Madame Latournelle, who herself took Modeste to church and home again, to tell the mother that she was under a mistake.

"Modeste," said she, "is a very enthusiastic young person; she has passions for this one's poetry and that one's prose. You could not see what an impression was made on her by that executioner's piece (a phrase of Butscha's, who lent wit without any return to his benefactress), called *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*; but she seemed to me beside herself with her admiration of that Monsieur Hugo. I cannot think where that sort of people (Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and Byron were what Madame Latournelle meant by *that sort*) go to find their ideas. The little thing talked to me about *Childe Harold*; I did not choose to have the worst of it; I was fool enough to set to work to read it that I might be able to argue with her. I don't know whether it is to be set down to the translations, but my heart heaved, my eyes were dizzy. I could not get on with it. It is full of howling comparisons, of rocks that faint away, of the lavas of war!

"Of course, as it is an Englishman on his travels, one must expect something queer, but this is really too much! You fancy you are in Spain, and he carries you up into the clouds above the Alps; he makes the torrents and the stars speak; and then there are too many virgins! You get sick of them. In short, after Napoleon's campaigns we have had enough of flaming shot and sounding brass which roll on from page to page. Modeste tells me that all this pathos comes from the translator, and I ought to read the English. But I am not going to learn English for Lord Byron when I would not learn it for Exupère! I much prefer the romances of Ducray-Duménil to these English romances! I am too thoroughly Norman to fall in love with everything that comes from abroad, and especially from England——"

Madame Mignon, notwithstanding her perpetual mourn-

ing, could not help smiling at the idea of Madame Latournelle reading *Childe Harold*. The stern lady accepted this smile as approbation of her doctrines.

“And so, my dear Madame Mignon, you mistake Modeste’s imaginings, the result of her reading, for love affairs. She is twenty. At that age a girl loves herself. She dresses to see herself dressed. Why, I used to make my little sister, who is dead now, put on a man’s hat, and we played at gentleman and lady. . . . You, at Frankfort, had a happy girlhood, but let us be just: Modeste here has no amusements. In spite of our readiness to meet her lightest wishes, she knows that she is guarded, and the life she leads has little pleasure to offer a girl who could not, as she can, find something to divert her in books. Take my word for it, she loves no one but you. Think yourself lucky that she falls in love with nobody but Lord Byron’s corsairs, Walter Scott’s romantic heroes, or your Germans, Count Egmont, Werther, Schiller, and all the other *ers*.”

“Well, Madame?” said Dumay respectfully, alarmed by Madame Mignon’s silence.

“Modeste is not merely ready for love; she loves somebody,” said the mother obstinately.

“Madame, my life is at stake, and you will no doubt allow me—not for my own sake, but for my poor wife’s and for the Colonel’s, and all our sakes—to try to find out which is mistaken—the watch-dog or the mother.”

“It is you, Dumay! Oh, if I could but look my daughter in the face!” said the poor blind woman.

“But who is there that she can love?” replied Madame Latournelle. “As for us—I can answer for my Exupère.”

“It cannot be Gobenheim, whom we hardly see for nine hours out of the week since the Colonel went away. Besides, he is not thinking of Modeste—that crown-piece made man! His uncle, Gobenheim-Keller, told him, ‘Get rich enough to marry a Keller!’ With that for a programme, there is no fear that he will even know of what sex Modeste is. Those are all the men we see here. I do not count Butscha, poor little hunchback. I love him; he is your Dumay, Madame,” he said to the notary’s wife. “Butscha knows very well that

if he glanced at Modeste it would cost him a combing *à la mode de Vannes*.—Not a soul ever comes near us. Madame Latournelle, who since—since your misfortune, comes to take Modeste to church and bring her home again, has watched her carefully these last days during the Mass, and has seen nothing suspicious about her. And then, if I must tell you everything, I myself have raked the paths round the house for the last month, and I have always found them in the morning with no footmarks.”

“Rakes are not costly nor difficult to use,” said the German lady.

“And the dogs?” asked Dumay.

“Lovers can find sops for them,” replied Madame Mignon.

“I could blow out my own brains if you are right, for I should be done for,” cried Dumay.

“And why, Dumay?”

“Madame, I could not meet the Colonel’s eye if he were not to find his daughter, especially now that she is his only child; and as pure, as virtuous as she was when he said to me on board the ship, ‘Do not let the fear of the scaffold stop you, Dumay, when Modeste’s honor is at stake.’”

“I know you both—how like you!” said Madame Mignon, much moved.

“I will wager my eternal salvation that Modeste is as innocent as she was in her cradle,” said Madame Dumay.

“Oh, I will know all about it,” replied Dumay, “if Madame la Comtesse will allow me to try a plan, for old soldiers are knowing in stratagems.”

“I allow you to do anything that may clear up the matter without injuring our last surviving child.”

“And what will you do, Anne,” said his wife, “to find out a young girl’s secret when it is so closely kept?”

“All of you obey me exactly,” said the Lieutenant, “for you must all help.”

This brief account, which, if elaborately worked up, would have furnished forth a complete picture of domestic life—how many families will recognize in it the events of their own home!—is enough to give a clew to the importance of the

little details previously given of the persons and circumstances of this evening, when the lieutenant had undertaken to cope with a young girl, and to drag from the recesses of her heart a passion detected by her blind mother.

An hour went by in ominous calm, broken only by the hieroglyphical phrases of the whist-players: "Spade!—Trump!—Cut!—Have we the honors?—Two trebles!—Eight all!—Who deals?"—phrases representing in these days the great emotions of the aristocracy of Europe. Modeste stitched, without any surprise at her mother's taciturnity. Madame Mignon's pocket-handkerchief slipped off her lap on to the floor; Butscha flew to pick it up. He was close to Modeste, and as he rose said in her ear, "Be on your guard!"

Modeste raised astonished eyes, and their light, pointed darts as it seemed, filled the hunchback with ineffable joy.

"She loves no one," said the poor fellow to himself, and he rubbed his hands hard enough to flay them.

At this moment Exupère flew through the garden and into the house, rushing into the drawing-room like a whirlwind, and said in Dumay's ear, "Here is the young man!"

Dumay rose, seized his pistols, and went out.

"Good God! Supposing he kills him!" cried Madame Dumay, who burst into tears.

"But what is going on?" asked Modeste, looking at her friends with an air of perfect candor, and without any alarm.

"Something about a young man who prowls round the Chalet!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What then?" said Modeste. "Why should Dumay kill him?"

"*Sancta simplicitas!*" said Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander gazes at Babylon in Lebrun's picture.

"Where are you going, Modeste?" asked her mother, as her daughter was leaving the room.

"To get everything ready for you to go to bed, mamma," replied Modeste, in a voice as clear as the notes of a harmonica.

"You have had all your trouble for nothing," said Butscha to Dumay when he came in.

"Modeste is as saintly as the Virgin on our altar!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Ah, good Heavens! Such agitation is too much for me," said the cashier. "And yet I am a strong man."

"I would give twenty-five sous to understand one word of what you are at this evening," said Gobenheim; "you all seem to me to have gone mad."

"And yet a treasure is at stake," said Butscha, standing on tiptoe to speak into Gobenheim's ear.

"Unfortunately, I am almost positive of the truth of what I say," repeated the mother.

"Then it now lies with you, Madame," said Dumay quietly, "to prove that we are wrong."

When he found that nothing was involved but Modeste's reputation, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and went away, carrying off ten sous, and regarding a fresh rubber as hopeless.

"Exupère, and you Butscha, leave us," said Madame Latournelle. "Go down to the town. You will be in time to see one piece; I will treat you to the play."

As soon as Madame Mignon was left with her four friends, Madame Latournelle glanced at Dumay, who, being a Breton, understood the mother's persistency, and then at her husband fidgeting with the cards, and thought herself justified in speaking.

"Come, Madame Mignon, tell us what decisive evidence has struck your ear?"

"Oh, my dear friend, if you were a musician, you, like me, would have heard Modeste's tone when she sings of love."

The piano belonging to the two sisters was one of the few feminine luxuries among the furniture brought from the town-house to the Chalet. Modeste had mitigated some tedium by studying without a master. She was a born musician, and played to cheer her mother. She sang with natural grace the German airs her mother taught her. From this instruction and this endeavor had resulted the phenomenon, not uncommon in natures prompted by a vocation, that



Modeste unconsciously composed purely melodic strains, as such composition is possible without a knowledge of harmony. Melody is to music what imagery and feeling are to poetry, a flower that may blossom spontaneously. All nations have had popular melodies before the introduction of harmony. Botany came after flowers. Thus Modeste, without having learnt anything of the technique of painting beyond what she had gathered from seeing her sister work in water-colors, could stand enchanted before a picture of Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer, or Holbein, that is to say, the highest ideal of each nation. Now, for about a month, Modeste had more especially burst into nightingale songs, into new strains so poetical as to arouse her mother's attention, surprised as she was to find Modeste bent on composition and trying airs to unfamiliar words.

"If your suspicions have no other foundation," said La-tournelle to Madame Mignon, "I pity your sensitiveness."

"When a young girl sings in Brittany," said Dumay, now grave again, "the lover is very near."

"I will let you overhear Modeste improvising," said the mother, "and you will see!—"

"Poor child!" said Madame Dumay. "If she could but know of our anxiety, she would be in despair; and she would tell us the truth, especially if she knew all it meant to Dumay."

"To-morrow, my friends, I will question Modeste," said Madame Mignon; "and perhaps I shall achieve more by affection than you have gained by ruse."

Was the comedy of the "Ill-guarded Daughter" being enacted here, as it is everywhere and at all times, while these worthy Bartolos, these spies, these vigilant watch-dogs failed to scent, to guess, to detect the lover, the conspiracy, the smoke of the fire?

This was not the consequence of any defiance between a prisoner and her jailers, between the tyranny of the dungeon and the liberty of the captive, but merely the eternal repetition of the first drama played as the curtain rose on the new Creation: Eve in Paradise. Which, in this case, was right—the mother or the watch-dog?

None of the persons about Modeste understood the girl's heart—for, be assured, the soul and the face were in unison. Modeste had transplanted her life into a world of which the existence is as completely denied in our days as the New World of Christopher Columbus was denied in the sixteenth century. Fortunately, she could be silent, or she would have been thought mad.

We must first explain the influence that past events had had on the girl. Two especially had formed her character, as they awakened her intelligence. Monsieur and Madame Mignon, startled by the disaster that had come upon Bettina, had, before their bankruptcy, resolved on seeing Modeste married, and their choice fell on the son of a wealthy banker, a native of Hamburg, who had settled at le Havre in 1815, and who was under some obligations to them. This young man—Francisque Althor—the dandy of le Havre, handsome in the style which captivates the philistine, what the English call a heavy-weight—florid healthy coloring, firm flesh, and square shoulders—threw over his bride elect, at the news of their disaster, so completely that he had never since set eyes on Modeste, or on Madame Mignon, or on the Dumays. Latournelle having made so bold as to speak to the father, Jacob Althor, on the subject, the old German had shrugged his shoulders, and replied, “I do not know what you mean.”

This reply, repeated to Modeste to give her experience, was a lesson she understood all the better because Latournelle and Dumay made voluminous comments on this base desertion. Charles Mignon's two daughters, spoiled children as they were, rode, had their own horses and servants, and enjoyed fatal liberty. Modeste, finding herself in command of a recognized lover, had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, and put his arm round her to help her to mount; she had accepted flowers, and the trifling gifts of affection which are the burden of paying court to a young lady; she worked him a purse, believing in bonds of that kind, so strong to noble souls, but mere cobwebs to the Gobenheims, Vilquins, and Althors.

In the course of the spring, after Madame Mignon and her daughter had moved into the Chalet, Francisque Althor

went to dine with the Vilquins. On catching sight of Modeste beyond the wall of the lawn, he looked away. Six weeks after, he married Mademoiselle Vilquin—the eldest. Thus Modeste learnt that she, handsome, young, and well born, had for three months been simply Mademoiselle Million. So Modeste's poverty, which was of course known, was a sentinel which guarded the ways to the Chalet quite as well as the Dumays' prudence and the Latournelles' vigilance. Mademoiselle Mignon was never mentioned but with insulting pity: "Poor girl! what will become of her? She will die an old maid."—"What a hard lot! After seeing all the world at her feet, and having a chance of marrying Althor, to find that no one will have anything to say to her!"—"Such a life of luxury, my dear! and to have sunk to penury!"

Nor were these insults spoken in private and only guessed by Modeste; more than once she heard them uttered by the young men and girls of the town when walking at Ingouville, who, knowing that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon lived at the Chalet, discussed them audibly as they went past the pretty little house. Some of the Vilquins' friends wondered that these ladies could bear to live so near the home of their former splendor. Modeste, sitting behind closed shutters, often heard such impertinence as this: "I cannot think how they can live there!" one would say to another, walking round the garden, perhaps to help the Vilquins to be rid of their tenants. "What do they live on?—What can they do there?—The old woman is gone blind!—Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty?—Ah, she has no horses now. How dashing she used to be!"

As she heard this savage nonsense spoken by envy, foul-mouthed and surly, and tilting at the past, many girls would have felt the blood rise to their very brow; others would have wept, some would have felt a surge of rage; but Modeste smiled as we smile at a theater, hearing actors speak. Her pride could not descend to the level which such words, rising from below, could reach.

The other event was even more serious than this mercenary desertion. Bettina-Caroline had died in her sister's

arms; Modeste had nursed her with the devotion of a woman, with the inquisitiveness of a maiden imagination. The two girls, in the watches of the night, had exchanged many a confidence. What dramatic interest hung round Bettina in the eyes of her innocent sister! Bettina knew passion only as misfortune; she was dying because she had loved. Between two girls every man, wretch though he be, is a lover. Passion is the one thing really absolute in human life; it will always have its own. Georges d'Estourny, a gambler, dissipated and guilty, always dwelt in the memory of these young things as the Parisian dandy of the Havre parties, the cynosure of every woman—Bettina believed that she had snatched him from Madame Vilquin's flirtations—and, to crown all, Bettina's successful lover. In a young girl her worship is stronger than social reprobation. In Bettina's mind, justice had erred; how should she have condemned a young man by whom she had been loved for six months, loved with passion in the mysterious retreat where Georges hid her in Paris, that he might preserve his liberty? Thus, Bettina, in her death, had inoculated her sister with love.

The sisters had often discussed the great drama of passion, to which imagination lends added importance; and the dead girl had taken Modeste's purity with her to her grave, leaving her not perhaps all-knowing, but, at any rate, all-curious. At the same time, remorse had often set sharp pangs in Bettina's heart, and she lavished warnings on her sister. In the midst of her revelations, she never failed to preach obedience in Modeste, absolute obedience to her family. On the eve of her death, she implored her sister to remember the pillow she had soaked with her tears, and never to imitate the conduct her sufferings could scarcely expiate. Bettina accused herself of having brought the lightning down on those dear to her; she died in despair at not receiving her father's forgiveness. In spite of the consolations of religion, which was softened by such deep repentance, Bettina's last words, in a heartrending cry, were, "Father! Father!"

"Never give your heart but with your hand," said she to Modeste, an hour before her death; "and, above all, accept no attentions without my mother's consent or papa's."

These words, touching in their simple truth, and spoken in the hour of death, found an echo in Modeste's mind, all the more because Bettina made her take a solemn vow. The poor girl, with prophetic insight, drew from under her pillow a ring on which she had had engraved *Pense à Bettina, 1827*—"Remember Bettina"—instead of a motto, sending it by the hand of her faithful servant Françoise Cochet, to be done in the town. A few minutes before she breathed her last sigh, she placed this ring on her sister's finger, begging her to wear it till she should be married. Thus, between these two girls there had been a strange succession of acute remorse and artless descriptions of that brief summer which had been so soon followed by the autumn winds of desertion, while tears, regrets, and memories were constantly overruled by a dread of evil.

And yet this drama of the young creature seduced, and returning to die of a dreadful disorder under the roof of elegant poverty, the meanness of the Vilquins' son-in-law, and her mother's blindness, resulting from her griefs, only account for the surface of Modeste's character, with which the Dumays and the Latournelles had to be content, for no devotion can fill the mother's place. This monotonous life in the pretty Chalet, among the beautiful flowers grown by Dumay; these habits, as regular as the working of a clock; this provincial propriety; these rubbers at cards by which she sat knitting; this silence, only broken by the moaning of the sea at the equinoxes; this monastic peace covered the stormiest kind of life—the life of ideas, the life of the spiritual world.

We sometimes wonder at the lapses of young girls, but that is when they have no blind mother to sound with her stick the depths of the maiden heart undermined by the caverns of fancy.

The Dumays were asleep when Modeste opened her window, imagining that a man might pass by—the man of her dreams, the knight who would take her on a pillion, defying Dumay's pistols. In her dejection after her sister's death, Modeste had plunged into such constant reading as was enough to make her idiotic. Having been brought up to

speaking two languages, she was mistress of German as well as of French; then she and Caroline had learnt English of Madame Dumay. Modeste, who in such matters found little supervision from her uncultivated companions, fed her soul on the masterpieces of modern English, German, and French literature—Lord Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history and the theater, romance from Rabelais to Manon Lescaut, from Montaigne's *Essays* to Diderot, from the *Fabliaux* to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, the thoughts of three countries furnished her brain with a medley of images. And her mind was beautiful in its cold guilelessness, its repressed virginal instincts, from which sprang forth, flashing, armed, sincere, and powerful, an intense admiration for genius. To Modeste, a new book was a great event; she was so happy over a great work as to alarm Madame Latournelle, as we have seen, and saddened when it failed to take her heart by storm.

But no gleam of this lurid flame ever appeared on the surface; it escaped the eye of Lieutenant Dumay and his wife as well as of the Latournelles; but the ear of the blind mother could not fail to hear its crackling. The deep contempt which Modeste thenceforth conceived for all ordinary men soon gave her countenance an indescribably proud and shy expression which qualified its German simplicity, but which agrees with one detail of her face; her hair, growing in a point in the middle of her forehead, seems to continue the slight furrow made by thought between her brows, and makes this shy look perhaps a little too wild.

This sweet girl's voice—before his departure Charles Mignon used to call her his little "Solomon's slipper," she was so clever—had acquired delightful flexibility of accent from her study of three languages. This advantage is yet further enhanced by a suave fresh quality which goes to the heart as well as to the ear. Though her mother could not see the hope of high destiny stamped on her daughter's brow, she could study the changes of her soul's development in the tones of that amorous voice.

After this period of ravenous reading, there came to

Modeste a phase of the singular faculty possessed by a lively imagination; of living as an actor in an existence pictured as in a dream; of representing things wished for with a vividness so keen, that it verges on reality; of enjoying them in fancy, of devouring time even, seeing herself married, grown old, attending her own funeral, like Charles V.—in short, of playing out the drama of life, and at need that of death too.

As for Modeste, she played the drama of love. She imagined herself adored to the height of her wishes, and passing through every social phase. As the heroine of some dark romance, she loved either the executioner or some villain who died on the scaffold, or else, like her sister, some penniless fop, whose misdemeanors were the affair of the police court. She pictured herself as a courtesan, and laughed men to scorn in the midst of perpetual festivities, like Ninon. By turns, she led the life of an adventuress or of a popular actress, going through the vicissitudes of a Gil Blas, or the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran, Florine. Satiated with horrors, she would come back to real life. She married a notary, she ate the dry bread of respectability, she saw herself in Madame Latournelle. She accepted a laborious life, facing the worries of accumulating a fortune; then she began to romance again: she was loved for her beauty; the son of a peer of France, artistic and eccentric, read her heart, and discerned the star which the genius of a Staël had set on her brow. At last her father returned a millionaire. Justified by experience, she subjected her lovers to tests, preserving her own freedom; she owned a splendid château, servants, carriages, everything that luxury has most curious to bestow; and she mystified her lovers till she was forty, when she accepted an offer.

This edition of the *Arabian Nights*, of which there was but one copy, lasted nearly a year, and brought Modeste to satiety of invention. She too often held life in the hollow of her hand; she could say to herself very philosophically, and too seriously, too bitterly, too often, "Well; and then?" not to sink now to her waist in those depths of disgust, into which men of genius fall who are too eager to escape by the vast

labor of the task to which they have devoted themselves. But for her rich nature and her youth, Modeste would have retired to a cloister. This satiety flung the girl, still soaked in Catholic feeling, into a love of goodness, and of the infinite of heaven. She conceived of charity as the occupation of her life; still she groped in forlorn gloom as she found there no aliment for the fancy that gnawed at her heart like a malignant insect in the cup of a flower. She calmly stitched at baby clothes for poor women; and she listened absently to Monsieur Latournelle grumbling at Monsieur Dumay for trumping a thirteenth, or forcing him to play his last trump. Faith led Modeste into a strange path. She fancied that by becoming irreproachable in the Catholic sense, she might achieve such a pitch of sanctity that God would hear her and grant her desires.

“Faith, as Jesus Christ says, can remove mountains; the Saviour made His apostle walk on the Lake of Tiberias; while I only ask of God to send me a husband,” thought she. “That is much easier than going for a walk on the sea.”

She fasted all through Lent, and did not commit the smallest sin; then she promised herself that on coming out of church on a certain day she would meet a handsome young man, worthy of her, whom her mother would approve, and who would follow her, madly in love. On the day she had fixed for God to send her this angel without fail, she was persistently followed by a horrible beggar; it poured with rain, and there was not one young man out of doors. She went down to the quay to see the English come on shore, but every Englishman had an English damsel almost as handsome as herself, and Modeste could not see anything like a Childe Harold who had lost his way. At that stage tears rose to her eyes as she sat, like Marius, on the ruins of her imaginings. One day when she made an appointment with God for the third time, she believed that the elect of her dreams had come into the church, and she dragged Madame Latournelle to look behind every pillar, imagining that he was hiding out of delicacy. Thenceforth she concluded that God had no power. She often made conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing question and answer, and giving him a very pretty wit.



Thus it was her heart's excessive ambition, buried in romance, which gave Modeste the discretion so much admired by the good people who watched over her; they might have brought her many a Francisque Althor or Vilquin *fil*s, she would not have stooped to such boors. She required simply and purely a man of genius; talent she thought little of, as a barrister is nothing to a girl who is set on an ambassador. She wished for riches only to cast them at her idol's feet. The golden background against which the figures of her dreams stood out was less precious than her heart overflowing with a woman's delicacy; for her ruling idea was to give wealth and happiness to a Tasso, a Milton, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Murat, a Christopher Columbus. Vulgar sorrows appealed but little to this soul, which longed to extinguish the stake of such martyrs unrecognized during their lifetime. Modeste thirsted for unconfessed suffering, the great anguish of the mind.

Sometimes she imagined the balm, she elaborated the tenderness, the music, the thousand devices by which she would have soothed the fierce misanthropy of Jean-Jacques. Again she fancied herself the wife of Lord Byron, and almost entered into his scorn of realities, while making herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred, and into his doubts while making him a Catholic. Modeste accused all the women of the seventeenth century as guilty of Molière's melancholy.

"How is it," she wondered, "that some living, wealthy, and beautiful woman does not rush forth to meet every man of genius, to make herself his slave like Lara, the mysterious page?"

As you see, she had quite understood the English poet's wail, as sung by Gulnare. She greatly admired the conduct of the young English girl who came to propose to the younger Crébillon, who married her. The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper was a joy to her for some months; as the imaginary heroine of a similar romance, she studied the sublime part of Eliza again and again. The exquisite feeling so gracefully expressed in those letters filled her eyes with the tears which, it is said, never rose to those of the wittiest of English writers.

Modeste thus lived for some time by her sympathy, not

merely with the works, but with the personal character of her favorite authors. Goldsmith, the author of *Obermann*, Charles Nodier, Maturin—the poorest, the most unhappy were her gods; she understood their sufferings, she entered into their squalor, blending with heaven-sent visions; she poured on them the treasures of her heart; she pictured herself clearly as supplying the comforts of life to these artists, martyrs to their gifts. This noble compassion, this intuitive knowledge of the difficulties of work, this worship for talent, is one of the rarest vagaries that ever beat its wings in a woman's soul. At first it is like a secret between her and God, for there is nothing dazzling in it, nothing to flatter her vanity—that potent auxiliary of all actions in France.

From this third phase of her ideas there was born in Modeste a violent desire to study one of these anomalous lives to the very heart of it, to know the springs of thought, the secret sorrows of genius, and what it craves, and what it is. And so, in her, the rashness of fantasy, the wanderings of her soul in a void, her excursions into the darkness of the future, the impatience of her undeveloped love to center in an object, the nobleness of her notions of life, her determination to suffer in some lofty sphere rather than to paddle in the slough of provincial life as her mother had done, the vow she had made to herself never to go wrong, to respect her parents' home, and never bring to it anything but joy,—all this world of feeling at last took shape: Modeste purposed to be the wife of a poet, an artist, a man, in short, superior to the crowd; but she meant to choose him, and to subject him to a thorough study, before giving him her heart, her life, her immense tenderness freed from the trammels of passion.

She began by reveling in this pretty romance. Perfect tranquillity possessed her soul. Her countenance was gradually colored by it. She became the lovely and sublime image of Germany that you have seen, the glory of the Chalet, the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays. Then Modeste lived a double life. She humbly and lovingly fulfilled all the trivial tasks of daily life at the Chalet, using them as a check to hold in the poem of her ideal existence,

like the Carthusians, who order their material life by rule, and occupy their time to allow the soul to develop itself in prayer.

All great intellects subject themselves to some mechanical employment to obtain control of thought. Spinoza ground lenses, Bayle counted the tiles in a roof, Montesquieu worked in his garden. The body being thus under control, the spirit spreads its wings in perfect security. So Madame Mignon, who read her daughter's soul, was right. Modeste was in love; she loved with that Platonic sentiment which is so rare, so little understood—the first illusion of girlhood, the subtlest of feelings, the heart's daintiest morsel. She drank deep draughts from the cup of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She delighted in the Blue Bird of the Maiden's Paradise, which sings far away, on which none may lay hands, which lets itself be seen, while the shot of no gun can ever touch it; its magical colors, like the sparkling of gems, dazzle the eye, but it is never more seen when once reality appears—the hideous Harpy bringing witnesses and the *Maire* in her train. To have all the poetry of love without the presence of the lover! How exquisite an orgy! What a fair chimera of all colors and every plumage!

This was the trifling foolish accident which sealed the girl's fate.

Modeste saw on a bookseller's counter a lithographed portrait of de Canalis, one of her favorites. You know what libels these sketches are, the outcome of an odious kind of speculation which falls upon the persons of celebrated men, as if their face were public property. So Canalis, caught in a Byronic attitude, offered to public admiration his disordered hair, his bare throat, and the excessively high forehead proper to every bard. Victor Hugo's brow will lead to as many heads being shaved as there were sucking field-m Marshals who rushed to die on the strength of Napoleon's glory.

Modeste was struck by this head, made sublime by commercial requirements; and on the day when she bought the portrait, one of the finest books by Arthès had just come out. Though it may sound to her discredit, it must be confessed that she long hesitated between the illustrious poet and the

illustrious prose writer. But were these two great men unmarried? Modeste began by securing the co-operation of Françoise Cochet, the girl whom poor Bettina-Caroline had taken with her from le Havre and brought back again. She lived in the town, and Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay would employ her for a day's work in preference to any other. Modeste had this somewhat homely creature up into her room; she swore that she would never cause her parents the smallest grief, nor exceed the limits imposed on a young lady; she promised Françoise that in the future on her father's return, the poor girl should have an easy life, on condition of her keeping absolute secrecy as to the service required of her.—What was it?—A mere trifle, a perfectly innocent thing. All that Modeste asked of her accomplice was that she should post certain letters and fetch the replies, addressed to Françoise Cochet.

The bargain concluded, Modeste wrote a polite note to Dauriat, the publisher of Canalis' poems, in which she asked him, in the interests of the great poet, whether Canalis were married, begging him to address the answer to Mademoiselle Françoise, *poste restante*, au Havre. Dauriat, who, of course, could not take such a letter seriously, sent a reply concocted in his private room by five or six journalists, each in turn adding his jest.

“*MADemoiselle*,—Canalis (Baron de), Constant-Cyr-Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800 at Canalis, Corrèze; stands five fee. four, is in good condition, vaccinated, thoroughbred, has served his term under the conscription, enjoys perfect health, has a small landed estate in Corrèze and wishes to marry, but looks for great wealth.

“His arms are, party per pale gules a broadax or, and sable a shell argent; surmounted by a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches proper. The motto *Or et fer* (gold and iron) has never proved auriferous.

“The first Canalis, who went to the Holy Land in the first crusade, is mentioned in the Chronicles of Auvergne as carrying no weapon but an ax, by reason of the complete indigence in which he lived, and which has ever since weighed on his

posterity. Hence, no doubt, the blazon. The ax brought him nothing but an empty shell. This noble baron became famous, having discomfited many infidels, and he died at Jerusalem, without either gold or iron, as bare as a worm, on the road to Ascalon, the ambulance service having not yet been called into existence.

“The castle of Canalis—the land yields a few chestnuts—consists of two dismantled towers joined by a wall, remarkable for its superior growth of ivy, and it pays twenty-two francs to the revenue.

“The publisher, undersigned, begs to remark that he pays Monsieur de Canalis ten thousand francs per volume for his poetry. He does not give his empty shells for nothing.

“The Bard of the Corrèze lives at Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29, which is a suitable situation for a poet of the Seraphic School. Worms (*les vers*) are a bait for gudgeon. Letters must be prepaid.

“Certain noble dames of the Faubourg Saint-Germain often, it is said, make their way to Paradise and patronize the divinity. King Charles X. thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of becoming a statesman. He has recently made him an officer of the Legion of Honor, and, which is more to the purpose, Master of Appeals, attached to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These functions in no way keep the great man from drawing a pension of three thousand francs from the fund devoted to the encouragement of art and letters. This pecuniary success causes, in the publishing world, an eighth plague which Egypt was spared—a plague of worms (*les vers*)!

“The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on handmade paper, large 8vo, with vignettes by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, and others, printed by Didot, is in five volumes, price nine francs, post paid.”

This letter fell like a paving-stone on a tulip. A poet as Master of Appeals, in the immediate circle of a Minister, drawing a pension, aiming at the red rosette, adored of the ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Was this at all like the threadbare poet wandering on the quays, melancholy and

dreamy, overwrought by work, and climbing up to his garret again loaded with poetic inspiration? At the same time, Modeste saw through the jest of the envious publisher, which conveyed, "I made Canalis! I made Nathan!" Then she re-read Canalis' verses, very catching verses, full of hypocrisy, and which require a few words of analysis if only to explain her infatuation.

Canalis is distinguished from Lamartine, the chief of the Seraphic School, by a sort of sick-nurse blarney, a perfidious sweetness, and exquisite correctness. If the chief, with his sublime outcry, may be called an eagle, Canalis, all rose and white, is a flamingo. In him women discern the friend they yearn for, a discreet confidant, their interpreter, the being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves.

The broad margins with which Dauriat had graced his last edition were covered with confessions scribbled in pencil by Modeste, who sympathized with this dreamy and tender soul. Canalis has not life in his gift; he does not breathe it into his creations; but he knows how to soothe vague sufferings such as Modeste was a victim to. He speaks to girls in their own language, lulling the pain of the most recent wounds, and silencing groans, and even sobs. His talent does not consist in preaching loftily to the sufferer, in giving her the medicine of strong emotions; he is content to say in a musical voice which commands belief: "I am unhappy, as you are; I understand you fully; come with me, we will weep together on the bank of this stream, under the willows!" And they go! and listen to his verse, as vacuous and as sonorous as the song of a nurse putting a baby to sleep! Canalis—like Nodier in this—bewitches you by an artlessness, which in the prose writer is natural but in the poet elaborately studied, by his archness, his smile, his fallen flowers, his childlike philosophy. He mimics the language of early days well enough to carry you back to the fair field of illusion.

To an eagle we are pitiless; we insist on the quality of the diamond, flawless perfection; but from Canalis we are satisfied with the orphan's mite; everything may be forgiven him. He seems such a good fellow, human above everything. These seraphic airs succeed with him, as those of a woman will always

succeed if she acts simplicity well—the startled, youthful, martyred, suffering angel.

Modeste, summing up her impressions, felt that she trusted that soul, that countenance, as attractive as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's. She paid no heed to the publisher. And so, at the beginning of the month of August, she wrote the following letter to this Dorat of the sacristy, who even now is regarded as one of the stars of the modern Pleiades.

## I.

*To Monsieur de Canalis*

“Many times ere now, Monsieur, I have intended to write to you—and why? You can guess: to tell you how much I delight in your talent. Yes, I feel a longing to express to you the admiration of a poor country-bred girl, very solitary in her nook, whose sole joy is in reading your poetry. From *René* I came to you. Melancholy tends to reverie. How many other women must have paid you the homage of their secret thoughts! What chance have I of being of the elect in such a crowd? What interest can this paper have, though full of my soul, above all the perfumed letters which beset you? I introduce myself with more to perplex you than any other woman. I intend to remain unknown, and yet ask your entire confidence, as if you had known me a long time.

“Answer me, be kind to me. I do not pledge myself to tell my name some day, still I do not positively say no. . . . What more can I add to this letter? Regard it, Monsieur, as a great effort, and allow me to offer you my hand—oh, a very friendly hand—that of your servant,

“O. D'ESTE-M.

“If you do me the favor of replying, address your letter, I beg, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, Poste Restante, le Havre.”

Now every damsel, whether romantic or no, can imagine Modeste's impatience during the next few days! The air was full of tongues of flame; the trees looked like plumage; she did not feel her body; she floated above nature! The earth van-

ished under her tread. Wondering at the powers of the post-office, she followed her little sheet of paper through space; she was glad, as we are glad at twenty at the first exercise of our will. She was bewitched, possessed, as people were in the Middle Ages. She pictured to herself the poet's lodgings, his room; she saw him opening the letter, and she made a million guesses.

Having sketched his poetry, it is necessary here to give an outline of the man. Canalis is small and thin, with an aristocratic figure; dark, gifted with a foolish face and a rather insignificant head, that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loves luxury, display, and splendor. Fortune is a necessity to him more than to other men. No less proud of his birth than of his talent, he has swamped his ancestors by too great personal pretensions. After all, the Canalis are neither Navarreins, nor Cadignans, nor Grandlieus, nor Nègrepelisses; however, nature has done much to support his pretensions. He has the eyes of Oriental luster that we look for in a poet, a very pretty refinement of manner, a thrilling voice; but a mannerism that is natural to him almost nullifies these advantages. He is an actor in perfect good faith. He displays a very elegant foot—it is an acquired habit. He has a declamatory style of talk, but it is his own. His affectation is theatrical, but it has become a second nature. These faults, as we must call them, are in harmony with an unflinching generosity which may be termed carpet-knightliness in contrast to chivalry. Canalis has not faith enough to be a *Don Quixote*, but he is too high-minded not to take invariably the nobler side in any question. His poetry, which comes out in a military eruption on every possible occasion, is a great disadvantage to the poet, who is not indeed lacking in wit, but whose talent hinders his wit from developing. He is the slave of his reputation; he aims at seeming superior to it.

Hence, as frequently happens, the man is completely out of tune with the products of his mind. The author of these insinuating, artless poems, full of tender sentiment, of these calm verses as clear as lake ice, of this caressing womanish poetry, is an ambitious little man, buttoned tightly into his coat, with the air of a diplomat, dreaming of political influ-



ence, stinking of the aristocrat, scented and conceited, thirsting for a fortune that he may have an income equal to his ambitions, and already spoiled by success under two aspects—the crown of bays and the crown of myrtle. A salary of eight thousand francs, a pension of three thousand, two thousand from the Académie, a thousand crowns of inherited income—a good deal reduced by the agricultural requirements of the Canalis estate, and the ten thousand francs he gets from his poems one year with another—twenty-five thousand francs a year in all.

To Modeste's hero this income was all the more precarious because he spent, on an average, five or six thousand francs a year more than he received, but hitherto the King's privy purse and the secret funds of the Ministry had made up the deficit. He had composed a hymn for the coronation, for which he had been rewarded with a service of plate; he refused a sum of money, saying that the Canalis owed their homage to the King of France. The *Roi Chevalier* smiled, and ordered from Odiot a costly version of the lines from *Zaire*.

"What! Rhymester, did you ever hope to vie  
With Charles the Tenth in generosity?"

Canalis had drained himself dry, to use a picturesque vulgarism; he knew that he was incapable of inventing a fresh form of poetry; his lyre has not seven strings, it has but one; and so long had he played on it, that the public left him now no choice but to use it to hang himself, or to be silent. De Marsay, who could not endure Canalis, had uttered a sarcasm of which the poisoned dart had pierced the poet's conceit to the quick.

"Canalis," he had said, "strikes me as being just like the man of whom Frederick the Great spoke after a battle, as the trumpeter who had never ceased blowing the same note through his penny pipe!"

Canalis was anxious to become a political personage, and as a beginning made capital of a journey he had taken to Madrid when the Duc de Chaulieu was ambassador, accompanying him as *attaché*—but to the Duchess, as the jest went in fashionable drawing-rooms. How often has a jest sealed a man's fate! Colla, the erewhile President of the Cisalpine Republic,

and the greatest advocate in Piémont, is told by a friend, at the age of forty, that he knows nothing of botany; he is nettled, he becomes a Jussieu, cultivates flowers, invents new ones, and publishes, in Latin, the *Flora of Piémont*, the work of ten years!

“Well, after all, Canning and Chateaubriand were statesmen,” said the extinguished poet, “and in me de Marsay shall find his master!”

Canalis would have liked to write an important political work; but he was afraid of getting into trouble with French prose, a cruelly exacting medium to those who have acquired the habit of taking four Alexandrine lines to express one idea. Of all the poets of the day, only three—Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and de Vigny—have been able to conquer the double glory of a poet and a prose-writer, which was also achieved by Voltaire, Molière, and Rabelais. It is one of the rarest triumphs in French literature, and distinguishes a poet far above his fellows. Our poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was therefore very wise to try to find shelter for his chariot under the guardian roof of a Government office.

When he was made Master of Appeals, he felt the need of a secretary, a friend who might fill his place on many occasions, cook his affairs with publishers, see to his fame in the newspapers, and, at a pinch, support him in politics—in short, who would be his satellite. Several men, famous in art, science, or letters, have one or two such followers in Paris, a captain in the Guards, or a Court Chamberlain, who lives in the beams of their sunshine, a sort of aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate tasks, allowing themselves to be compromised at need, working round the idol's pedestal, not quite his equals and not quite his superiors, men bold in puffery, the first in every breach, covering his retreats, looking after his business, and devoted to him so long as their illusions last, or till their claims are satisfied. Some at last perceive that their Great Man is ungrateful; others feel that they are being made use of; many weary of the work; and few indeed are satisfied by the mild interchange of sentiment, the only reward to be looked for from an intimacy with a superior man, and which satisfied Ali, raised by Mahomet to his own level. Many, deluded by their self-con-

ceit, think themselves as clever as their Great Man. Devotion is rare, especially without reward and without hope, as Modeste conceived of it.

Nevertheless, a Menneval is occasionally to be met with; and, in Paris more than anywhere, men love to live in the shade and to work in silence, Benedictines who have lost their way in a world which has no monastery for them. These valiant lambs bear in their deeds and in their private lives the poetry which writers put into words. They are poets at heart, in their secluded meditations, in their tenderness, as others are poets on paper, in the fields of intellect, and at so much a verse, like Lord Byron—like all those who live, alas! by ink, which in these days is the water of Hippocrene, for which the Government is to blame.

It was a young consulting referendary of the Court of Exchequer who constituted himself the poet's secretary; he was attracted by the poet's fame, and the future prospects of this vaunted political genius, and led by the advice of Madame d'Espard, who thus played the Duchesse de Chaulieu's cards for her; and Canalis made much of him, as a speculator does of his first share-holder. The beginnings of this alliance had quite an air of friendship. The younger man had already gone through a course of the same kind with one of the Ministers who fell in 1827; but the Minister had taken care to find him a place in the Exchequer.

Ernest de la Brière, at that time seven-and-twenty, decorated with the Legion of Honor, with nothing in the world but the emoluments of his office, had the habit of business, and after hanging about the private room of the Prime Minister for four years, he knew a good deal. He was gentle, amiable, with an almost maidenly soul, full of good feeling, and he hated to be seen in the foreground. He loved his country, he yearned to be of use, but brilliancy dazzled him. If he had had his choice, the place of secretary to a Napoleon would have been more to his mind than that of Prime Minister.

Ernest, having become the friend of Canalis, did great things for him, but in eighteen months he became aware of the shallowness of a nature which was poetical merely in its literary expression. The truth of the homely proverb, "The

cowl does not make the monk," is especially applicable in literature. It is most rare to find a talent and character in harmony. A man's faculties are not the sum-total of the man. This discord, of which the manifestations are startling, is the outcome of an unexplored—a perhaps unexplorable—mystery. The brain and its products of every kind—since in the arts the hand of man carries out his brain—form a world apart that flourishes under the skull, perfectly independent of the feelings, of what are called the virtues of a citizen, of the head of a family, of a private householder. And yet this is not final; nothing in man is final. It is certain that a debauchee will exhaust his talent in orgies, and a drunkard drown it in his libations, while a good man can never acquire talent by wholesome decency; but it is also almost proved that Virgil, the poet of love, never loved a Dido; and that Rousseau, the pattern citizen, had pride enough to furnish forth a whole aristocracy. Nevertheless, Michael Angelo and Raphael showed the happy concord of talent and character. Hence talent is in men, as far as the individual is concerned, what beauty is in women—a promise. Let us give twofold admiration to the man whose heart and character are equally perfect with his talent.

Ernest, when he detected under the poet an ambitious egoist—the worst species of egoist, for some are amiable—felt a singular diffidence about leaving him. Honest souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those they have voluntarily accepted. The secretary, then, was on very good terms with the poet when Modeste's letter was flying through the mail, but on the good terms of constant self-effacement. La Brière felt he owed Canalis something for the frankness with which he had revealed himself. And indeed, in this man, who will be accounted great so long as he lives, and made much of, like Marmontel, his defects are the seamy side of brilliant qualities. But for his vanity, his pretentious conceit, he might not have been gifted with that sonorous verbiage which is a necessary instrument in the political life of the day. His shallowness is part of his rectitude and loyalty; his ostentation is paired with liberality. Society profits by the results; the motives may be left to God.

Still, when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest had no illusions left as to Canalis. The two friends had just breakfasted, and were chatting in the poet's study; he was at that time living in ground-floor rooms looking out on a garden, beyond a courtyard.

"Ah!" cried Canalis, "I was saying the other day to Madame de Chaulieu that I must cast forth some new poem; admiration is running low, for it is some time since I have had any anonymous letters——"

"An unknown lady?"

"Unknown! A d'Este, and from le Havre! It is evidently an assumed name!"

And Canalis handed the letter to La Brière. This poem, this veiled enthusiasm, in short, Modeste's very heart, was recklessly exposed by the gesture of a coxcomb.

"It is a grand thing," said the young accountant, "thus to attract the chastest feelings, to compel a helpless woman to shake off the habits forced upon her by education, by nature, by society, to break through conventionalities. . . . What privileges genius commands! A letter like this in my hand, written by a girl, a genuine girl, without reservation, with enthusiasm . . ."

"Well?" said Canalis.

"Well, if you had suffered as much as Tasso, you ought to find it reward enough!" exclaimed La Brière.

"So we tell ourselves at the first or at the second letter," said Canalis. "But at the thirtieth! . . . but when we have discovered that the young enthusiast is an old hand! . . . but when at the end of the radiant path traveled over by the poet's imagination we have seen some English old maid sitting on a milestone and holding out her hand! . . . but when the angel—by post—turns into a poor creature, moderately good-looking, in search of a husband! . . . Well, then, the effervescence subsides."

"I am beginning to think," said La Brière, smiling, "that glory has something poisonous in it, like certain gorgeous flowers."

"Besides, my dear fellow," Canalis went on, "all these women, even when they are sincere, have an ideal to which

we rarely correspond. They never tell themselves that a poet is a man, and a tolerably vain one, as I am accused of being; it never occurs to them that he is rough-riden by a sort of feverish excitement which makes him disagreeable and uncertain. They want him to be always great, always splendid; they never dream that talent is a disease; that Nathan lives on Florine; that d'Arthez is too fat; that Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Béranger can go on foot; that the divinity may foam at the mouth. A Lucien de Rubempré, a verse-writer, and a pretty fellow, is a Phoenix. So why go out of your way to receive bad compliments and sit under the cold shower-bath of a disillusioned woman's helpless stare?"

"Then the true poet," said La Brière, "ought to remain hidden, like God, in the center of his universe, and be visible only in his creations!"

"Then glory would be too dearly paid for," replied Canalis. "There is some good in life, I tell you," said he, taking a cup of tea. "When a woman of birth and beauty loves a poet, she does not hide herself in the gallery or the stage-box of a theater, like a duchess smitten by an actor; she feels strong enough and sufficiently protected by her beauty, by her fortune, by her name, to say, as in every epic poem, 'I am the nymph Calypso, and I love Telemachus.' Mystification is the resource of small minds. For some time now I have never answered such masqueraders——"

"Oh! how I could love a woman who had come to me!" cried La Brière, restraining a tear. "It may be said in reply, my dear Canalis, that it is never a poor creature that rises to the level of a celebrated man; she is too suspicious, too vain, too much afraid. It is always a star, a——"

"A Princess," said Canalis, with a shout of laughter, "who condescends to him, I suppose?—My dear fellow, such a thing happens once in a century. Such a passion is like the plant that flowers once in a hundred years—Princesses who are young, rich, and handsome have too much else to do; they are inclosed, like all rare plants, within a hedge of silly men, well born and well bred, and as empty as an elder-stem. My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream hung with garlands of flowers all the way hither from la Corrèze, and

with what fervour!—But no more of that!—it is in fragments, at my feet, long since.—No, no, every anonymous letter is a beggar! And what demands they make. Write to this young person, assuming her to be young and pretty, and you will see! You will have your hands full. One cannot in reason love every woman. Apollo, or at any rate, the Apollo Belvedere, is a consumptive dandy who must save his strength.”

“But when a woman comes to you like this,” argued Ernest, “her excuse must lie in her certainty that she can eclipse the most adored mistress, in tenderness, in beauty—and then a little curiosity——”

“Ah!” said Canalis, “my too youthful Ernest, you must allow me to be faithful to the fair Duchess, who is all my joy!”

“You are right—too right,” replied Ernest.

Nevertheless, the young secretary read and re-read Modeste’s letter, trying to guess the mind behind it.

“But there is nothing extravagant in it, no appeal to your genius, only to your heart,” he said to Canalis. “This perfume of modesty and the exchange proposed would tempt me——”

“Sign it yourself; answer her, and follow up the adventure to the end; it is a poor bargain that I offer you,” exclaimed Canalis, with a smile. “Go on; you will have something to tell me in three months time, if it lasts three months . . .”

Four days after Modeste received the following letter, written on handsome paper, under a double cover, and sealed with the arms of Canalis.

## II.

*To Mademoiselle O. d’Este-M.*

“**MADemoiselle**,—Admiration for great works—admitting that mine may be great—implies a certain holy simplicity which is a defense against irony and a justification, in the eyes of every tribunal, of the step you have taken in writing to me. Above all, I must thank you for

the pleasure which such a testimonial never fails to give, even when undeserved, for the writer of verse and the poet alike secretly believe themselves worthy of them, self-love is a form of matter so far from repellent of praise. The best proof of friendship that I can give to an unknown lady in return for this balm, which heals the stings of criticism, is surely to share with her the harvest of my experience, at the risk of scaring away her living illusions.

“Mademoiselle, the noblest palm a young girl can bear is that of a saintly, pure, and blameless life. Are you alone in the world? That is a sufficient answer. But if you have a family, a father or a mother, consider all the sorrows that a letter like yours may entail—written to a poet whom you do not know. Not every writer is an angel; they have their faults. Some are fickle, reckless, conceited, ambitious, dissipated; and imposing as innocence must be, chivalrous as a French poet may be, you might find more than one degenerate bard willing to encourage your affection only to betray it. Then your letter would not be interpreted as I read it. He would find a meaning in it which you have not put there, and which in your innocence you do not even suspect. Many authors, many natures!

“I am extremely flattered by your having thought me worthy to understand you; but if you had addressed yourself to an insincere talent, to a cynic whose writings were melancholy while his life was a continual carnival, you might have found at the end of your sublime imprudence some bad man, a dangler behind the scenes, or wine-shop hero! You, under the arbor of clematis where you dream over poetry, cannot smell the stale cigar-smoke which de-poetizes the manuscript; just as when you go to a ball, dressed in the dazzling products of the jeweler’s skill, you never think of the sinewy arms, the toilers in their shirt-sleeves, the wretched workshops whence spring these radiant flowers of handicraft.

“Go further. What is there in the solitary life of reverie that you lead—by the seashore, no doubt—to interest a poet whose task it is to divine everything, since he must describe everything? Our young girls here are so highly accom-



plished, that no daughter of Eve can vie with them! What reality was ever so good as a dream? And you now, you, a young girl brought up to be the duteous mother of a family, what would you gain by an initiation into the terrible excitement of a poet's life in this appalling capital, to be defined only as a hell we love?

“If you took up your pen, prompted by the wish to enliven your monotonous existence as an inquisitive girl, has not this a semblance of depravity? What meaning am I to attribute to your letter? Are you one of a caste of reprobates, seeking a friend at a distance? Are you cursed with ugliness, and do you feel you have a noble soul with none to trust? Alas!—a sad conclusion—you have either gone too far, or not far enough. Either let it end here, or, if you persist, tell me more than in the letter you have already written.

“But, Mademoiselle, if you are young, if you have a family, if you feel that you bear in your heart a heavenly spikenard, to be shed, as the Magdalen shed hers on Christ's feet, suffer yourself to be appreciated by some man who is worthy of you, and become what every good girl should be—an admirable wife, the virtuous mother of children. A poet is the poorest conquest any young woman can aspire to; he has too much vanity, too many salient angles which must run counter to the legitimate vanity of a wife, and bruise the tenderness which has no experience of life. The poet's wife should love him for long before marrying him; she must resign herself to be as charitable and as indulgent as the angels, to all the virtues of motherhood. These qualities, Mademoiselle, exist only as a germ in a young girl.

“Listen to the whole truth; do I not owe it to you in return for your intoxicating flattery? Though it may be glorious to marry a great celebrity, a woman soon discovers that a man, however superior, is but a man like all others. He then the less fulfills her hopes, because miracles are expected of him. A famous poet is then in the predicament of a woman whose overpraised beauty makes us say, ‘I had pictured her as handsomer’; she does not answer

to the requirements of the portrait sketched by the same fairy to whom I owe your letter—Imagination!

“Again, great qualities of mind develop and flourish only in an invisible sphere; the poet’s wife sees only the unpleasant side of it; she sees the jewels made instead of wearing them. If the brilliancy of an exceptional position is what fascinates you, I warn you, its pleasures are soon exhausted. You would be provoked to find so much that is rough in a situation which from afar looks so smooth, so much ice on a glittering height! And then, as women never have set foot in the world of difficulty, they presently cease to value what they once admired, when they fancy that they have understood the workmanship at a glance.

“I will conclude with a last reflection, which you will do wrong to mis-read as an entreaty in disguise; it is the advice of a friend. A communion of souls cannot be complete excepting between two persons who are prepared to conceal nothing. Could you show yourself as you really are to a stranger? I pause before the consequences of such a notion.

“Accept, Mademoiselle, all the respect we owe to every woman, even to those who are unknown, and who wear a mask.”

To think that she had carried this letter between her skin and her stays, under the scorching busk, for a whole day! . . . that she had postponed reading it till an hour when everybody was asleep, till midnight, after waiting for the solemn hour in the pangs of a fiery imagination! . . . that she had blessed the poet, had read in fancy a thousand letters, had conceived of everything excepting this drop of cold water shed on the most diaphanous visions of fancy, and destroying them as prussic acid destroys life! . . . It was enough to make her hide her face—as Modeste did—under her sheets though she was alone, and put out the candle, and weep.

All this happened in the early days of July. Modeste presently got up, paced her room, and then opened the window. She wanted air. The scent of flowers came up to

her with the peculiar freshness of night-perfumes. The sea, lighted up by the moon, twinkled like a mirror. A night-ingale was singing in the Vilquins' park.

"Ah! there is the poet!" said Modeste to herself, her anger dying out.

The bitterest reflections crowded on her mind. She was stung to the quick; she wanted to read the letter again. She relighted the candle, and studied this careful production, till at last she heard the early voices of real life.

"He is in the right, and I am in the wrong," thought she. "But how could I expect to find one of Molière's old men under the star-spangled robe of a poet?"

When a woman or a girl is caught red-handed, she feels intense hatred of the witness, the first cause, or the object of her folly. And so Modeste, genuine, natural, and coy, felt her heart swell with a dreadful longing to trample on this essence of rectitude, and throw him over into some abyss of contradiction, to pay him back this stunning blow.

The pure-hearted child, whose head alone had been corrupted by her reading, by her sister's long agony, and by the perilous meditations of her solitude, was roused by a sunbeam falling on her face. She had lain for three hours tacking about on the immense ocean of doubt. Such nights are never forgotten.

Modeste went at once to her little lacquer table, her father's gift, and wrote a letter dictated by the infernal spirit of revenge which disports itself at the bottom of a young girl's heart.

### III.

#### *To Monsieur de Canalis.*

"MONSIEUR,—You are certainly a great poet, but you are something better—an honest man. After showing so much frank loyalty to a young girl on the verge of an abyss, have you enough to reply without the least hypocrisy or evasion to this question—

"Would you have written the letter I have received in

answer to mine—would your ideas, your language, have been the same if someone had whispered in your ear, what may be true: ‘Mademoiselle O. d’Este-M. has six millions of francs, and does not want to have a simpleton for her master?’

“For one moment admit this hypothesis for a fact. Be as honest with me as with yourself; fear nothing, I am superior to my twenty years, nothing that is genuine can injure you in my estimation. When I shall have read that confession, if indeed you vouchsafe to make it to me, you shall have an answer to your first letter.

“After admiring your talent, which is often sublime, allow me to do homage to your delicacy and rectitude, which compel me to sign myself

“Your humble servant,

“O. D’ESTE-M.”

When this note was placed in La Brière’s hands, he went out to walk on the Boulevard, tossed in his soul like a light bark in a tempest when the wind blows every minute from a different point of the compass. One of the young men of whom we meet so many—a true Parisian—would have summed up the case in these words, “An old hand!” But to a young fellow whose soul is lofty and refined, this sort of implied oath, this appeal to veracity, had the power to arouse the three judges that lurk at the bottom of every conscience. And Honor, Truth, and Justice, rising erect, cried aloud.

“Ah! my dear Ernest,” said Truth, “you certainly would not have written a lecture to a rich heiress. No, no, my boy, you would have set off, nose on for le Havre, to find out whether the young lady were handsome, and you would have been much aggrieved by the preference given to genius. And if you could only have tripped your friend up, and have made yourself acceptable in his place, Mademoiselle d’Este would have been divine!”—“What,” said Justice, “you pity yourselves, you men of brains or wit, and without cash, when you see rich girls married to men whom you would not employ as porters; you run amuck against the sordidness of the age, which is eager to wed money with money, and never to unite some fine young fellow full of talent to a rich

and high-born beauty; now here is one who rebels against the spirit of the time, and the poet retorts with a blow on her heart!"—"Rich or poor, young or old, handsome or plain, this girl is in the right, she has brains, she casts the poet into the mire of self-interest," cried Honor. "She deserves a sincere, noble, and honest reply, and, above all, the true expression of your thought! Examine yourself. Sound your heart, and purge it of its meannesses! What would Molière's Alceste say?"—And La Brière, starting from the Boulevard Poissonnière, lost in meditation, walked so slowly, that at the end of an hour he had but just reached the Boulevard des Capucines. He returned by the quays to the Exchequer, at that time situated near the Sainte-Chapelle. Instead of verifying accounts, he sat under the spell of his perplexities.

"She has not six millions, that is clear," said he to himself; "but that is not the question . . ."

Six days later Modeste received the following letter.

#### IV.

*To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.*

"**MADemoiselle**,—You are not a d'Este. That is an assumed name to conceal your own. Are such revelations as you request due to a person who is false as to her identity? Attend; I will answer your question by asking another, Are you of illustrious parentage? of noble birth? of a family of townfolk?

"Morality indeed cannot change; it is one; but its obligations vary in different spheres. As the sun sheds a different light on different aspects, producing the variety we admire, morality makes social duty conform to rank and position. What is a peccadillo in the soldier, is a crime in the general, and *vice versa*. The proprieties are not the same for a peasant girl who reaps the field, for a workman at fifteen sous a day, for the daughter of a small shopkeeper, for a young girl of the middle class, for the child of a rich commercial

house, for the heiress of a noble family, for a daughter of the race of Este. A king must not stoop to pick up a gold coin, and a workman must turn back to look for a piece of ten sous he has dropped, though both alike ought to observe the laws of economy. A d'Este owning six millions of francs may wear a broad-brimmed hat and feathers, flourish a riding whip, mount an Arab horse, and come as an Amazon in gold lace, followed by a groom, to say to a poet, 'I love poetry, and I desire to expiate the wrongs done by Leonora to Tasso,' while the daughter of a merchant would be simply ridiculous in imitating her.

"To what social class do you belong? Answer truly, and I will as truly reply to the question you ask me.

"Not being so happy as to know you, though already bound to you by a sort of poetical communion, I do not like to offer you any vulgar homage. It is already a triumph of mischief for you perhaps to have perplexed a man whose books are published."

The young accountant was not lacking in the skill of fence which a man of honor may allow himself. By return of post he received this reply.

## V.

*To Monsieur de Canalis.*

"You are more and more cautious, my dear poet. My father is a count. The most distinguished member of our family was a cardinal, in the days when cardinals were the equals of kings. At the present day our race, almost extinct, ends in me; but I have the necessary quarterings to admit me to any Court or any Chapter. In short, we are a match for the Canalis. Excuse my not forwarding our coat-of-arms.

"Try to write as sincerely as I do. I await your reply to know whether I may still subscribe myself, as now,

"Your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

“What advantage the young person takes of her position!” exclaimed La Brière. “But is she truthful?”

It is not for nothing that a man has been for four years a Minister’s private secretary; that he has lived in Paris and watched its intrigues; and the purest soul is always more or less intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of the Empress city. La Brière, rejoicing that he was not Canalis, secured a place in the mail-coach for le Havre, after writing a letter in which he promised a reply by a certain day, excusing the delay by the importance of the confession required of him, and the business of his office. He took the precaution of obtaining from the Director-General of the Mails a line enjoining silence and compliance on the head of the office at le Havre. He could thus wait to see Françoise Cochet arrive at the office, and quietly follow her home. Guided by her, he mounted the hill of Ingouville, and saw Modeste Mignon at the window of the Chalet.

“Well, Françoise?” asked the girl.

“Yes, Mademoiselle, I have got one.”

Ernest, struck by this celestial fair type of beauty, turned on his heel, and inquired of a passer-by the name of the owner of that splendid residence.

“That?” asked the native, pointing to the great house.

“Yes, my good fellow.”

“Oh, that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, the richest ship-owner of the place, who does not know how much he has.”

“I know of no Cardinal Vilquin in history,” said the accountant to himself, as he went down the town again, to return to Paris.

Of course, he questioned the postmaster as to the Vilquin family. He learned that the Vilquins owned an immense fortune; that Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of them married to young Monsieur Althor. Prudence saved La Brière from showing any adverse interest in the Vilquins; the postmaster was already looking at him with suspicion.

“Is there no one at the house just now besides the family?” he asked.

“Just at present the Hérouville family are there. There

is some talk of a marriage between the young Duke and the second Mademoiselle Vilquin."

"There was a famous Cardinal d'Hérouville," thought La Brière, "in the time of the Valois; and, under Henri IV., the terrible Marshal, who was created Duke.

Ernest returned, having seen enough of Modeste to dream of her; to believe that, rich or poor, if she had a noble soul, he would gladly make her Madame la Brière, and he determined to carry on the correspondence.

Do your utmost, hapless Frenchwomen, to remain unknown, to weave the very least little romance in the midst of a civilization which takes note on public squares of the hour when every hackney cab comes and goes, which counts every letter and stamps them twice at the exact hours when they are posted and when they are delivered, which numbers the houses, which registers each floor on the schedule of taxes, after making a list of the windows and doors, which ere long will have every acre of land, down to the smallest holdings and its most trifling details, laid down on the broad sheets of a survey—a giant's task, by command of a giant! Try, rash maidens, to evade—not, indeed, the eye of the police, but the ceaseless gossip which, in the poorest hamlet, scrutinizes your most trivial acts, counts the dishes at the Prefect's dessert, and sees the melon rind outside the door of the small annuitant, which tries to hear the chink of gold when Economy adds it to her treasury, and every evening, over the fire, sums up the incomes of the village, of the town, of the department!

Modeste, by a commonplace mistake, had escaped the most innocent espionage, for which Ernest already blamed himself. But what Parisian could endure to be the dupe of a little country girl? Never be duped! This odious maxim is a solvent for all man's noble sentiments. From the letter he wrote, where every lash of the scourge of conscience has left its mark, the reader may easily imagine the conflict of feeling to which the honest youth was a prey.

A few days later, Modeste, sitting at her window on a fine summer day, read the following pages.



## VI.

*To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.*

“**MADemoisELLE**,—Without hypocrisy, yes, if I had been sure that you had an immense fortune, I should have acted quite differently. Why? I have sought the reason, and it is this. There is in us an inborn feeling, developed, too, to an extreme by society, which urges us to seek and to seize happiness. Most men confound happiness with the means to happiness, and in their eyes fortune is its chief element. I should therefore have endeavored to please you, spurred by the social instinct that has in all ages made wealth a religion. At least, I think so. The wisdom which substitutes good sense for impulse is not to be looked for in a man who is still young; and when the prey is in sight, the animal instinct lurking in the heart of man urges him on. Thus, instead of a lecture, I should have sent you compliments and flattery.

“Should I have respected myself? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in such a case, success brings absolution; but as to happiness, that is another matter. Should I not distrust my wife if I won her thus? Most certainly. Your action would, sooner or later, have resumed its true character; your husband, however great you might deem him, would at last have reproached you for having humiliated him; and you, sooner or later, might have learned to despise him. An ordinary man cuts the Gordian knot of a marriage for money with the sword of tyranny. A strong man forgives. The poet bewails himself. This, Mademoiselle, is the answer given by my honesty.

“Now, attend to me well. Yours is the triumph of having made me reflect deeply, both on you, whom I know not enough, and on myself, whom I know but little. You have had the skill to stir up the evil thoughts that grovel at the bottom of every heart; but in me the outcome has been a generous something, and I hail you with my most grateful blessings, as, at sea, we hail a lighthouse warning us of rocks where we might have been wrecked.

“And now for my confession, for I would not lose your

esteem nor my own for the price of all the treasures on earth. I was bent on knowing who you were. I have just come back from le Havre, where I saw Françoise Cochet, followed her to Ingouville, and saw you in your magnificent villa. You are as lovely as a poet's dream of woman; but I know not whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin hidden under Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, hidden under Mademoiselle Vilquin. Though all is fair in war, I blushed at playing the spy, and I paused in my investigations. You piqued my curiosity; owe me no grudge for having been so womanly, is it not a poet's privilege? Now I have opened my heart to you; I have let you read it; you may believe in the sincerity of what I am about to add. Brief as was the glimpse I had of you, it was enough to modify my opinion. You are a poet and a poem even before being a woman. Yes, there is in you something more precious than beauty; you are the ideal of art, of fancy.

“The step you took, blamable in a young girl fated to a commonplace existence, is different in one gifted with such a character as I suppose you to have. Among the vast number of beings flung by chance into social life to make up a generation, there are exceptions. If your letter is the outcome of long poetical musing on the lot which the law reserves for women; if, carried away by the vocation of a superior and cultivated mind, you have wished to know something of the intimate life of a man to whom you concede the chance endowment of genius, in order to create a friendship with a soul akin to your own, exempt from vulgar conditions, and evading all the limitations of your sex—you are indeed an exception! The law which is good to measure the actions of the crowd is then very narrow to qualify your determination. But then the words of my first letter recur in all their meaning, ‘You have done too much or not enough.’

“Once more accept my thanks for the service you have done me in compelling me to probe my heart; for you have cured me of the error, common enough in France, of regarding marriage as a means to fortune. In the midst of the disturbance of my conscience a sacred voice has spoken. I have

solemnly sworn to myself to make my own fortune, that my choice of a wife may never be determined by mercenary motives. Finally, I have blamed and repressed the unbecoming curiosity you aroused in me. You have not six millions. It would be impossible at le Havre that a young lady possessed of such a fortune should remain unknown, and you would have been betrayed by the pack of those aristocratic families which I see in pursuit of heiresses here in Paris, and which has sent the King's chief equerry on a visit to your Vilquins. So the sentiments I express are put forward as a positive rule, apart from all romance or statement of fact.

“Now, prove to me that you have one of those souls which we allow to disobey the common law, and you will grant in your mind that this second letter is in the right as well as the first. You are destined to a middle-class life; obey the iron law that holds society together. You are a superior woman, and I admire you; but if you are bent on yielding to the instinct you ought to repress, I pity you; these are the conditions of the social state. The admirable moral of the domestic epic *Clarissa Harlowe* is that the victim's love, though legitimate and sincere, leads to her ruin, because it has its rise and progress in defiance of her family. The family, silly and cruel as it is, is in its rights as against Lovelace. The family is society.

“Believe me, for a girl, as for a wife, her glory will always consist in restraining her ardent whims within the strictest limits of propriety. If I had a daughter who might become a Madame de Staël, I would wish that she might die at fifteen. Can you think, without the acutest regret, of your own child exhibited on the stage of celebrity and parading to win the applause of the mob? However high a woman may have raised herself in the secret poetry of her dreams, she must sacrifice her superiority on the altar of family life. Her soaring moods, her genius, her aspirations towards the lofty and the sublime, all the poem of a girl's soul belongs to the man she accepts, the children she may bear. I discern in you a secret ambition to enlarge the narrow circle of life to which every woman is condemned,

and to bring passion and love into your marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream; it is not impossible; it is difficult; but it has been realized to bring incompatible souls—forgive me a word which has become ridiculous—to desperation.

“If you look for a sort of Platonic regard, it can only lead you to despair in the future. If your letter was a sport, play no more. And so this little romance ends, does it not? It will not have been altogether barren of fruit; my honesty has taken up arms; and you, on your part, have learnt something certain about social life. Turn your gaze on real life, and throw the transient enthusiasm to which literature has given birth into the virtues of your sex. Farewell, Mademoiselle; do me the honor of granting me your esteem. Since seeing you—or her whom I believe to be you—your letter has seemed to me quite natural; so fair a flower would instinctively turn toward the sun of poetry. So love poetry still, as you doubtless love flowers and music, the sumptuous grandeur of the sea, the beauties of Nature—all as ornaments of the soul; but remember all I have had the honor of telling you about poets. Be sure you do not marry an ass; seek with care for the mate God has created for you. There are, take my word for it, many clever men capable of appreciating you and of making you happy. If I were rich, and you were poor, I would some day lay my fortune and my heart at your feet, for I believe you have a soul full of riches and of loyalty; and I would intrust you with my life and honor in the fullest confidence. Once more farewell, fair daughter of fair Eve.”

On reading this letter—at one gulp, like a drink of cold water in a desert—the mountain weighing on Modeste’s heart was lifted; then, perceiving the mistakes she had made in carrying out her scheme, she corrected them at once by making some wrappers for Françoise, on which she wrote her own address at Ingouville, desiring her to come no more to the Chalet. Thenceforth Françoise was to go home, place each letter as it came from Paris in one of these wrappers, and privily repost it in the town. Modeste promised herself

always to meet the postman, standing at the front door at the hour when he should pass.

As to the feelings excited in Modeste by this reply in which poor La Brière's noble heart throbbed under the brilliant mask of Canalis, they were as infinite as the waves which rolled up to die one after another on the shore, while, with her eyes fixed on the ocean, she gave herself up to the joy of having harpooned an angel's soul, so to speak, in the sea of Paris, of having discerned that in a really superior man the heart may sometimes be on a par with genius, and of having been well advised by the voice of presentiment. A mastering interest would henceforth inspire her life. The inclosure of her pretty home, the wires of her cage were broken. Thought could soar on widespread wings.

"Oh, dear father," she cried, looking across to the horizon, "make us very rich!"

Her answer, which Ernest de la Brière read five days later, will tell more than any comments can.

## VII.

### *To Monsieur de Canalis.*

"MY FRIEND,—Let me call you so—you have enchanted me, and I would not have you other than you are in this letter—the first; oh, let it not be the last! Who but a poet could ever have so perfectly excused and understood a girl?"

"I wish to speak to you with the same sincerity as that which dictated the opening lines of your letter.

"In the first place, happily, you do not know me. I can tell you gladly, that I am neither that frightful Mademoiselle Vilquin, nor that most noble and most faded Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, who hovers between thirty and fifty, and cannot make up her mind to a creditable age. Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in Church history before the cardinal who is our only pride, for I do not count lieutenant-generals, or abbés who write small volumes of too big verse, as celebrities.

"Also, I do not live in the Vilquins' gorgeous villa; thank

God, not the millionth part of a drop of their blood chilled in many a counting-house flows in my veins. I am by birth partly German, partly a child of Southern France; in my brain lurks Teutonic sentiment, and in my blood the energy of the Provençal. I am of noble birth both on my father's and my mother's side; through my mother I have connections on every page of the *Almanach de Gotha*. But I have taken every precaution; it is not in the power of any man, not even of the police, to lift my disguise. I shall remain shrouded, unknown. As to myself and my belongings, *mes propres*, as they say in Normandy, be quite easy; I am at least as good-looking as the little person—happy, though she knows it not—on whom your eyes fell; and I do not think myself a pauper though I am not attended in my walks by ten sons of peers! I have even seen the contemptible farce played in my behoof of the heiress adored for her millions.

“Finally, make no attempt to find me, not even to win a bet. Alas! though free, I am guarded; in the first place, by myself, and then by very brave folks, who would not hesitate to stick a knife in your heart if you tried to penetrate this retreat. I say this, not to incite your courage or your curiosity; I believe no such sentiments are needed to arouse your interest in me, or to secure your attachment.

“I now proceed to reply to the second and greatly enlarged edition of your sermon.

“Shall I make a confession? When I found you so suspicious, taking me for a *Corinne*—how her improvisations have bored me!—I said to myself that many a tenth Muse had, ere now, led you by the tow-line of curiosity into her inmost vales, and proposed to you to taste the fruits of her schoolgirl Parnassus. . . . Be quite easy, my friend; though I love poetry, I have no copies of verses in my blotting-book; my stockings are, and will remain, perfectly white. You will not be bored by any ‘trifles’ in one or two volumes. In short, if I should ever say to you, ‘Come,’ you know now that you will not find an old maid, ugly and penniless. . . .

“Oh! my friend, if you could only know how much I regret that you should have come to le Havre! You have altered the aspect of what you call my romance. God alone

can weigh in His Almighty hands the treasure I had in store for a man great enough, confiding and clear-sighted enough, to set out on the strength of my letters, after having made his way step by step through all the recesses of my heart, and to come to our first meeting with the guilelessness of a child! I dreamed of such innocence in a genius; you have marred that treasure. I forgive you; you live in Paris; and, as you say, a poet is a man.

“Will you, therefore, take me to be a silly schoolgirl, cherishing the enchanted garden of illusions? Nay, do not amuse yourself with throwing stones at the broken windows of a long ruined castle. You, a man of wit, how is it that you never guessed that Mademoiselle d’Este had already read herself the lecture contained in your first letter? No, my dear poet, my first note was a pebble flung by a boy loitering along the highway, who thinks it fun to startle a landowner reading his tax-paper under shelter of his fruit-trees; or, rather, was the line carefully fixed by a fisherman from the top of a rock by the seashore, in hope of a miraculous draught.

“All you say so beautifully about family ties has my approbation. The man I shall love, and of whom I shall think myself worthy, shall have my heart and my life with my parents’ consent. I would neither distress nor startle them; I am certain of overruling them, and they have no prejudices. Again, I am strong enough to defy the illusions of my fancy. I have built a stronghold with my own hands, and have allowed it to be fortified by the unbounded devotion of those who watch over me as a treasure—not that I am not strong enough to defend myself in open fight; for, I may tell you, fate has clothed me in well-tempered armor on which is stamped the word DISDAIN. I have the deepest horror of everything which suggests self-interest, of all that is not entirely noble, pure, and disinterested. Without being romantic, I worship the beautiful and the ideal; though I have been romantic, all to myself, in my dreams. And so I could recognize the truth—true even to platitude—of what you wrote me as to social life.

“For the present, we are only, and can only be, friends.—

Why seek a friend among the unknown? you will ask. Your person is unknown to me; but your mind and heart are known to me; I like them, and I am conscious of infinite feelings in my soul, which demand a man of genius as their only confidant. I do not want the poem of my heart to be wasted; it shall be as beautiful for you as it would have been for God alone. What a precious thing is a trusty comrade to whom we may say what we will! Can you reject the unspoiled blossoms of a genuine girl? They will fly to you as gnats fly to the sunbeams. I am sure that your intellect has never before won you such a success—the confidences of a young girl. Listen to her prattle, accept the songs she has hitherto sung only for herself.

“By and by, if our souls are really akin, if on trial our characters agree, some day an old white-haired retainer will await you, standing by the roadside, and conduct you to a chalet, a villa, a castle, a palace—I do not yet know of what type that temple of Hymen may be—brown and gold, the colors of Austria, which marriage has made so powerful—nor whether such a conclusion may be possible; but confess that it is poetical, and that Mademoiselle d’Este has good ideas. Does she not leave you free? Does she come on jealous tiptoe to glance round Paris drawing-rooms? Does she lay on you the task of some high emprise, the chains which paladins of old voluntarily hung on their arm? What she asks of you is a really spiritual and mystical alliance.

“Come, come to my heart whenever you are unhappy, wounded, weary. Tell me everything, conceal nothing; I shall have balm for all your sorrows. I, my friend, am but twenty; but my mind is fifty, and I have unhappily known through another, my second self, the horrors and ecstasies of passion. I know all that the human heart can possibly contain of meanness and infamy, and yet I am the most honest girl living. No; I have no illusions left; but I have something better—faith and religion. There, I have played first in our game of confidences.

“Whoever my husband may be, if he is my own choice, he may sleep in peace; he might sail for the Indies, and on his return he would find me finishing the tapestry begun at



his departure; no eyes would have looked into mine, no man's voice would have tainted the air in my ear; in every stitch he might find a line of the poem of which he was the hero. Even if I should have been taken in by a fair and false exterior, that man would have every flower of my thought, every refinement of my tenderness, all the wordless sacrifices of proud and never suppliant resignation. Yes, I have vowed to myself never even to go out with my husband when he does not want me; I will be the divinity of his hearth. This is my human religion.—But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I shall be what life is to the body? Does a man ever find life an inconvenience? What is a wife who annoys her husband? Not life, but a sickness. By life, I mean the perfect health which makes every hour an enjoyment.

“To return to your letter, which will always be dear to me. Yes, jesting apart, it really contains what I had hoped for—the expression of prosaic sentiments, which are as necessary to family life as air is to the lungs, and without which happiness is out of the question. What I hoped for in my friend was, that he should act as an honest man, think as a poet, love as women love; and this is now, beyond a doubt, no longer a chimera.

“Farewell, my friend. At present I am poor. That is one of the reasons which make me cling to my mask, my incognito, my impenetrable fortress.

“I read your last poem in the *Revue*, and with what delight, after having mastered the austere and secret loftiness of your soul!

“Will it aggrieve you greatly to be told that a girl beseeches God fervently in your behalf, that she makes you her one thought, and that you have no rival in her heart but her father and mother? Can there be any reason why you should reject these pages that are full of you, that are written for you, that none but you will read? Repay me in kind. I am as yet so little a woman, that your effusions, so long as they are genuine and full, will suffice for the happiness of your

“O. D'ESTE-M.”

“Great Heavens! am I in love with her already!” exclaimed the young referendary, when he discovered that he had been sitting for an hour with this letter in his hand after having read it. “What must I do next? She believes she is writing to our great poet. Ought I to carry on the deception? Is she a woman of forty, or a girl of twenty?”

Ernest was fascinated by the abyss of the unknown. The unknown is dark infinitude, and nothing is more enthralling. From that murky vastness flash fires which rend it from time to time, and light up visions like those of Martin. In a life as full as that of Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a cornflower among the boulders of a torrent; in that of a young referendary awaiting the reinstatement in power of the party of which his patron was the representative, and who, as a precaution, was dry-nursing Canalis for parliament, this pretty girl—his imagination persistently believed her to be the fair-haired damsel he had seen—was bound to find a place in his heart, and commit all the ravages caused by a romance when it breaks into a humdrum existence, like a wolf into a farmyard. So Ernest thought a great deal about his unknown correspondent, and he replied by the following letter—an elaborate and pretentious letter, but already betraying some passion by its tone of annoyance.

### VIII.

#### *To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.*

“MADEMOISELLE,—Is it quite fair in you to come and establish yourself in a poor poet's heart with the admitted purpose of leaving him to his fate if he should not be to your mind, and bequeathing to him perennial regrets after showing him, for a few minutes, an image of perfection were it but assumed, or, at least, a first promise of happiness?”

“I was wanting in foresight when I requested the letter in which you have begun the display of your elegant assortment of ideas. A man may well fall in love with a stranger who can unite so much daring with so much originality, such fancy with such feeling. Who but would long to know you

after reading these first confidences? It is only by a really great effort that I preserve my balance when I think of you, for in you are combined all things that can disturb a man's heart and brain. So I take advantage of the remains of coolness I am able to preserve to put the case humbly before you.

“Do you believe, Mademoiselle, that letters which are more or less truthful in relation to life as it really is, and more or less insincere, since the letters we may write to each other must be the expression of the moment when we send them forth, and not the general outcome of our characters—do you believe, I ask, that however fine they may be, these letters can ever take the place of the expression of ourselves we should give through the practical evidence of daily life? Each man is twofold: There is the invisible life of the spirit, which letters may satisfy, and the mechanical life to which we attach, alas! more importance than you, at your age, can imagine. These two existences ought both to agree with the ideal you cherish, and this, it may be said, very rarely happens.

“The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul, at once well-informed and chaste, is one of those heavenly flowers whose color and fragrance are a consolation for every grief, every wound, every mortification entailed by a literary life in Paris; and I thank you with a fervor equal to your own; but after this poetical exchange of my woes in return for the pearls of your charity, what can you expect? I have neither the genius nor the splendid position of Lord Byron; above all, I have not the halo of his artificial damnation and his imaginary social grievances; but what would you have hoped for from him in similar circumstances? His friendship, no doubt. Well, he, who ought only to have been proud, was eaten up by an offensive and sickly vanity which discouraged friendship. I, who am a thousand times less great than he—may not I too have such discords of nature as make life unpleasing, and turn friendship into the most difficult burthen? What will you get in return for your dreams? The vexations of a life which will not be wholly yours.

“The bargain is a mad one, for this reason: The poetry of your dreams is but a plagiarism. A young German girl; not half-German like you, but wholly German, in the intoxication of her twenty years, adored Goethe; she made him her friend, her religion, her god, knowing that he was married. Frau Goethe, a good German soul, a poet’s wife, lent herself to this worship with very shrewd complacency—which failed to cure Bettina! But what was the end? The ecstatic married some substantial worthy German. Between ourselves, let us confess that a girl who should have made herself the handmaid of a genius, who should have raised herself to his level by understanding him, and have adored him piously till her death—as one of those divine figures might have done that painters have represented on the doors of their mystical shrines—and who, when Germany should lose Goethe, would have retired to some wilderness never more to see mankind—as Lord Bolingbroke’s lady did—let us confess that this girl would have lived forever in the poet’s glory as Mary Magdalen does in the blood-stained triumph of the Saviour.

“If this is sublime, what do you say to the converse of it?

“Being neither Lord Byron nor Goethe, but merely the writer of a few approved poems, I cannot claim the honors of worship. I have little in me of the martyr. I have a heart, but I am also ambitious, for I have to make my fortune, and I am yet young. See me as I am. The King’s favor and the patronage of his Ministers afford me a decent maintenance; I have all the habits of a very commonplace man. I go to evening parties exactly like the first fool you meet; but my carriage-wheels do not run, as the present times require, on ground made solid under me by securities in the State funds.

“Though I am not rich, I have not, on the other hand, the distinction conferred by a garret, by neglected work, by glory in penury, on certain men of greater merit than mine; for instance, on d’Arthez.

“What prosaic fifth act will you not find for the enchanted fancy of your young enthusiasm? Let it rest here. If I have been so happy as to seem to you an earthly wonder, you will have been to me something radiant and supernatural, like

a star that blazes and vanishes. Let nothing tarnish this episode in our lives. By remaining as we are, I may love you, going through one of those mad passions which break down every obstacle and light fires in the heart, which are alarming by their violence out of all proportion to their duration; and, supposing that I should succeed in pleasing you, we must end in the vulgarest way—marriage, housekeeping, and children! Oh, Bélise and Henriette Chrysale in one, can that be? So, farewell.”

## IX.

*To Monsieur de Canalis.*

“MY FRIEND,—Your letter gave me as much pain as pleasure. Perhaps we may soon find it all pleasure to read each other’s letters. Understand me. We speak to God, we ask of Him many things; He remains speechless. Now I want to have from you the answers God never gives us. Cannot such a friendship as that of Mademoiselle de Gour-nay and Montaigne be repeated? Have you not known the household of Sismonde de Sismondi, at Geneva, the most touching home-life ever seen, and of which I have been told—something like that of the Marchese and Marchesa di Pescara, happy even in their old age? Good Heavens! is it impossible that there should be two harps, which, though at a distance, respond to each other as in a symphony, and vibrate so as to produce delicious harmony? Man alone, in all creation, is at once the harp, the musician, and the hearer.

“Do you see me fretting after the manner of ordinary women? Do not I know that you go into society and see the handsomest and cleverest women in Paris? Can I not imagine that one of those sirens might embrace you in her cold scales, and that it is she who has sent the answer that grieves me by its prosaic reflections? There is, my friend, something more beautiful than these flowers of Parisian blandishment; there is a flower that grows at the height of those Alpine peaks called men of genius; the pride of humanity, which they fructify by shedding on it the clouds

they collect with their heads in the skies; that flower I intend to cultivate and to make it open, for its wild, sweet perfumes will never fail us; they are perennial.

“Do me the honor to believe that in me there is nothing common. If I had been Bettina—for I know to whom you allude—I would never have been Frau von Arnim; and if I had been one of Lord Byron’s loves, I should at this moment be in a convent. You have touched me in a sensitive spot.

“You do not know me; you will know me. I feel in myself a sublime something which may be spoken of without vanity. God has implanted in my soul the root of that hybrid plant I have mentioned as native to Alpine heights, and I will not stick it in a flower-pot at my window to see it perish. No, that gorgeous and unique blossom, full of intoxicating fragrance, shall not be dragged through the vulgarities of life; it is yours—yours without a glance having blighted it, yours forever! Yes, dear one, yours are all my thoughts, even the most secret, the most mad; yours is the heart of a girl without reserve; yours an infinite affection. If I do not like you personally, I shall not marry.

“I can live the life of the heart, the life of your mind, of your feelings; they please me, and I shall always be, as I am now, your friend. There is beauty of nature in you, and that is enough for me. There lies my life. Do not disdain a pretty young handmaiden who, for her part, does not shrink from the idea of being some day the poet’s old housekeeper, in some sort his housewife, in some sort his common-sense, in some sort his wealth. This devoted maid, so precious in your lives, is pure, disinterested Friendship, to whom everything is revealed; who listens sometimes with a shake of the head, and who sits late, spinning by the light of the lamp, to be at hand when the poet comes home, soaked by the rain or out of sorts. This is my destiny if I am never to be a happy and faithfully attached wife: I can smile on one as on the other.

“And do not suppose that France will be deeply aggrieved if Mademoiselle d’Este does not give her two or three children,

or refuses even to be a Madame Vilquin, or the like! I, for my part, shall never be an old maid. I shall make myself a motherhood by beneficence, and by secretly sharing the existence of a great man, to whom I shall dedicate all my thoughts and all my earthly efforts. I have the utmost horror of the commonplace. If I should be free and rich—and I know I am young and handsome—I will never become the property of some simpleton under the excuse of his being the son of a peer of France; nor of some good-looking man, who would be the woman of the two; nor of any man who would make me blush twenty times a day at the thought that I was his. Be quite easy on that score.

“My father adores my wishes too much ever to contravene them. If my poet likes me, if I like him, the glorious palace of our love will be built so high that it will be absolutely inaccessible to misfortune. I am an eaglet; you will see it in my eye. I will not repeat what I have already told you, but I put it into fewer words when I assure you that I shall be of all women the most glad to be as completely the captive of love as I am at this moment of my father’s will.

“Come, my friend, let us reduce to the truth of romance what has come upon us by my free-will.

“A girl of lively imagination shut up in a turret is dying to run about in a park which only her eyes can explore; she invents a way of opening her bars, she springs out of windows, climbs the park wall, and goes off to sport at her neighbor’s. It is the eternal comedy! . . . Well, that girl is my soul, the neighboring park is your genius. Is it not most natural? Was a neighbor ever heard of who complained of his trellis being damaged by pretty feet?

“So much for the poet; but must the ultra-reasonable hero of Molière’s comedies have reasons? Here are plenty. My dear *Géronte*, marriages are commonly made in direct opposition to common-sense. A family makes inquiries as to a young man. If this *Léandre*, provided by a friendly gossip, or picked up in a ballroom, has robbed no one, if he has no visible stain, if he has as much money as is expected, if he has come from college or has had a legal training, thus satisfying

the usual ideas of education, he is allowed to call on a young lady, dressed to receive him from the moment when she gets up, instructed by her mother to be careful of what she says, and enjoined to keep anything of her soul or heart from being read in her countenance by assuming a set smile, like a dancer finishing a pirouette; she is armed with the most positive instructions as to the perils of showing her true character, and advised not to appear too distressingly knowing. The parents, when all the points of interest are satisfactorily settled between them, are simple-minded enough to recommend the young people to know all they can of each other during the few moments when they are alone, when they talk together, when they walk out—without any kind of freedom, for they know that they are tied already. Under such conditions a man dresses his mind as carefully as his person, and the girl on her side does the same. This miserable farce, carried on with gifts of flowers and jewels and places at the play, is what is called courting a girl.

“This is what I rebel against, and I mean to make legal marriage the outcome of a long marriage of souls. In all a girl’s life this is the only moment when she needs reflection, insight, and experience. Her liberty and happiness are at stake, and you place neither the dice nor the box in her hands; she bets on the game; she is but a looker-on. I have the right, the will, and the power to work out my own woe, and I will use them—as my mother did when, guided by instinct, she married the most generous, devoted, and loving of men, who bewitched her one evening by his beauty. I know you to be single, a poet, and handsome. You may be sure that I never should have chosen for my confidant one of your brethren in Apollo who was married. If my mother was attracted by a handsome face, which is perhaps the genius of form, why should not I be attracted by mind and form combined? Shall I know you better after studying you by correspondence than after beginning by the vulgar method of so many months of courting? ‘That is the question,’ saith Hamlet.

“My plan, my dear Chrysale, has at least the advantage of not compromising our persons. I know that love has its



illusions, and every illusion has its morrow. Therein lies the reason why so many lovers part who believed themselves bound for life. The true test lies in suffering and in happiness. When, after standing this double test of life, two beings have shown all their faults and good qualities, and have learnt each other's characters, they may go to the tomb hand in hand; but, my dear Argante, who tells you that our little drama has no future before it? . . . And, at any rate, shall we not have had the pleasure of our correspondence?

"I await your commands, Monsiegnieur, and remain, with all my heart, yours obediently,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

## X.

*To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.*

"You are a demon! I love you. Is that what you want, extraordinary girl? Perhaps you only wish to divert your leisure in the country by looking on at the follies of which a poet is capable? That would be a very wicked thing. Your two letters betray just enough of mischief to suggest the doubt to a Parisian. But I am no longer master of myself; my life and future hang on the answer you may send me. Tell me whether the certain possession of an unbounded affection given to you, in defiance of social conventionalities, can touch you: if you will allow me to visit you. There will still be ample room for doubt and agony of mind in the question whether I shall be personally agreeable to you. If your answer is favorable, I alter my life, and bid adieu to many vexations which we are so foolish as to call happiness.

"Happiness, my dear, beautiful, unknown one, is what you have dreamed it; a perfect fusion of feelings, an absolute harmony of souls, a keen sense of ideal beauty—so far as God vouchsafes it to us here below—stamped on the common actions of a life whose round we are bound to follow; above all constancy of heart, far more precious than what we call fidelity. Can anything be called a sacrifice when the

end is the supremest good, the dream of poets and of maidens, the poem to which on entering life—as soon as the spirit tries its wings—every lofty mind looks up with longing, brooding eyes, only to see it dashed to pieces against a stumbling-stone as hard as it is vulgar; for almost every man sees the foot of reality set down at once on that mysterious egg which hardly ever hatches out?

“ I will not as yet tell you of myself, of my past, of my character, nor of an affection—almost motherly on one side, and on mine almost filial—in which you have already wrought a change with results in my life that may explain the word sacrifice. You have made me forgetful, not to say ungrateful. Is that enough to satisfy you? Oh! speak! say one word, and I shall love you till my eyes are closed in death, as Pescara loved his wife, as Romeo loved his Juliet, and faithfully. Our life—mine, at any rate—will be that untroubled happiness of which Dante speaks as being the atmosphere of his ‘Paradiso’—a poem infinitely superior to his ‘Inferno.’

“ Strange to say, it is not myself, but you, whom I doubt in the long meditations in which I have allowed myself—like you, perhaps—to follow the chimerical course of a dream-life. Yes, dear one, I feel in me the strength to love thus, to go on my way to the tomb gently, slowly, always smiling, arm in arm with the woman I love, without a cloud on the fair weather of my soul. Yes, I have courage enough to look forward to our old age together, to see us both with white hair, like the venerable historian of Italy, still inspired by the same affection, but changed by the spirit of each season.

“ You see, I can no longer be no more than your friend. Though Chrysale, Oronte, and Argante, you say, have come to life again in me, I am not yet so senile as to drink of a cup held by the fair hands of a veiled woman without feeling a fierce desire to tear away the domino, the mask, and to see her face. Either write no more, or give me hope. I must have a glimpse of you, or throw up the game. Must I say farewell? Will you allow me to sign myself,

“ YOUR FRIEND? ”

## XI.

*To Monsieur de Canalis.*

“What flattery! How quickly has grave Anselme turned into a dashing Léandre! To what am I to ascribe such a change? Is it to the black I have scribbled on white, to the ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn in black-lead pencil is to the roses of the garden? Or to the remembrance of the girl you took for me, who is to my real self what a waiting-maid is to her mistress? Have we exchanged parts? Am I reason, and are you folly?”

“A truce to this nonsense. Your letter made me acquainted with intoxicating joys of soul, the first I have not owed to family feelings. What, a poet has asked, are the ties of blood which weigh so heavily on ordinary souls in comparison with those which Heaven forges for us of mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, there are no thanks for such things. Blessings on you for the happiness you have given me; may you be happy with the gladness you poured into my soul.

“You have explained to me some apparent injustice in social life. There is something brilliant in glory, something masculine which becomes men alone, and God has prohibited women from wearing this halo, while giving us love and tenderness with which to refresh the brows on which its awful light rests. I feel my mission, or rather, you have confirmed me in it.

“Sometimes, my friend, I have risen in the morning in a frame of inconceivable sweetness. A sort of peace, tender and divine, gave me a sense as of Heaven. My first thought was like a blessing. I used to call these mornings my German *levers*, to distinguish them from my southern sunsets, full of heroic deeds of battles, of Roman festivals, and of ardent verse. Well, after having read the letter into which you breathed a fever of impatience, I felt in my heart the lightness of one of those heavenly awakenings, when I loved air and nature, and felt myself destined to die for someone I loved. One of your poems, ‘Le Chant d’une jeune fille,’

describes these delicious hours when gladness is sweet, when prayer is a necessity, and it is my favorite piece. Shall I put all my flattery into one line: I think you worthy to be me!

“Your letter, though short, allowed me to read your heart. Yes, I could guess your tumultuous impulses, your excited curiosity, your plans, all the fagots carried (by whom) for the pyre of your heart. But I do not yet know enough of you to comply with your request. Understand, dear one, it is mystery which allows me the freedom that betrays the depths of my soul. When once we have met, farewell to our knowledge of each other.

“Shall we make a bargain? Was the first we made a bad one for you? You gained my esteem by it. And admiration supported by esteem is a great thing, my friend. First write me a sketch of your life in a few words; then tell me about your life in Paris, day by day, without any disguise, as if you were chatting to an old friend: well, then, after that I will carry our friendship a step further. I will see you, my friend, that I promise you; and it is a great deal.

“All this, dear, I warn you, is neither intrigue nor an adventure; it cannot result in any kind of ‘affair’ of gallantry, as you men say among yourselves. My life is involved in it, and moreover—a thing which sometimes causes me terrible remorse as to the thoughts I send flying to you in flocks—not less involved is the life of a father and mother I adore, whom I must satisfy in my choice, and who in my friend must find a son.

“How far can you lordly souls, to whom God has given the wings of angels, but not always their perfections, yield to the Family and its petty needs? A text I have pondered over already! Although before going forth to you I said in my heart, ‘Be bold!’ it has not quaked the less on the road, and I have never deceived myself either as to the roughness of the way or the difficulties of the mountain I had to climb. I have followed it all out in long meditations. Do I not know that men as eminent as you are have known the love they have inspired quite as well as that they have felt; that they have had more than one romance; and that you, above all, while cherishing those thorough-bred chimeras

which a woman will buy at any cost, have gone through more final than first chapters? And yet I could say to myself, 'Be bold!' because I have studied the geography of the high peaks of Humanity that you accuse of coldness—studied them more than you think. Did you not say of Byron and Goethe that they were two colossal masses of egoism and poetry? Ah, my friend, you there fall into the error of superficial minds; but it was perhaps generosity on your part, false modesty, or the hope of evading me.

"The vulgar may be allowed, but you may not, to regard the results of hard work as a development of the individual. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor Cuvier, nor any inventor belongs to himself; they are all the slaves of an idea; and this mysterious power is more jealous than a woman, it absorbs them, it makes them or kills them for its own advantage. The visible outcome of this concealed life resembles egoism in its effects; but how dare we say that a man who has sold himself for the delight, the instruction, or the greatness of his age, is an egoist? Is a mother accused of selfishness when she sacrifices everything for her child? Well, the detractors of genius do not discern its teeming maternity, that is all.

"The poet's life is so perpetual a sacrifice that he needs a gigantic organization to enable him to enjoy the pleasures of an ordinary life. Hence, if, like Molière, he insists on living the life of feelings while giving them expression in their most acute crises, what disasters come upon him! for to me the comic side of Molière, as overlaying his private life, is really horrible. The magnanimity of genius seems to me almost divine, and I have classed you with that noble family of egoists so called. Oh! if I had found shallowness, self-interest, and ambition where, as it is, I admire all the flowers of the soul that I love best, you cannot know what slow suffering would have consumed me. I found disappointment sitting at the portal of my sixteenth year; what should I have done if at twenty I had found fame a liar, and the man, who in his writings had expressed so many of the sentiments buried in my heart, incapable of understanding that heart when disclosed to him alone?

“Do you know, my friend, what would have become of me? I am going to admit you to the very depths of my soul. Well, I should have said to my father, ‘Bring me any son-in-law to your mind; I give up all free-will; get me married to please yourself!’—and the man might have been a notary, a banker, avaricious, stupid, provincial, as tiresome as a rainy day, as vulgar as a parish voter; he might have been a manufacturer or some brave but not brainless soldier—he would have found in me his most resigned and attentive slave. But then—dreadful suicide at every instant!—my soul would never have unfolded in the life-giving beams of the sun it worships. Not a murmur should ever have revealed to my father, my mother, or my children the suicide of the being who is at this moment shaking its prison-bars, flashing lightnings from my eyes, flying to you on outspread pinions, perching like a Polyhymnia in the corner of your study, breathing its atmosphere, and gazing at everything with a mildly inquisitive eye. Sometimes in the fields, where my husband might have taken me, I should have escaped a little way from my babes, and, seeing a lovely morning, would secretly have shed a few very bitter tears. Finally, in my heart, and in the corner of a drawer, I should have stored a little comfort for every girl betrayed by love, poor poetical souls dragged into torments by a smiling face!

“But I believe in you, my friend. This faith purifies the most fantastic notions of my secret ambition, and sometimes—see how frank I can be—I long to be in the middle of the story we have just begun, so assured am I of my feelings, such strength for love do I feel in my heart, such constancy founded on reason, such heroism to fulfill the duty I am creating for myself in case love should ever turn to duty.

“If it were given to you to follow me to the splendid seclusion where I picture our happiness, if you could know my schemes, you might utter some terrible sentence about madness, and I should perhaps be cruelly punished for sending so much poetry to a poet. Yes, I want to be a living spring, to be as inexhaustible as a beautiful country during the twenty years which nature allows us to shine in. I will keep satiety at a distance by refinements and variety. I will

be brave for my love as other women are for the world. I will vary happiness, lend wit to tenderness, and piquancy to faithfulness. I am ambitious; I will kill my past rivals, dispel superficial troubles by the sweetness, the proud self-devotion of a wife, and, for a whole lifetime, give such care to the nest as a bird gives for only a few days. This immense dower ought, and could, only be offered to a great man before being dropped into the mire of vulgar conventionality.

“Now, do you still think my first letter a mistake? A gust of some mysterious will flung me towards you, as a tempest may carry a rose-bush to the heart of a stately willow. And in the letter I keep here—next my heart—you have exclaimed like your ancestor when he set out for the crusades, ‘It is God’s will!’

“You will be saying, ‘How she chatters!’ All those about me say, ‘Mademoiselle is very silent!’

“O. D’ESTE-M.”

These letters seemed very original to those persons to whose kindness the author of the *Comédie Humaine* is beholden for them; but their admiration for this duel between two minds crossing their pens, while their faces were hidden by the strictest incognito, may not be generally shared. Of a hundred spectators, eighty perhaps will be tired of this assault of arms. So the respect due to the majority—even to a possible majority—in every country enjoying a constitutional government, advises the suppression of eleven more letters exchanged by Ernest and Modeste during the month of September; if a flattering majority should clamor for them, let us hope that it may one day afford me the means of restoring them here.

Tempted on by a wit as audacious as the heart beneath seemed to be adorable, the poor private secretary’s really heroic feelings gave themselves the rein in those letters, which each reader’s imagination may conceive of as finer than they really are, when picturing this harmony of two unfettered souls. Ernest, indeed, lived only on these dear scraps of paper, as a miser lives on those sent forth by the bank; while in Modeste a deep attachment had grown up in the place of

the pleasure of bringing excitement into a life of celebrity, and being, in spite of distance, its chief element. Ernest's affection completed Canalis' glory. Alas! it often takes two men to make one perfect lover, just as in literature a type can only be produced by a compound of the peculiarities of several different characters. How often has a woman said in a drawing-room after some intimate talk: "That man would be my ideal as to his soul, but I feel that I love that other who is no more than a fancy of my senses!"

The last letter written by Modeste, which here follows, gives us a glimpse of the *Isle of Pheasants*, whither the divagations of this correspondence were conducting our lovers.

## XII.

### *To Monsieur de Canalis.*

"Be at le Havre on Sunday; go into the church after the one o'clock service, walk round it two or three times, go out without speaking to anyone, without asking anybody a question; wear a white rose in your button-hole. Then return to Paris, you will there find an answer. This answer will not be such as you expect, for I must tell you, the future is not yet in my hands. But should I not be really mad to say *yes* without having seen you? When I have seen you, I can say *no* without offense. I am sure to remain unrecognized."

This was the letter Modeste had sent off the very day before that on which the futile struggle between herself and Dumay had taken place. So she was happy in looking forward with yearning impatience to Sunday, when her eyes would prove her intuitions, her heart, to be right or wrong—one of the most solemn moments in a woman's life, made, too, as romantic as the most enthusiastic girl could desire by three months of communion soul to soul.

Everybody, excepting her mother, had taken this torpor of expectancy for the placidity of innocence. However stringent the laws of family life and religious bonds, there



are still Julies d'Étanges and Clarissas—souls which, like a brimming cup, overflow under the divine touch. Was not Modeste splendid in the fierce energy she brought to bear on repressing her exuberant youth, and remaining concealed? Let us confess that the memory of her sister was more potent than any social limitations; she had sheathed her will in iron that she might not fail her father or her family. But what a turbulent upheaval! and how could a mother fail to perceive it?

On the following day Modeste and Madame Dumay led Madame Mignon out into the noonday sun to her bench among the flowers. The blind woman turned her pale withered face towards the ocean; inhaled the scent of the sea, and took Modeste's hand in her own, for the girl was sitting by her mother. Even as she was about to question her child, the mother hesitated between forgiveness and remonstrance, for she knew that this was love, and to her, as to the false Canalis, Modeste seemed exceptional.

“If only your father may be here in time! If he delays much longer, he will find you alone of those he loved! Promise me once more, Modeste, never to leave him,” she said, with motherly persuasiveness.

Modeste raised her mother's hands to her lips, and kissed them softly, as she replied—

“Need I tell you so again?”

“Ah, my child; you see, I myself left my father to go to my husband! And my father was alone too; I was his only child. . . . Is that what God is punishing me for, I wonder?—All I ask you is to marry in agreement with your father's choice, to keep a place for him in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your happiness; to keep him in the bosom of your family. Before I lost my sight I made a note of my wishes; he will carry them out; I have enjoined on him to keep the whole of his fortune, not that I have thought of distrusting you, but can one ever be sure about a son-in-law? I, my child, was I prudent? A flash of an eye settled my whole life. Beauty, the most deceitful of shows, spoke the truth to me; but if it should ever be the same with you, poor child, swear to me that if appearances should carry you

away, as they did your mother, you would leave it to your father to make inquiries as to the character, the heart, and the previous life of the man of your choice, if you make a choice."

"I will never marry without my father's consent," replied Modeste.

On hearing this answer, her mother sat in complete silence, and her half-dead countenance showed that she was pondering on it, as blind people ponder, meditating on her daughter's tone in speaking it.

"You see, my child," said Madame Mignon, after a long silence, "the thing is this: If Caroline's wrong-doing is killing me by inches, your father would never survive yours; I know him; he would blow his brains out; there would be neither life nor happiness on earth for him . . ."

Modeste walked away a few steps, and returned in a minute.

"Why did you leave me?" asked Madame Mignon.

"You made me cry, mamma," said Modeste.

"Well, my angel, kiss me then. You love no one here? You have no one paying attentions to you?"

"No, mamma," said the little Jesuit.

"Can you swear to that?"

"Really, truly!" cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more; she still doubted.

"In short, if you should choose a husband, your father would know all about it?"

"I promised that to my sister and to you, mother. What sin do you suppose I could commit when every minute I read on my finger, *Remember Bettina!*—Poor little sister!"

At the moment when the words, "Poor little sister!" were followed by an interval of silence between Modeste and her mother, from whose darkened eyes fell tears which Modeste could not check even by falling at Madame Mignon's knees and crying, "Forgive me; forgive me, mamma!"—at that very moment the worthy Dumay was mounting the hill of Ingouville at a rapid pace, an abnormal incident in the cashier's life.

Three letters had once brought them ruin; one had brought fortune back to them. That morning Dumay had received,

by the hand of a captain just returned from the China seas, the first news he had had of his patron and only friend.

*To Monsieur Dumay, formerly cashier to the  
firm of Mignon.*

“MY DEAR DUMAY,—Barring misadventure by sea, I shall follow closely on the vessel by which I am forwarding this letter; I would not leave the ship to which I am accustomed. I told you, No news was to be good news; but the first words of this letter will rejoice you, for those words are, I have at least seven millions of francs! I am bringing a large part of it in indigo, a third in good bills on London and Paris, another third in bright gold. The money you sent me enabled me to make the sum I had determined on—two millions for each of the girls, and comfort for myself.

“I have been dealing wholesale in opium for the Canton houses, all ten times as rich as I am. You have no notion in Europe of what the rich China merchants are. I traveled from Asia Minor, where I could buy opium cheap, to Canton, where I sold it in bulk to the firms that deal in it.

“My last voyage was to the Malay Archipelago, where I could buy indigo of the first quality with the proceeds of the opium trade. Perhaps I may find that I have five or six hundred thousand francs more, as I am valuing my indigo only at cost price.

“I have been quite well all the time; never an ailment. That is the reward of traveling for one’s children! At the beginning of the second year I was able to purchase the *Mignon*, a nice brig of seven hundred tons burthen, built of teak, and lined with the same, and copper-bottomed; fitted throughout to suit my convenience. This, too, is worth something. The seafaring life, the constant change needed in my trading, and hard work, as being in a way my own captain on the high seas, have all kept me in excellent health.

“To speak of all this is to speak of my two girls and my dear wife! I hope that on hearing of my ruin the wretch who robbed me of my Bettina may have deserted her, and the wandering lamb have returned to the cottage. She, no doubt, will need a larger dower.

“ My three women and my good Dumay—you have all four been constantly in my thoughts during these three years. Dumay, you are a rich man. Your share, besides my own fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, which I am forwarding to you by a draft, payable to yourself only, by the firm of Mongenod, who are advised from New York. A few months more and I shall see you all again—well, I hope.

“ Now, my dear Dumay, I write to you only, because I wish you to keep the secret of my fortune, and I leave it to you to prepare my dear ones for the joy of my return. I have had enough of trade, and I mean to leave le Havre.

“ The choice of my sons-in-law is a very serious matter. It is my intention to repurchase the estate and château of la Bastie, to endow it with an entailed settlement of a hundred thousand francs a year at least, and to petition the King to confer my name and titles on one of my sons-in-law. You, my dear Dumay, know the misfortune that befell us in consequence of the fatal splendor given by wealth. By that I wrecked the honor of one of my daughters. I carried back to Java the most wretched of fathers—an unhappy Dutch merchant with nine millions of francs, whose two daughters had been both carried off by villains! We wept together like two children. So I will not have the amount of my fortune known.

“ I shall not land at le Havre, but at Marseilles. My mate is a Provençal, an old retainer of my family, whom I have enabled to make a little fortune. Castagnouid will have my instructions to repurchase la Bastie, and I shall dispose of my indigo through the firm of Mongenod. I shall place my money in the Bank of France, and come home to you, professing to have made no more than about a million francs in merchandise. My daughters will be reputed to have two hundred thousand francs apiece. Then my great business will be to decide which of my sons-in-law may be worthy to succeed to my name, my arms, and my titles, and to live with us; but they must both be, as you and I are, absolutely steady, firm, loyal, and honest men.

“ I have never doubted you, old boy, for a single instant.

I have felt sure that my dear and admirable wife, with yours and yourself, will have drawn an impassable fence round my daughter, and that I may press a kiss full of hope on the pure brow of the angel that remains to me. Bettina-Caroline, if you have been able to screen her fault, will have a fortune. After trying war and trade, we will now go in for agriculture, and you must be our steward. Will that suit you?

“And so, old friend, you are master of your line of conduct to the family, to tell them, or to say nothing of my success. I trust to your judgment; you are to say just what you think right. In four years there may have been many changes of character. I make you the judge; I so greatly fear my wife’s tender weakness with her daughters.

“Farewell, my dear old Dumay. Tell my wife and daughters that I have never failed to embrace them in my heart every day, morning and evening. The second draft, for forty thousand francs, payable, like the other, to you alone, is for my wife and daughters to go on with.

“Your master and friend,

“CHARLES MIGNON.”

“Your father is coming home,” said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

“What makes you think that, mamma?” asked Modeste.

“Nothing could make Dumay run but having that news to bring us.”

Modeste, lost in her own thoughts, had not seen nor heard Dumay.

“Victory!” shouted the Lieutenant from the gate. “Madame, the Colonel has never been ill, and he is coming home. . . . He is coming on the *Mignon*, a good ship of his own, which, with the cargo he describes to me, must be worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he urgently begs you will say nothing about it; the disaster to our poor lost child has eaten deeply into his heart.”

“He has made room in it for a grave then,” said Madame Mignon.

“And he ascribes this disaster—as seems to me most

probable—to the greed which a large fortune excites in young men. My poor Colonel hopes to find the lost lamb among us here.—Let us rejoice among ourselves, and say nothing to anybody, not even to Latournelle if possible.—Mademoiselle,” he added to Modeste apart, “write a letter to your father to tell him of the loss in the family and its terrible consequences, so as to prepare him for the dreadful sight that awaits him; I will undertake that he shall get the letter before arriving at le Havre, for he will be obliged to come through Paris; write fully, you have plenty of time; I will take the letter on Monday; on Monday, no doubt, I shall have to go to Paris——”

Modeste was now afraid lest Dumay and Canalis should meet; she was eager to go up to her room and write to put off the assignation.

“Tell me, Mademoiselle,” Dumay went on in the humblest tone, but standing in her path, “that your father will find his daughter without a feeling in her heart but that which was in it when he left—of love for her mother.”

“I have sworn to my sister and my mother—I have sworn to myself to be my father’s comfort, his joy, and his pride, and—I—will be,” replied Modeste, with a haughty and scornful glance at Dumay. “Do not mar my joy at knowing that my father will soon be amongst us again by any offensive suspicions. A young girl’s heart cannot be hindered from beating; you do not wish me to be a mummy? I belong to my family; but my heart is my own. If I love anyone, my father and mother shall be told of it. Are you satisfied, Monsieur?”

“Thank you, Mademoiselle,” replied Dumay. “You have restored me to life. But you might at least have called me Dumay, even when giving me a slap in the face!”

“Swear to me,” said her mother, “that you have never exchanged a word or glance with any young man.”

“I can swear it,” said Modeste, smiling, and looking at Dumay, who was studying her, with a mischievous smile like a girl’s playing off some joke.

“Can she really be so false!” exclaimed Dumay, when Modeste had gone into the house.

“My daughter Modeste may have her faults,” said the mother, “but she is incapable of a lie.”

“Well, then, let us make ourselves easy,” replied the Lieutenant, “and be satisfied that misfortune has closed its account with us.”

“God grant it!” said Madame Mignon. “You will see him, Dumay; I can only hear him. . . . There is much sadness in my joy.”

Modeste, meanwhile, though happy in the thought of her father's return, was, like Pierrette, distressed to see all her eggs broken. She had hoped for a larger fortune than Dumay had spoken of. She was ambitious for her poet, and wished for at least half of the six millions of which she had written in her second letter. Thus absorbed by her double happiness, and annoyed by the grievance of her comparative poverty, she sat down to her piano, the confidant of so many girls, who tell it their anger, and their wishes, expressing them in their way of playing.

Dumay was talking to his wife, walking to and fro below her window, confiding to her the secret of their good fortune, and questioning her as to her hopes, wishes, and intentions. Madame Dumay, like her husband, had no family but the Mignon family. The husband and wife decided on living in Provence, if the Count should go to Provence, and to leave their money to any child of Modeste's that might need it.

“Listen to Modeste,” said Madame Mignon to them; “only a girl in love could compose such a melody without any knowledge of music.”

Homes may burn, fortunes may collapse, fathers may come back from their travels, Empires may fall, cholera may ravage the town—a girl's love pursues its flight as nature keeps her course, or that horrible acid discovered by chemistry which might pierce through the earth if it were not absorbed in the center.

This is the ballad Modeste had improvised to some verses which must be quoted here, though they are to be found in the second volume of poems published by Dauriat; for, to

adapt them to the air, the young composer had broken the rhythm by some changes which might puzzle the admirers of a poet who is sometimes too precise.

And here, too, since modern typography allows of it, is Modeste's music, to which her exquisite expression lent the charm we admire in the greatest singers—a charm that no printing, were it phonetic or hieroglyphic, could ever represent.

A MAIDEN'S SONG

*Allegretto.*

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble clef for the voice and a bass clef for the piano accompaniment. The time signature is 3/4, and the key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The tempo is marked *Allegretto*. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows the initial chords and melody. The second system includes dynamic markings *fz* and *fz >*. The third system includes the vocal line with the lyrics "Come a".



## MODESTE MIGNON

wake, my heart, for the soaring lark..... Wings her

upward flight as she chants her lay. Sleep no

more, my heart, for the vi - o - let..... Breathes her

in - cense to God at break of day. Ev - 'ry

# MODESTE MIGNON

99

blos - som re-fresh'd, and soft - ly un-clos - ing,

O - pens an eye to be - hold it - self.. fair. In each

chal - ice a gen, a dew - drop re - pos - ing,

Mir - rors its hues Ere it dies... in the air. We

## MODESTE MIGNON

feel in the breeze that the an - gel of flow - ers Has

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (F major). The lyrics are "feel in the breeze that the an - gel of flow - ers Has". The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The bottom staff is the bass line in G major, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The music is in 2/4 time.

kiss'd ev - 'ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are "kiss'd ev - 'ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has". The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The bottom staff is the bass line in G major, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The music is in 2/4 time.

guard - ed their beau - ty through all the dark hours, Their

The third system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are "guard - ed their beau - ty through all the dark hours, Their". The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The bottom staff is the bass line in G major, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The music is in 2/4 time.

first smile is his in the sweet morn - ing light...

The fourth system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are "first smile is his in the sweet morn - ing light...". The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in G major, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The bottom staff is the bass line in G major, starting with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The music is in 2/4 time.

.... Then a - wake, my heart, for the soar - ing lark...

.... Wings her ear - ly flight, and chants her... lay.

Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let.....

.... To God her in - cense breathes at break of day;

## MODESTE MIGNON

Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let To

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are "Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi - o - let To". The piano accompaniment is in a bass clef and features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

God... her in - cense breathes at break of day.

The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "God... her in - cense breathes at break of day.". The musical notation includes various dynamics and articulation marks, such as accents and slurs, to guide the performer.

The third system of the musical score shows the continuation of the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands, including chords and moving lines.

The fourth system concludes the piece. It features a final vocal phrase and a piano accompaniment that ends with a strong dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) and a fermata over the final notes. The piano part includes a large, ornate flourish or cadenza-like passage.

"It is pretty," said Madame Dumay. "Modeste is very musical; that is all."

"She has the very devil in her!" exclaimed the cashier, for the mother's dread had entered into his soul and made his blood run cold.

"She is in love," said Madame Mignon.

By her success in communicating her conviction as to Modeste's secret passion, on the irrefragable evidence of that melody, Madame Mignon chilled the cashier's joy over his patron's return and success. The worthy Breton went off to the town to do his day's business at Gobenheim's; then, before going home to dinner, he called on the Latournelles to mention his fears, and once more to request their help and co-operation.

"Yes, my good friend," said Dumay on the threshold, as he took leave of the notary, "I am of Madame's opinion. She is in love, sure enough; beyond that the devil only knows! . . . I am disgraced!"

"Do not worry yourself, Dumay," said the little notary. "We certainly, among us all, must be a match for that little lady. Sooner or later every girl who is in love does something rash which betrays her secret; we will talk it over this evening."

So all these persons, devoted to the Mignon family, were still a prey to the same anxiety as had tormented them before the experiment that the old soldier had expected to be decisive. The futility of all these struggles so spurred Dumay's conscience that he would not go to Paris to fetch his fortune before he had discovered the clew to this enigma. All these hearts, caring far more for sentiment than for self-interest, understood that unless he found this daughter innocently pure, the Colonel might die of grief on finding Bettina dead and his wife blind. The unhappy Dumay's despair made so deep an impression on the Latournelles, that they forgot their loss of Exupère, whom they had sent off to Paris that morning. During the dinner hour, when the three were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned the matter over under every aspect, and considered every conceivable hypothesis.

“If Modeste were in love with anyone at le Havre, she would have quaked last night,” said Madame Latournelle, “so her lover must be elsewhere.”

“She swore this morning to her mother, in Dumay’s presence, that she had not exchanged a glance or a word with a living soul,” said the notary.

“Then she loves as I do!” said Butscha.

“And how do you love, my poor boy?” asked Madame Latournelle.

“Madame,” replied the little hunchback, “I love all to myself, from afar, almost as far as from hence to the stars.”

“And how do you get there, you great goose?” said Madame Latournelle, smiling at him.

“Ah, Madame, what you take to be a hump is the sheath for my wings.”

“Then this explains your seal!” exclaimed the lawyer.

The clerk’s seal was a star, with the motto, *Fulgens, sequar*—Shine, and I will follow you—the device of the house of Chastillonest.

“A beautiful creature may be as diffident as the most hideous,” said Butscha, as if talking to himself. “Modeste is quite clever enough to have feared lest she should be loved only for her beauty.”

Hunchbacks are wonderful creatures, and due entirely to civilization; for, in the scheme of nature, weak or deformed beings ought to perish. A curvature or twist of the spinal column gives to these men, who seem to be Nature’s outcasts, a flashing look, in which is concentrated a greater quantity of nervous fluids than other men can command, in the very center where they are elaborated and act, and whence they are set forth like a light to vivify their inmost being. Certain forces are the result, detected occasionally by magnetism, but most frequently lost in the waste places of the spiritual world. Try to find a hunchback who is not gifted in some remarkable way, either with a cheerful wit, superlative malignity, or sublime kindness. These beings, privileged beings though they know it not, live within themselves as Butscha did, when they have not exhausted their splendidly

concentrated powers in the battle they have fought to conquer obstacles and remain alive.

In this way we may explain the superstitious and popular traditions, which we owe to the belief in gnomes, in frightful dwarfs, in misshapen fairies—the whole race of bottles, as Rabelais has it, that contain rare balsams and elixirs.

Thus Butscha almost read Modeste; and with the eagerness of a hopeless lover, of a slave ever ready to die like the soldiers who, deserted and alone amid Russian snows, still shouted "*Vive l'Empereur!*" he dreamed of discovering her secret for himself alone.

As his chief and Madame Latournelle walked up to the Chalet, he followed them with a very anxious mien, for it was imperative that he should conceal from every watchful eye, from every listening ear, the snare in which he meant to entrap the girl. There should be a flashing glance, a start detected, as when a surgeon lays his finger on a hidden injury.

That evening Gobenheim did not join them; Butscha was Monsieur Dumay's partner against Monsieur and Madame Latournelle. At about nine o'clock, while Modeste was absent preparing her mother's room, Madame Mignon and her friends could talk openly; but the poor clerk, stricken by the conviction which had come on him too, seemed as far away from the discussion as Gobenheim had been the night before.

"Why, Butscha, what ails you?" exclaimed Madame Latournelle, astonished at him. "One might think you had lost all your relations!"

A tear started to the poor fellow's eye—a foundling, deserted by a Swedish sailor, and his mother dead of grief in the workhouse!

"I have no one in the world but you," he replied in husky tones; "and your compassion is too pious ever to be withdrawn from me, for I will never cease to deserve your kindness."

The answer struck an equally sensitive chord in those present, that of delicacy.

"We all love you, Monsieur Butscha," said Madame Mignon with emotion.



“I have six hundred thousand francs of my own!” cried the worthy Dumay. “You shall be a notary at le Havre, and Latournelle’s successor.”

The American, for her part, had taken the poor hunchback’s hand and pressed it.

“You have six hundred thousand francs!” cried Latournelle, pricking up his ears at this speech, “and you let these ladies stay here! And Modeste has no horse! And she no longer has lessons in music, in painting, in——”

“Oh, he has only had the money a few hours,” exclaimed the American wife.

“Hush!” said Madame Mignon. While this was going on, the dignified Madame Latournelle had recovered herself. She turned to Butscha.

“My dear boy,” said she, “you have so much affection around you, that I never considered the particular bearing of a common phrase as applied to you; but you may thank me for the blunder, since it has shown you what friends you have earned by your beautiful nature.”

“Then you have some news of Monsieur Mignon?” asked the notary.

“He is coming home,” said Madame Mignon; “but we must keep it secret.—When my husband hears how Butscha has clung to us, and that he has shown us the warmest and most disinterested friendship when the world turned its back on us, he will not leave you to provide for him entirely, Dumay. And so, my friend,” she added, trying to turn towards Butscha, “you may proceed at once to deal with Latournelle——”

“He is of full age, five-and-twenty,” said Latournelle. “And, on my part, it is paying off a debt, my dear fellow, if I give you the refusal of my practice.”

Butscha kissed Madame Mignon’s hand, wetting it with tears, and showed a tearful face when Modeste opened the drawing-room door.

“Who has been distressing my mysterious dwarf?” she asked.

“Oh, Mademoiselle, do we children nursed in sorrow ever shed tears of grief? I have just received such marks of

attachment, that I was moved with tenderness for all those in whom I liked to believe I had found relations. I am to be a notary; I may grow rich. Ah, ha! Poor Butscha may some day be rich Butscha. You do not know what audacity exists in this abortion!" he exclaimed.

The hunchback struck himself hard on his cavernous breast, and placed himself in front of the fireplace after giving Modeste a look that stole like a gleam from under his heavy, drooping eyelids; for in this unforeseen conjuncture he had found his chance of sounding his sovereign lady's heart.

For an instant Dumay fancied that the clerk had dared aspire to Modeste; he exchanged looks with his friends which were understood by all, and which made them gaze at the little hunchback with a sort of dread mingled with curiosity.

"I—I too—have my dreams," Butscha went on, not taking his eyes off Modeste.

The girl looked down instinctively, in a way which was a revelation to the clerk. "You love romances; allow me, in the midst of my joy, to confide my secret to you, and you will tell me if the end of the romance I have dreamed of for my life is possible. . . . If not, of what use is fortune? To me, more than to anyone else, money is happiness, since to me happiness means the enriching of the one I love! You know so many things, Mademoiselle, tell me whether a man can be loved independently of his person—handsome or ugly, and for his soul alone."

Modeste looked up at Butscha. It was a terrible, questioning look, for at this moment Modeste shared Dumay's suspicions. "When I am rich, I shall look out for some poor but beautiful girl, a foundling like myself, who has suffered much, and is very unhappy; I will write to her, comfort her, be her good genius; she shall read my heart, my soul; she shall have all my wealth, in both kinds—my gold, offered with great delicacy, and my mind, beautified by all the graces which the misfortune of birth has denied to my grotesque form! And I will remain hidden, like a cause which science seeks. God perhaps is not beautiful.—The girl will naturally be curious and want to see me; but I shall tell her that I am a monster of ugliness, I will describe myself as hideous—"

At this, Modeste looked hard in his face. If she had said, "What do you know of my love affairs?" it could not have been more explicit.

"If I am so happy as to be loved for the poetry of my soul!—if, some day, I might seem to that woman to be only slightly deformed, confess that I shall be happier than the handsomest of men, than even a man of genius beloved by such a heavenly creature as you are——"

The blush that mounted to Modeste's face betrayed almost the whole of the girl's secret to the hunchback.

"Well, now, if a man can enrich the girl he loves, and charm her heart irrespective of his person, is that the way to be loved?—This has been the poor hunchback's dream—yesterday's dream; for to-day your adorable mother has given me the clew to my future treasure by promising to facilitate my acquiring an office and connection. Still, before becoming a Gobeenheim, I must know whether such a horrible transformation will achieve its end. What do you think, Mademoiselle, on your part?"

Modeste was so taken by surprise, that she did not observe Butscha's appeal to her judgment. The lover's snare was better contrived than the soldier's; for the poor girl, quite bewildered, stood speechless.

"Poor Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle to her husband, "is he going mad?"

"You want to play the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast," said Modeste at last, "and you forget that the Beast is turned into Prince Charming."

"Do you think so?" said the dwarf. "Now I have always imagined that transformation to symbolize the phenomenon of the soul becoming visible and eclipsing the body by its radiant glory. If I should never be loved, I shall remain invisible, that is all!—You and yours, Madame," said he to his mistress, "instead of having a dwarf at your command, will have a life and fortune."

Butscha returned to his seat, and said to the three players, affecting perfect calmness—

"Who deals?"

But to himself he was saying with grief. "She wants to

be loved for her own sake; she is corresponding with some sham great man, and how far has she gone? ”

“ My dear mamma, it has struck a quarter to ten,” said Modeste to her mother.

Madame Mignon bid her friends good-night, and went to bed.

Those who insist on loving in secret may be watched over by Pyrenean dogs, mothers, Dumays, Latournelles—they are in no danger from these; but a lover! It is diamond cut diamond, fire against fire, wit against wit, a perfect equation, of which the terms are equal and interchangeable.

On Sunday morning Butscha was beforehand with Madame Latournelle, who always went to escort Modeste to Mass, and stayed cruising about outside the Chalet, waiting for the postman.

“ Have you a letter for Mademoiselle Modeste this morning? ” he asked of that humble functionary as he approached.

“ No, Monsieur, no——”

“ We have been good customers of the Government for some time past! ” exclaimed the clerk.

“ I believe you! ” replied the postman.

Modeste from her room saw and heard this little interview; she posted herself at her window at this hour, behind the Venetian shutter, to watch for the postman.

She went down and out into the little garden, where, in a husky voice, she called out, “ Monsieur Butscha.”

“ Here am I, Mademoiselle,” said the hunchback, coming to the little gate, which Modeste herself opened.

“ Will you tell me whether you include among your titles to the affection of a woman the disgraceful espionage you choose to exercise? ” asked the girl, trying to overwhelm her slave by her gaze and queenly attitude.

“ Yes, Mademoiselle,” he proudly replied. “ I had never imagined,” he added in a low voice, “ that a worm could do good service to a star! But so it is. Would you rather have your heart read by your mother, Monsieur Dumay, and Madame Latournelle, than by a poor creature, almost an outcast from life, who is yours as much as one of the flowers you cut to gratify you for a moment? They all know that

you love; I alone know how. Take me as you would take a watch-dog; I will obey you, I will protect you, I will never bark, and I will have no opinions about you. All I ask is that you will let me be of some use to you. Your father placed Dumay in your menagerie; try a Butscha, and you will find it quite another story! A poor Butscha, who asks for nothing, not even for a bone!"

"Well, I will take you on trial," said Modeste, who only wished to be rid of so sharp a guardian. "Go at once to all the hotels at Gravelle and le Havre, and ask if a M. Arthur has arrived from England——"

"Listen, Mademoiselle," said Butscha respectfully, but interrupting Modeste, "I will just go for a walk on the beach, and that will be all that is necessary, for you do not wish me to go to church, that is all."

Modeste looked at the hunchback in blank astonishment.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, though you have wrapped your face in wadding and a handkerchief, you have no cold; though you have a double veil to your hat, it is only to see without being seen."

"What endows you with so much penetration?" cried Modeste, reddening.

"Why, Mademoiselle, you have no stays on! A cold would not require you to disguise your figure by putting on several petticoats, to hide your hands in old gloves, and your pretty feet in hideous boots, to dress yourself anyhow, to——"

"That will do," said she. "But, now, how am I sure that you will obey me?"

"My master wanted to go to Sainte-Adresse, and was rather put out; but as he is really very kind, he would not deprive me of my Sunday. Well, I will propose to him that we should go——"

"Go then, and I shall trust to you——"

"Are you sure you will not want me at le Havre?"

"Quite.—Listen, mysterious dwarf, and look up," she said, pointing to a cloudless sky. "Can you see the track left by the bird that flew across just now? Well, my actions, as pure as that pure air, leave no more trace than that. Reassure Dumay and the Latournelles, reassure my mother; and be sure

that this hand " (and she held out to him a slender little hand with upturned finger-tips, transparent to the light) . " will never be given away, never even warmed by the kiss of what is called a lover, before my father's return."

" And why do you want me to keep away from church to-day? "

" Do you cross-question me, after all I have done you the honor to tell you and require of you? "

Butscha bowed without replying, and hastened home, enraptured at thus entering the service of his anonymous mistress.

An hour later Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came to fetch Modeste, who complained of a dreadful toothache.

" I really had not strength to dress," said she.

" Well, then, stay at home," said the notary's wife.

" No, no. I will go and pray for my father's safe return," replied Modeste; " and I thought that if I wrapped up well, it would do me more good than harm to go out."

So Mademoiselle Mignon set out alone with Latournelle. She would not take his arm for fear of being questioned as to the internal tremor that agitated her at the idea of so soon seeing her great poet. One look, the first, was about to decide her future existence.

Is there in the life of man a more exquisite moment than that of the first promised meeting? Can the feelings that lie buried in his heart, and that then burst into life, ever be known again? Can he ever again feel the pleasure that he finds, as did Ernest de la Brière, in choosing his best razors, his finest shirts, spotless collars, and impeccable clothes? We deify everything that is associated with that supreme hour. We imagine poems in our hearts, secret poems as beautiful as the woman's, and on the day when each reads the other's soul all is over! Is it not the same with these things as with the blossom of those wild fruits, at once sharp and sweet, lost in forest depths, the delight of the sun, no doubt; or, as Canalis says in "The Maiden's Song," the gladness of the plant itself which the Angel of Flowers has allowed to see its own beauty.

This leads to the reflection that La Brière, a modest soul,

like many another penurious being for whom life begins with toil and money difficulties, had never yet been loved. He had arrived at le Havre the night before, and had at once gone to bed, like a coquette, to efface every trace of his journey; and he had now, after taking a bath, just completed a carefully advantageous toilet. This, perhaps, is the place for giving a full-length portrait of him, if only to justify the last letter Modeste was ever to write to him.

Born of a good family at Toulouse, distantly connected with that Minister who took him under his patronage, Ernest has the well-bred air which comes of an education begun from the cradle; the habit of business has given it solidity without effort, for pedantry is the rock on which precocious gravity is commonly wrecked. Of medium height, his face is attractively refined and gentle; his complexion warm, though colorless, was at that time set off by a slender mustache and a small imperial, a *virgule à la Mazarin*. But for these manly witnesses, he would, perhaps, have looked too much like a girl dressed up, so delicate is the cut of his face and lips, so natural is it to attribute to a woman teeth of transparent enamel and almost artificial evenness. Add to these feminine characteristics a voice as sweet as his looks, as gentle as his turquoise blue eyes, with Oriental lids, and you will perfectly understand how it was that the Minister had nicknamed his young private secretary Mademoiselle de la Brière. His broad, smooth forehead, framed under thick black hair, has a dreamy look that does not contradict the expression of his countenance, which is wholly melancholy. The prominence of the eyebrows, though delicately arched, overshadows the eyes, and adds to this look of melancholy by the sadness—a physical sadness, so to speak—that the eyelids give when they half close the eyes. This secret bashfulness, to which we give the name of modesty, characterizes his features and person. The whole result will, perhaps, be better understood if we add that the theory of perfect drawing demands greater length in the shape of the head, more space between the chin, which ends abruptly, and the forehead, on which the hair grows too low. Thus the face looks flattened. Work had already graven a furrow between the eyebrows, which were

thick, and too nearly met, like those of all jealous natures. Though La Brière was as yet slight, his figure was one of those which, developing late, are unexpectedly stout at the age of thirty.

The young man might very well have typified, to those who are familiar with French history, the royal and mysterious personality of Louis XIII., with his melancholy diffidence for no known reason, pallid under his crown, loving the fatigue of hunting, and hating work; so timid with his mistress as to respect her virtue, so indifferent to his friend as to leave him to be beheaded; explicable only by his remorse at having avenged his father on his mother—either a Catholic Hamlet or the victim of some incurable malady. But the canker-worm which paled the King's cheek and unnerved his strength, was as yet, in Ernest, no more than simple distrust of himself, the shyness of a man to whom no woman had ever said, "How I love you!" and, above all, wasted self-sacrifice. After hearing the knell of a monarchy in the fall of a minister, the poor boy had found in Canalis a rock hidden under tempting mosses; he was seeking a despotism to worship; and this uneasiness, that of a dog in search of a master, gave him the expression of the king who found his. These clouds and feelings, this "pale cast" over his whole person, made his face far more attractive than the young secretary himself imagined, annoyed as he was sometimes to find himself classed by women as a *beau ténébreux*—gloomily handsome; a style gone quite out of fashion at a time when every man would gladly keep the clarions of advertisement for his own exclusive use.

So Ernest the diffident had sought the adornment of the most fashionable clothes. For this interview, when everything would depend on first sight, he donned black trousers and carefully polished boots, a sulphur-colored waistcoat, revealing an excessively fine shirt fastened with opal studs, a black necktie, and a short blue coat, which looked as if it had been glued to his back and waist by some new process; his rosette graced the button-hole. He wore smart kid gloves of the color of Florentine bronze, and held in his left hand a light cane and his hat, with a certain Louis-quatorze air;



thus showing, as the sacred place demanded, his carefully combed hair, on which the light shed satin-like reflections. Standing sentry under the porch from the very beginning of the service, he studied the church while watching all the Christians, more especially those in petticoats, who came to dip their fingers in the holy water.

As Modeste came in, an inner voice cried out, "'Tis he!" That coat and figure, so essentially Parisian, that rosette, the gloves, the walking-stick, the scented hair—none of these things were native to le Havre. And when La Brière turned to look at the notary's tall and showy wife, the little notary himself and the bundle—a word dedicated to this sense by women—under which Modeste had concealed herself, though she was fully prepared, the poor child was stricken to the heart by the aspect of this romantic countenance, in the bright daylight from the open door. She could not be mistaken; a small white rose almost hid the rosette. Would Ernest recognize his unknown fair hidden under an old hat and a double veil? Modeste was so fearful of the clairvoyance of love that she walked with an elderly shuffle.

"Wife," said Latournelle, as he went to his place, "that man does not belong to le Havre."

"So many strangers come through," replied the lady.

"But do strangers ever think of coming to see our church, which is not more than two centuries old?"

Ernest remained in the porch all through the service without seeing any woman who realized his hopes. Modeste, on her part, could not control her trembling till near the end. She was agitated by joys which she alone could have described. At last she heard on the pavement the step of a gentleman, for Mass being over, Ernest was walking round the church, where no one remained but the *dilettanti* of prayer, who became to him the object of anxious and piercing scrutiny. He remarked the excessive trembling of the prayer-book held by the veiled lady as he passed her; and as she was the only one who hid her face, he conceived some suspicions, confirmed by Modeste's dress, which he studied with the care of an inquisitive lover.

When Madame Latournelle left the church, he followed her

at a decent distance, and saw her, with Modeste, go into the house in the Rue Royale, where Mademoiselle Mignon usually waited till the hour of vespers. Ernest studied the house, decorated with escutcheons, and asked of a passer-by the name of the owner, who was mentioned almost with pride as Monsieur Latournelle, the first notary of le Havre.

As he lounged down the Rue Royale, trying to catch a glimpse of the interior of the house, Modeste could see her lover; she then declared herself to be too ill to attend vespers, and Madame Latournelle kept her company. So poor Ernest had his cruise for his pains. He dared not go to loiter about Ingouville; he made it a point of honor to obey, and returned to Paris after writing a letter while waiting for the coach, and posting it for Françoise Cochet to receive next morning with the postmark of le Havre.

Monsieur and Madame Latournelle dined at the Chalet every Sunday, taking Modeste home after vespers. As soon as the young lady felt better, they all went up to Ingouville, followed by Butscha. Modeste, quite happy, now dressed herself beautifully. As she went down to dinner she forgot all about her disguise of the morning and her cold, and sang—

"Night and sleep begone! My heart, the violet  
To God her incense breathes at break of day!"

Butscha felt a thrill as he beheld Modeste, she seemed to him so completely changed; for the wings of love fluttered, as it were, on her shoulders, she looked like a sylph, and her cheeks glowed with the divine hue of happiness.

"Whose words are those which you have set to such a pretty air?" Madame Mignon asked her daughter.

"They are by Canalis, mamma," she replied, turning in an instant to the finest crimson, from her neck to the roots of her hair.

"Canalis!" exclaimed the dwarf, who learnt from Modeste's tone and blush all of her secret that he as yet knew not. "He, the great poet, does he write ballads?"

"They are some simple lines," replied she, "to which I have ventured to adapt some reminiscences of German airs."

“No, no, my child,” said Madame Mignon; “that music is your own, my dear!”

Modeste, feeling herself grow hotter and hotter, went out into the garden, taking Butscha with her.

“You can do me a great service,” said she, in an undertone. “Dumay is affecting discretion to my mother and me as to the amount of the fortune my father is bringing home, and I want to know the truth. Has not Dumay, at different times, sent papa five hundred and something thousand francs? My father is not the man to stay abroad four years simply to double his capital. Now a ship is coming in that is all his own, and the share he offers Dumay amounts to nearly six hundred thousand francs.”

“We need not question Dumay,” said Butscha. “Your father had lost, as you know, four millions of francs before his departure, these he has no doubt recovered; he would certainly have given Dumay ten per cent. of his profits; so, from the fortune the worthy Breton confesses to, my chief and I calculate that the Colonel’s must amount to six or seven millions——”

“Oh, father!” cried Modeste, crossing her arms, and raising her eyes to heaven, “you have given me a second life!”

“Oh, Mademoiselle, you love a poet! A man of that stamp is more or less of a Narcissus. Will he love you as he ought? A craftsman in words, always absorbed in fitting sentences together, is very fatiguing. A poet, Mademoiselle, is not poetry—no more than the seed is the flower.”

“Butscha, I never saw such a handsome man!”

“Beauty, Mademoiselle, is a veil which often serves to hide many imperfections.”

“He has the most angelic heart that heaven——”

“God grant you may be right,” said the dwarf, clasping his hands. “May you be happy! That man, like yourself, will have a slave in Jean Butscha. I shall then no longer be a notary; I shall give myself up to study—to science——”

“And why?”

“Well, Mademoiselle, to bring up your children, if you will condescend to allow me to be their tutor. . . . Oh! if you would accept a piece of advice! Look here, let me

go to work my own way. I could ferret out this man's life and habits, could discover if he is kind, if he is violent or gentle, if he will show you the respect you deserve, if he is capable of loving you perfectly, preferring you to all else, even to his own talent——”

“What can it matter if I love him?” said she simply.

“To be sure, that is true,” cried the hunchback.

At this moment Madame Mignon was saying to her friends—

“My daughter has this day seen the man she loves.”

“Can it be that sulphur-colored waistcoat that puzzled you so much, Latournelle?” cried the notary's wife. “That young man had a pretty white rosebud in his buttonhole——”

“Ah!” said the mother, “a token to be known by!”

“He wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor,” Madame Latournelle went on. “He is a charming youth! But we are all wrong; Modeste never raised her veil, she was huddled up like a pauper, and——”

“And she said she was ill,” added the notary. “But she has thrown off her mufflers, and is perfectly well now!”

“It is incomprehensible!” said Dumay.

“Alas! it is as clear as day,” said the notary.

“My child,” said Madame Mignon to Modeste, who came in, followed by Butscha, “did you happen to see in church this morning a well-dressed little man with a white rose in his buttonhole, and the rosette——”

“I saw him,” Butscha hastily put in, seeing by the attention of the whole party what a trap Modeste might fall into. “It was Grindot, the famous architect, with whom the town is treating for the restoration of the church. He came from Paris, and I found him this morning examining the outside as I set out for Sainte-Adresse.”

“Oh! he is an architect! He puzzled me greatly,” said Modeste, to whom Butscha had secured time to recover herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha. Modeste, put on her guard, assumed an impenetrable demeanor. Dumay's suspicions were excited to the highest pitch, and he resolved to go next day to the Mairie and ascertain whether the expected architect had in fact been at le Havre. Butscha,

on his part, very uneasy as to Modeste's ultimate fate, decided on starting for Paris to set a watch over Canalis.

Gobenheim arrived in time to play a rubber, and his presence repressed the ferment of feeling. Modeste awaited her mother's bedtime almost with impatience; she wanted to write, and this is the letter her love dictated to her when she thought that everyone was asleep.

### XIII.

#### *To Monsieur de Canalis.*

“Oh, my best-beloved friend, what vile libels are your portraits displayed in the print-sellers' windows! And I who was happy with that detestable lithograph! I am quite shy of loving such a handsome man. No, I cannot conceive that Paris women can be so stupid as not to see, one and all, that you are the fulfilment of their dreams. You neglected! You loveless!—I do not believe a word you have said about your obscure and laborious life, your devotion to an idol till now vainly sought for. You have been too well loved, Monsieur; your brow, as pale and smooth as a magnolia petal, plainly shows it, and I shall be wretched.

“What am I now?—Ah! why have you called me forth to life! In one instant I felt that I had shed my ponderous chrysalis! My soul burst the crystal which held it captive; it rushed through my veins. In short, the cold silence of things suddenly ceased to me; everything in nature spoke to me. The old church to me was luminous; its vaults, glittering with gold and azure, like that of an Italian church, sparkled above my head. The melodious strains, sung by angels to martyrs to make them forget their anguish, sounded through the organ! The hideous pavement of le Havre seemed like a flowery path. I recognized the sea as an old friend, whose language, full of sympathy, I had never known well enough. I saw how the roses in my garden and greenhouse had long worshiped me, and whispered to me to love! They all smiled on me on my return from church; and, to crown all, I heard your name of Melchior murmured by the flower-bells; I saw it written on the clouds! Yes, I am indeed

alive, thanks to you—poet more beautiful than that cold and prim Lord Byron, whose face is as dull as the English climate. Wedded to you by one only of your Oriental glances which pierced my black veil, you transfused your blood into my veins, and it fired me from head to foot. Ah, we do not feel life like that when our mothers bring us into the world! A blow dealt to you would fall on me at the same instant, and my existence henceforth can only be accounted for by your mind. I know now the purpose of the divine harmony of music; it was invented by the angels to express love.

“To be a genius and handsome too, my Melchior, is too much. A man should have a choice at his birth. But when I think of the treasures of tenderness and affection you have lavished on me, especially during this last month, I wonder whether I am dreaming! Nay, you must be hiding some mystery. What woman could give you up without dying of it? Yes, jealousy has entered my heart with such love as I could not believe in! Could I imagine such a conflagration?

“A new and inconceivable vagary! I now wish you were ugly! What follies I committed when I got home! Every yellow dahlia reminded me of your pretty waistcoat, every white rose was a friend, and I greeted them with a look which was yours, as I am wholly! The color of the gentleman’s well-fitting gloves—everything, to the sound of his step on the flagstones—everything is so exactly represented by my memory that, sixty years hence, I shall still see the smallest details of this high day, the particular color of the atmosphere, and the gleam of the sunbeam reflected from a pillar; I shall hear the prayer which your advent broke into; I shall breathe the incense from the altar; and I shall fancy that I feel above our heads the hands of the priest who was giving us the final benediction just as you went past. That good Abbé Marcellin has married us already. The superhuman joy of experiencing this world of new and unexpected emotions can only be equaled by the joy I feel in telling you of them, in rendering up all my happiness to him who pours it into my soul with the unstinting bounty

of the sun. So no more veils, my beloved! Come, oh, come back soon! I will unmask with joy.

“You have, no doubt, heard of the firm of Mignon of le Havre? Well, in consequence of an irreparable loss, I am the sole heiress of the family. Do not scorn us, you who are descended from one of the heroes of Auvergne. The arms of Mignon de la Bastie will not dishonor those of Canalis. They are *gules, a bend sable charged with three besants, in each quarter a patriarchal cross or*, surmounted by a cardinal’s hat, and the cord and tassels as mantling. My dear, I will be faithful to our motto, *Una fides, unus Dominus!* The true faith, and one Lord.

“Perhaps, my friend, you will think there is some irony in my name after all I have here confessed. It is Modeste. Thus, I did not altogether cheat you in signing ‘O. d’Este-M.’ Nor did I deceive you in speaking of my fortune; it will, I believe, amount to the sum which has made you so virtuous. And I know so surely that to you money is so unimportant a consideration, that I can write of it unaffectedly. At the same time, you must let me tell you how glad I am to be able to endow our happiness with the freedom of action and movement that wealth gives, the power of saying, ‘Let us go——’ when the fancy takes us to see a foreign land, of flying off in a comfortable carriage, seated side by side, without a care about money; and happy, too, to give you the right of saying to the King, ‘I have such a fortune as you require in your peers!’

“In this, Modeste Mignon can be of some service to you, and her money will find noble uses. As to your humble servant, you have seen her once, at her window in a wrapper.—Yes, the fair-haired daughter of Eve was your unknown correspondent; but how little does the Modeste of to-day resemble her whom you then saw! She was wrapped in a shroud, and this other—have I not told you so?—has derived from you the life of life. Pure and permitted love, a love that my father, now at last returning from his travels and with riches, will sanction, has uplifted me with its childlike but powerful hand from the depths of the tomb where I was sleeping. You awoke me as the sun awakes the flowers.

The glance of her you love is not now that of the bold-faced little Modeste! Oh, no; it is bashful, it has glimpses of happiness, and veils itself under chaste eyelids. My fear now is that I cannot deserve my lot. The King has appeared in his glory; my liege has now a mere vassal, who implores his forgiveness for taking such liberties, as the thimble-rigger with loaded dice did after cheating the Chevalier de Grammont.

“Yes, beloved poet, I will be your ‘Mignon,’ but a happier Mignon than Goethe’s, for you will leave me to dwell in my native land, won’t you?—in your heart.

“As I write this bridal wish, a nightingale in the Vilquins’ park has just answered for you. Oh! let me quickly hear that the nightingale, with his long-drawn note, so pure, so clear, so full, inundating my heart with love and gladness, like an Annunciation, has not lied.

“My father will pass through Paris, on his way from Marseilles. The house of Mongenod, his correspondents, will know his address; go to see him, my dearest Melchior, tell him that you love me, and do not try to tell him how much I love you; let that be a secret always between us and God! I, dear adored one, will tell my mother everything. She, a daughter of Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, will justify me by her caresses; she will be made happy by our secret and romantic poem, at once human and divine! You have the daughter’s pledge; now obtain the consent of the Comte de la Bastie, the father of your own

MODESTE.

“*P. S.*—Above all, do not come to le Havre without having obtained my father’s permission; and, if you love me, you will be able to discover him on his way through Paris.”

“What are you doing at this time of night, Mademoiselle Modeste?” asked Dumay.

“I am writing to my father,” she replied to the old soldier. “Did you not tell me that you were starting to-morrow?”

Dumay had no answer to this, and went to bed, while Modeste wrote a long letter to her father.



Next day Françoise Cochet, alarmed at seeing the Havre postmark, came up to the Chalet to deliver to her young mistress the following letter, and carry away that which Modeste had written.

*To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.*

“My heart warns me that you were the woman, so carefully veiled and disguised, placed between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have but one child, a son. Ah, dearly loved one! if you are of humble rank, devoid of position, distinction, or even fortune, you cannot imagine what my joy would be. You must know me by this time; why not tell me the whole truth? I am no poet excepting through love in my heart, and for you. Oh, what immense affection I must have to stay here, in this Hôtel de Normandie, and not walk up to Ingouville, that I can see from my windows? Will you love me as I love you? To have to leave le Havre for Paris in such uncertainty! Is not that being punished for loving as if I had committed a crime?—I have obeyed you blindly.

“Ah! let me soon have a letter; for, if you are mysterious, I have returned mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw off the mask of my incognito, and tell you how little I am a poet, abdicating the glory you have lent me.”

This letter greatly disturbed Modeste; she could not withdraw her own, which Françoise had already posted by the time she read the last lines once more, puzzled as to their meaning; but she went up to her room, and wrote an answer, asking for explanations.

During these little incidents, others, equally small, were happening in the town, and were destined to make Modeste forget her uneasiness. Dumay, having gone early to le Havre, at once knew that no architect had arrived there the night before last. Furious at the lie told him by Butscha, which revealed a complicity which he would know the meaning of, he hurried from the Mairie to the Latournelles.

“Where is your Master Butscha?” asked he of his friend the notary, on not finding the clerk in the office.

“Butscha, my dear fellow? He is on the road to Paris, whisked away by the steamboat. Early this morning, on the quay, he met a sailor, who told him that his father, the Swedish sailor, has come into some money. Butscha's father went to India, it would seem, and served some prince, a Mahratta, and he is now in Paris——”

“A pack of lies! Shameful! Monstrous! Oh, I will find that damned hunchback; I am going to Paris, and on purpose for that!” cried Dumay. “Butscha is deceiving us! He knows something about Modeste, and has never told us. If he dares meddle in the matter—— He shall never be a notary; I will cast him back on his mother, in the mire, in the——”

“Come, my friend, never hang a man without trying him,” replied Latournelle, terrified at Dumay's exasperation.

After explaining on what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to stay at the Chalet with Modeste during his absence.

“You will find the Colonel in Paris,” said the notary. “In the shipping news this morning, in the *Commerce* newspaper, under the heading of Marseilles.—Here, look!” he said, handing him the sheet, “‘The *Bettina-Mignon*, Captain Mignon, arrived October 16th,’ and to-day is the 17th. At this moment all le Havre knows of the master's return.”

Dumay requested Gobenheim to dispense henceforth with his services; he then returned at once to the Chalet, going in at the moment when Modeste had just closed her letters to her father and to Canalis. The two letters were exactly alike in shape and thickness, differing only in the address. Modeste thought she had laid that to her father over that to her Melchior, and had done just the reverse. This mistake, so common in the trifles of life, led to the discovery of her secret by her mother and Dumay.

The Lieutenant was talking eagerly to Madame Mignon in the drawing-room, confiding to her the fresh fears to which Modeste's duplicity and Butscha's connivance had given rise.

“I tell you, Madame,” he exclaimed, “he is a viper we have warmed on our hearth; there is not room for a soul in these fag-ends of humanity.”

Modeste had slipped the letter to her father into her pocket, fancying that it was the letter to her lover, and went down with that addressed to Canalis in her hand, hearing Dumay speak of starting immediately for Paris.

“What is wrong with my poor Mysterious Dwarf, and why are you talking so loud?” said she at the door of the drawing-room.

“Butscha, Mademoiselle, set out for Paris this morning, and you, no doubt, can say why!—It must be to carry on some intrigue with the so-called little architect in a sulphur-colored waistcoat, who, unluckily for the hunchback’s falsehood, has not yet been to le Havre.”

Modeste was startled; she guessed that the dwarf had gone off to make his own inquiries as to the poet’s manners and customs; she turned pale, and sat down.

“I will be after him; I will find him!” said Dumay. “That, no doubt, is the letter for your father?” he added, holding out his hand. “I will send it to Mongenod’s—if only my Colonel and I do not cross on the way.”

Modeste gave him the letter. Little Dumay, who could read without spectacles, mechanically read the address—

“Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poisonnière, No. 29!” he exclaimed. “What is the meaning of this?”

“Ah! my child, then he is the man you love!” cried Madame Mignon. “The verses you set to music are by him——”

“And it is his portrait that you have upstairs in a frame!” added Dumay.

“Give me back that letter, Monsieur Dumay,” said Modeste, drawing herself up, like a lioness defending her cubs.

“Here it is, Mademoiselle,” he replied. Modeste slipped the letter into her bosom, and held out to Dumay that addressed to her father.

“I know you to be capable of anything, Dumay,” said she; “but if you move a single step towards Monsieur de Canalis, I will take one out of this house, and never come back!”

“You will kill your mother!” replied Dumay, who went to call his wife.

The poor mother had fainted away, stricken to the heart by Modeste’s threatening speech.

“Good-by, wife,” said the Breton, embracing the little American. “Save the mother; I am going to save the daughter.”

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon, made his preparations in a few minutes, and went down to le Havre. An hour later he set off by post with the swiftness which passion or interest alone can give to the wheels.

Madame Mignon soon revived under her daughter’s care, and went up to her room, leaning on Modeste’s arm; the only reproach she uttered when they were alone was to say, “Unhappy child! what have you done? Why hide anything from me? Am I so stern?”

“Why, of course, I was going to tell you everything,” replied the girl in tears.

She told her mother the whole story; she read her all the letters and replies; she plucked the rose of her poem to pieces, petal by petal, to lay in the heart of the kind German lady; this took up half the day. When her confession was ended, and she saw something like a smile on the lips of the too indulgent blind woman, she threw herself into her arms with tears.

“Oh, mother!” cried she, in the midst of her sobs, “you whose heart is of gold, and all poetry, and like some choice vessel molded by God to contain the one pure and heavenly love that can fill a whole life!—you whom I long to imitate by loving nothing on earth but my husband—you must know how bitter are these tears which I shed at this moment, which fall wet on your hands.—The butterfly with iridescent wings, that beautiful second soul which your daughter has cherished with maternal care—my love, my sacred love, that inspired and living mystery, has fallen into vulgar hands that will tear its wings and its veil under the cruel pretext of enlightening me, of inquiring whether genius is as correct as a banker, if my Melchior is capable of amassing dividends, if he has

some love affair to be unearthed, if he is not guilty in vulgar eyes of some youthful episode, which to our love is what a cloud is to the sun. What are they going to do?—Here, feel my hand; I am in a fever! They will kill me!”

Modeste, seized by a deadly shivering fit, was obliged to go to bed, alarming her mother, Madame Latournelle, and Madame Dumay, who nursed her while the Lieutenant was traveling to Paris, whither the logic of events transfers our tale for the moment.

Men who are truly modest, like Ernest de la Brière, and especially those who, though knowing their own value, are neither loved nor appreciated, will understand the infinite rapture in which the young secretary reveled as he read Modeste's letter. After discovering the wit and greatness of his mind, his young and guileless but wily mistress thought him handsome. This is the supremest flattery. Why! Because beauty is no doubt the Master's signature on the work into which He has infused His soul; it is the divinity made manifest; and to see it where it does not exist, to create it by the power of an enchanted eye, is—is it not?—the crowning magic of love.

And the poor young fellow could exclaim to himself with the ecstasy of an applauded author—

“At last I am loved!”

When once a woman, a courtesan, or an innocent girl has let the words escape her, “How handsome you are!” even if it be untrue, if the man allows the subtle poison of the words to enter his brain, he is thenceforth tied by eternal bonds to the bewitching liar, to the truthful or deluded woman; she is his world; he thirsts for this testimony; he would never weary of it, not even if he were a prince.

Ernest proudly paced his room; he stood in front of the mirror—three-quarter face, in profile; he tried to criticise his own features, but a diabolical, insinuating voice said to him, “Modeste is right!” and he came back to the letter and read it again. He saw the heavenly fair one, he talked to her! Then, in the midst of his rapture, came the overwhelming

thought, "She believes me to be Canalis, and she is a millionaire!"

All his happiness fell with a crash, as a man falls when, walking in his sleep, he has reached the ridge of a roof, and hearing a voice, steps forward, and is dashed to pieces on the stones.

"But for the halo of glory, I should be ugly!" cried he. "What a horrible predicament I have got myself into!"

La Brière was too thoroughly the man of his letters, too entirely the pure and noble soul he had shown in them, to hesitate at the voice of honor. He at once resolved to go and confess everything to Modeste's father if he were in Paris, and to inform Canalis fully of the outcome of their very Parisian practical joke. To this sensitive young fellow the vastness of Modeste's fortune was a casting reason. Above all, he would not be suspected of having used the stimulation of this correspondence, though on his side so perfectly sincere, for filching a fortune. Tears stood in his eyes as he walked from his rooms in the Rue Chantierine to Mongenod the banker's whose prosperity, connections, and prospects were partly the work of the Minister to whom he himself was indebted.

At the time when La Brière was closeted with the head of the house of Mongenod, and acquiring all the information he needed in his strange position, such a scene was taking place in Canalis' house as Dumay's hasty departure might have led us to expect.

Dumay, like a true soldier of the Imperial School, whose blood had been boiling all through his journey, conceived of a poet as an irresponsible fellow, a man who fooled in rhyme, living in a garret, dressed in black cloth white at all the seams, whose boots sometimes had soles, whose linen was anonymous, who always looked as if he had just dropped from the clouds, when he was not scribbling as intently as Butscha. But the ferment that muttered in his brain and heart received a sort of cold shower-bath when he reached the poet's handsome residence, saw a man cleaning a carriage in the courtyard, found himself in a splendid dining-room with another servant dressed like a banker, to whom the groom had referred

him, and who looked him from head to foot as he said that Monsieur le Baron could not see anyone.

"Monsieur le Baron has a meeting to-day," he added, "at the Council of State."

"I am right?" asked Dumay; "this is the house of Monsieur de Canalis, who writes poetry?"

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis," said the footman, "is no doubt the great poet you mean, but is also Master of Appeals to the State Council, and attached to the Foreign Office."

Dumay, who had come to box a rhymester's ears, to use his own contemptuous expression, had found a State functionary. The drawing-room where he was kept waiting, remarkable for its magnificence, presented to his contemplation the row of crosses that glittered on Canalis' evening coat, left by the servant over the back of a chair. Presently he was attracted by the sheen and workmanship of a silver gilt cup, and the words, "The gift of MADAME," struck his eye. Opposite this, on a bracket, was a Sèvres vase, over which was engraved, "Given by Madame la Dauphine." These silent warnings restored Dumay to his common sense, while the man-servant was asking his master whether he could receive a stranger, who had come from le Havre on purpose to see him—his name Dumay.

"What is he like?" asked Canalis.

"Has a good hat, and the red ribbon."

At a nod of assent, the man went out, and returned announcing—

"Monsieur Dumay."

When he heard his own name, when he stood before Canalis in a study as costly as it was elegant, his feet on a carpet quite as good as the best in the Mignons' old house, when he met the glance prepared by the poet, who was playing with the tassels of a sumptuous dressing-gown, Dumay was so absolutely dumfounded that he left the great man to speak first.

"To what, Monsieur, do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Monsieur," Dumay began, still standing.

"If you have much to say, pray be seated," said Canalis, interrupting him; and the poet sank back into his large easy-

chair, and crossed his legs, raising the upper one to rock his foot on a level with his eye, while staring hard at Dumay, who, to use his own soldier's phrase, felt like a dummy.

"I am listening, Monsieur," said the poet. "My time is precious; I am due at the office——"

"Monsieur," said Dumay, "I will be brief. You have bewitched—how I know not—a young lady at le Havre—handsome, rich, the last and only hope of two noble families, and I have come to ask you your intentions."

Canalis, who for the last three months had been absorbed by serious matters, who aimed at promotion to the grade of Commander of the Legion of Honor, and to be Minister to a German Court, had totally forgotten the letter from le Havre.

"I?" cried he.

"You," replied Dumay.

"Monsieur," said Canalis, smiling, "I know no more what you mean than if you were talking Hebrew. I bewitch a young girl?—I, who——?" A lordly smile curled the poet's lip. "Come, Monsieur. I am not a boy that I should amuse myself by stealing poor wild fruit when I have ample orchards open to me, where the finest peaches in the world ripen. All Paris knows where my affections are placed. That there should be at le Havre a young lady suffering from some admiration, of which I am wholly unworthy, for the verses I have written, my dear sir, would not astonish me! Nothing is commoner. Look there! You see that handsome ebony box inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and fitted with iron wrought as fine as lace. That coffer belonged to Pope Leo X.; it was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who had it from the King of Spain.—I have devoted it to the preservation of all the letters I receive from every part of Europe, written by unknown women and girls. Oh! I have the greatest respect for those posies of flowers culled from the very soul, and sent to me in a moment of enthusiasm that is indeed worthy of all respect. Yes, to me the impulse of a heart is a noble and beautiful thing!—Others, mocking spirits, screw up such notes to light their cigars, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; I—who am a bachelor, Monsieur—have too much delicate feeling not to treasure these artless and disinterested



offerings in a kind of tabernacle; indeed, I hoard them with no little reverence, and when I am dying I will see them burnt under my eyes. So much the worse for those who think me ridiculous! What is to be said? I am grateful by nature, and these testimonials help me to endure the criticisms and annoyances of a literary life. When I receive in my spine the broadside of an enemy in ambush behind a newspaper, I look at that chest and say to myself, "There are, here and there, a few souls whose wounds have been healed, or beguiled or stanch'd by me——"

This rhodomontade, pronounced with the cleverness of a great actor, petrified the little cashier, whose eyes dilated while his astonishment amused the great poet.

"To you," the peacock went on, still spreading his tail, "out of respect for a position I can sympathize with, I can but propose that you should open that treasury, and look there for your young lady; but I never forget names. I know what I am saying, and you are mistaken . . ."

"And this is what happens to a poor girl in this gulf called Paris!" cried Dumay. "The idol of her parents, the delight of her friends, the hope, the darling of them all; the pride of her family, for whom six persons have made a rampart against disaster of their hearts and their fortunes!"

Dumay paused, and then went on—

"Well, Monsieur, you are a great poet, and I am but a poor soldier. For fifteen years, while I served my country in the ranks, I felt the wind of many a bullet in my face, I crossed Siberia, where I was kept a prisoner, the Russians flung me on a truck like a bale of goods, I have endured everything; I have seen no end of my comrades die—— And you, Monsieur, have sent such a chill through my bones as I never felt before!"

Dumay believed that he had touched the poet; he had flattered him—an almost impossible achievement, for the ambitious man had by this time forgotten the first phial of precious balm that Praise had broken on his head.

"You see, my brave friend," said the poet solemnly, as he laid his hand on Dumay's shoulder, feeling it a strange thing that he should be able to make a soldier of the Empire shiver,

“this girl is everything to you—— But to society, what is she? Nothing. If at this moment the most important mandarin in China is closing his eyes and putting the Empire into mourning, does that grieve you deeply? In India the English are killing thousands of men as good as we are; and at this moment, as I speak, the most charming woman is there being burnt—but you have had coffee for breakfast all the same? Indeed, at this minute, here in Paris, you may find several mothers of families lying on straw and bringing a child into the world without a rag to wrap it in!—And here is some delicious tea in a cup that cost five louis, and I am writing verses to make the ladies of Paris exclaim, ‘*Charming, charming! divine, exquisite! it goes to the heart!*’

“Social nature, like Mother Nature herself, is great at forgetting. Ten years hence you will be amazed at the step you have taken. You are in a city where we die, and marry, and worship each other at an assignation; where a girl suffocates herself, while a man of genius and his cargo of ideas full of humanitarian benefits go to the bottom, side by side, often under the same roof, and knowing nothing of each other.—And you come and expect us to swoon with anguish at this commonplace question, ‘Is a certain young person at le Havre this or that, or is she not?’—Oh, you really are——”

“And you call yourself a poet!” cried Dumay. “But do you really feel nothing of what you depict?”

“If we felt all the misery or joy that we describe, we should be worn out in a few months, like old shoes,” said the poet, smiling. “Listen, you shall not have come from le Havre to Paris, and to me, Canalis, without having anything to take back with you. Soldier!”—and Canalis had the figure and gesture of an Homeric hero—“learn this from the poet, ‘Every noble feeling in each of us is a poem so essentially individual that our best friend, our self, takes no interest in it. It is a treasure belonging to each alone——’”

“Forgive me for interrupting you,” said Dumay, who gazed at Canalis with horror, “but have you been to le Havre?”

“I spent a night and day there in the spring of 1824 on my way to London.”

“You are a man of honor,” Dumay went on. “Can you give me your word of honor that you do not know Mademoiselle Modeste Mignon?”

“This it the first time I ever heard her name,” replied Canalis.

“Oh, Monsieur,” cried Dumay, “into what dark intrigue am I about to plunge? May I count on you to help me in my inquiries? For someone, I am certain, has been making use of your name. You ought to have received a letter yesterday from le Havre.”

“I have received nothing! You may be sure, Monsieur, that I will do all that lies in my power to be of service to you.”

Dumay took leave, his heart full of anxiety, believing that hideous little Butscha had hidden himself in the semblance of the great poet to captivate Modeste; while Butscha, on the contrary, as keen and clever as a prince who avenges himself, sharper than a spy, was making inquisition into the poet's life and actions, escaping detection by his insignificance like an insect working its way into the young wood of a tree.

The Breton had but just left when La Brière came into his friend's room. Canalis naturally mentioned the visit of this man from le Havre.

“Hah!” said Ernest, “Modeste Mignon! I have come on purpose about that affair.”

“Bless me!” cried Canalis, “do you mean to say I have made a conquest by proxy?”

“Why, yes, that is the turning-point of the drama. My friend, I am loved by the sweetest girl in the world, beautiful enough to shine among the beauties of Paris, with a heart and education worthy of Clarissa Harlowe; she has seen me, she likes my looks—and she believes me to be the great poet Canalis.

“Nor is this all: Modeste Mignon is of good birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Comte de la Bastie, must have a fortune of something like six millions of francs. This father has come home within three days, and I have just begged him to arrange an interview with me, at two o'clock—through Mongenod, who in his note mentioned that it concerned his daughter's happiness.—You will understand

that before meeting the father I was bound to tell you everything."

"Among all the blossoms that open to the sunshine of fame," said Canalis with emphasis, "there is one glorious plant which, like the orange, bears its golden fruit amid the thousand united perfumes of wit and beauty! one elegant shrub, one true passion, one perfect happiness—and it has evaded me!" Canalis kept his eyes on the carpet that Ernest might not read them. "How," he went on after a pause, to recover his presence of mind, "how is it possible, among the intoxicating scents of these fancy-paper notes, and these phrases that mount to the brain, to detect the genuine heart—the girl, the woman, in whom true love is hidden under the livery of flattery, who loves us for ourselves, and who offers us happiness? No one could do it but an angel or a demon, and I am only an ambitious Master of Appeals!

"Ah, my dear fellow, fame transforms us into a butt, a target for a thousand arrows. One of us owed his marriage to a copy of hydraulic verses; and I, even more ingratiating, more the ladies' man than he, shall have missed my chance—for you love this poor girl?" said he, looking at La Brière.

"Oh!" cried La Brière.

"Well, then, be happy, Ernest," said the poet, taking his friend's arm and leaning on it. "As it turns out, I shall not have been ungrateful to you! You are handsomely rewarded for your devotion, for I will be generously helpful to your happiness."

Canalis was furious, but he could not behave otherwise, so he took the benefit of his ill-luck by using it as a pedestal. A tear rose to the young secretary's eye; he threw his arms round Canalis and embraced him.

"Oh, Canalis, I did not half know you!"

"What did you expect? It takes time to travel round the world," replied the poet with emphatic irony.

"Consider," said La Brière, "that immense fortune?—"

"Well, my friend, will it not be in good hands?" cried Canalis, pointing his effusiveness by a charming gesture.

"Melchior," said La Brière, "I am yours in life and death."

He wrung the poet's hands, and went away hastily; he was eager to see Monsieur Mignon.

At this hour the Comte de la Bastie was suffering all the sorrows that had been lurking for him as their prey. He had learnt from his daughter's letter the facts of Bettina-Caroline's death and her mother's blindness; and Dumay had just told him the story of the terrible imbroglio of Modeste's love affair.

"Leave me to myself," he said to his faithful friend.

When the Lieutenant had closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself on a couch and lay there, his head in his hands, shedding the few thin tears that lie under the eyelids of a man of fifty-six without falling, wetting them, but drying quickly and rising again, the last dews of the autumn of human life.

"To have children you love and a wife you adore, is to have many hearts and offer them all to the dagger!" cried he, starting to his feet with a furious bound, and pacing the room. "To be a father is to give one's self over to misfortune, bound hand and foot. If I meet that fellow d'Estourny I will kill him. Daughters! Who would have daughters? One gets hold of a scoundrel; and the other, my Modeste, of what? A coward, who deludes her under the gilt-paper armor of a poet. If only it were Canalis! There would be no great harm done. But this Scapin of a lover!—I will throttle him with my own hands!" said he to himself, with an involuntary gesture of energetic atrocity. "And what then," he thought, "if my child should die of grief?"

Mechanically he looked out of the window of the Hôtel des Princes, and came back to sit down on the divan, where he remained motionless. The fatigue of six voyages to the Indies, the anxieties of investments, the dangers he had met and escaped, care and sorrow had silvered Charles Mignon's hair. His fine military face, clean in outline, was bronzed by the sun of Malaysia, China, and Asia Minor, and had assumed an imposing expression, which grief at this moment made sublime.

“And Mongenod tells me I can perfectly trust the young man who is to come to speak to me about my daughter!—”

Ernest de la Brière was just then announced by one of the servants whom the Comte de la Bastie had attached to him in the course of these four years, and had picked out from the crowd of men under him.

“You come, Monsieur, with an introduction from my friend Mongenod?” said he.

“Yes,” replied Ernest, gazing timidly at a face as gloomy as Othello’s. “My name is Ernest de la Brière, connected, Monsieur, with the family of the late Prime Minister; I was his private secretary when he was in office. At his fall, His Excellency was good enough to place me in the Court of Exchequer, where I am now first-class Referendary, and where I may rise to be a Master—”

“And what has all this to do with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?” asked Charles Mignon.

“Monsieur, I love her, and it is my unhopèd-for happiness to be loved by her. . . . Listen, Monsieur,” said Ernest, interrupting a terrible movement on the part of the angry father, “I have the strangest confession to make to you, the most ignominious for a man of honor. And the worst punishment of my conduct, which perhaps was natural, is not this revelation to you—I dread the daughter even more than the father.”

Ernest then told the prologue of this domestic drama, quite simply, and with the dignity of sincerity; he did not omit the twenty and odd letters they had exchanged—he had brought them with him—nor the interview he had just had with Canalis. When the father had read all these letters, the poor lover, pale and suppliant, quaked before the fiery looks of the Provençal.

“Well, Monsieur,” said Mignon, “in all this there is only one mistake, but it is all-important. My daughter has not six millions of francs; her fortune at most is two hundred thousand francs in settlement, and very doubtful expectations.”

“Oh, Monsieur!” cried Ernest, throwing his arms round Charles Mignon, and hugging him, “you relieve me of a load

that oppressed me. Now, perhaps, nothing will come in the way of my happiness!—I have interest; I shall soon be Master of the Exchequer. If she had but ten thousand francs, if I had to accept nominal settlements, Mademoiselle Mignon would still be the wife of my choice; and to make her happy, as happy as you have made yours, to be a true son to you—yes, Monsieur, for my father is dead—this is the deepest wish of my heart.”

Charles Mignon drew back three steps, and fixed on La Brière a look that sank into the young man's eyes, as a poniard goes into its sheath; then he stood silent, reading in those fascinated eyes and on that eager countenance the most perfect candor and the purest truthfulness.

“Is fate at last wearied out?” said he to himself in an undertone. “Can I have found a paragon son-in-law in this youth?” He walked up and down the room in great excitement.

“Well, Monsieur,” he said at length, “you owe implicit obedience to the sentence you have come to ask, for otherwise you would at this moment be acting a mere farce.”

“Indeed, Monsieur——”

“Listen to me,” said the father, nailing La Brière to the spot by a look. “I will be neither severe, nor hard, nor unjust. You must take the disadvantages with the advantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter imagines that she is in love with one of the great poets of our day, whose fame chiefly has fascinated her. Well, then, ought not I, as her father, to enable her to choose between the celebrity which has seemed a lighthouse to her, and the humble reality thrown to her by chance in the irony it so often allows itself? Must she not be free to choose between you and Canalis? I trust to your honor to be silent as to what I have just told you concerning the state of my affairs. You and your friend, the Baron de Canalis, must come to spend the last fortnight of this month of October at le Havre. My house will be open to you both; my daughter will have the opportunity of knowing you. Remember, you yourself are to bring your rival, and to allow him to believe all the fables that may be current as to the Comte de la Bastie's

millions. I shall be at le Havre by to-morrow, and shall expect you three days later. Good-morning, Monsieur.”

Poor La Brière very slowly made his way back to Canalis. At that moment the poet, face to face with himself, could give himself up to the torrent of reflections that flow from that “second thought” which Talleyrand so highly praised. The first thought is the impulse of nature, the second that of society.

“A girl with six millions of francs! And my eyes failed to discern the glitter of that gold through the darkness! With such a fortune as that, I can be a peer of France, count, ambassador!—I have answered the most ordinary women, simpletons, intriguing girls who only wanted an autograph! And I rebelled against these *bal masqué* wiles on the very day when heaven sent me a chosen soul, an angel with wings of gold!—Pooh! I will write a sublime poem, and the chance will come again! What luck for that little La Brière, who spread his tail in my sunbeams!—And what plagiarist. I am the model, and he is to be the statue! This is playing the fable of ‘Bertrand and Raton.’—Six millions, and an angel, a Mignon de la Bastie! An aristocratic angel, who loves poetry and the poet!—And I meanwhile display my muscles as a strong man, perform athletics, like Alcides, to astonish this champion of physical strength by moral force—this brave soldier full of fine feeling, this young girl’s friend, who will tell her I have a soul of iron. I am playing Napoleon, when I ought to show myself as a seraph!—I shall have won a friend perhaps, and have paid dear for him; but friendship is a fine thing. Six millions—that is the price of a friend; a man cannot have many at that figure!”

At this last point of exclamation La Brière came into his friend’s room; he was depressed.

“Well, what is the matter?” said Canalis.

“The father insists that his daughter shall be enabled to choose between the two Canalis——”

“Poor boy!” said the poet, laughing. “A clever man is that father!”

“I have pledged my honor to take you to le Havre,” said La Brière dolefully.



"My dear boy," said Canalis, "if your honor is at stake, you may depend upon me. I will ask for a month's leave of absence."

"Oh, Modeste is lovely!" cried La Brière in despair, "and you will easily extinguish me! Still, I was amazed to find good fortune coming my way; I said to myself, it is all a mistake!"

"Pooh! We shall see," said Canalis with ruthless cheerfulness.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and his cashier were flying, at the cost of three francs a stage to the postilion, from Paris to le Havre. The father had completely allayed his watch-dog's alarm as to Modeste's love affairs, had released him from his responsibilities, and reassured him as to Butscha's proceedings.

"Everything is for the best, my good old friend," said Charles, who had made inquiries of Mongenod as to Canalis and La Brière. "We have two players for one part," he added, laughing.

At the same time, he enjoined absolute silence on his old comrade as to the comedy about to be played at the Chalet, and his gentle revenge, or, if you will, the lesson to be given by a father to his child. From Paris to le Havre was one long dialogue between the friends, by which the Colonel learnt the smallest events that had happened in his family during the past four years; and Charles told Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was to come before the end of the month to examine the Countess's eyes, and decide whether it would be possible to remove the cataract and restore her sight.

A few minutes before the breakfast hour at the Chalet, the cracking of a whip, by a postilion counting on a large gratuity, announced the return of the two soldiers. Only the joy of a father coming home to his family after a long absence would give rise to such a detonation, and all the women were standing at the little gate.

There are so many fathers, and so many children—more fathers perhaps than children—who can enter into the excitement of such a meeting, that literature is never required to

depict it; happily! for the finest words, and poetry itself, are inadequate to such emotions. Perhaps, indeed, the sweeter emotions have no literary side.

Not a word was spoken that day that could disturb the happiness of the Mignon family. There was a truce between the father, the mother, and the daughter as to the mysterious love affair which had paled Modeste's cheek. She was up today for the first time. The Colonel, with the delicate tenderness that characterizes a true soldier, sat all the time by his wife's side, her hand constantly held in his, and he watched Modeste, never tired of admiring her refined, elegant, and poetic beauty. Is it not by such small things that we know a man of true feeling?

Modeste, fearful of troubling the melancholy happiness of her father and mother, came from time to time to kiss the traveler's brow, and by kissing him so often, seemed to wish to kiss him for two.

"Ah, darling child! I understand you," said her father, pressing Modeste's hand at a moment when she was smothering him with affection.

"Hush!" said Modeste in his ear, pointing to her mother.

Dumay's rather perfidious silence left Modeste very uneasy as to the results of his journey to Paris; she now and then stole a look at the Lieutenant, but could not penetrate that tough skin. The Colonel, as a prudent father, wished to study his only daughter's nature, and, above all, to consult his wife, before proceeding to a discussion on which the happiness of the whole family would depend.

"To-morrow, my dearest child, rise early," said he at night, "and if it is fine, we will go for a walk together on the seashore. We have to talk over your poems, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

These words, spoken with a smile that was reflected on Dumay's lips, were all Modeste could know; still, this was enough to allay her anxiety and to make her too curious to get to sleep till late, so busy was her fancy.

Next morning Modeste was dressed and ready before the Colonel.

“You know everything, my dear father,” said she, as soon as they had started on their way to the sea.

“I know everything—and a good many things that you do not know,” replied he.

Thereupon the father and daughter walked some few steps in silence.

“Now, tell me, my child, how a daughter so worshiped by her mother could take so decisive a step as to write to a man unknown to her without asking that mother’s advice?”

“Well, papa, because mamma would not have allowed it.”

“And do you think, my child, that it was right? Though you have inevitably been left to bring yourself up, how is it that your reason or your insight—if modesty failed you—did not tell you that to act in such a way was to throw yourself at a man’s head? Can it be that my daughter, my only child, lacks pride and delicacy? Oh! Modeste, you gave your father two hours of hell’s torments in Paris; for, in point of fact, your conduct morally has been the same as Bettina’s, without having the excuse of seduction; you have been a coquette in cold blood, and that is love without heart, the worst vice of the French woman.”

“I—without pride?” said Modeste in tears. “But he has never seen me!”

“*He* knows your name.”

“I never let him know it till the moment when our eyes had set the seal to three months of correspondence, during which our souls had spoken to each other!”

“Yes, my dear mistaken angel, you have brought a kind of reason to bear on this madness which has compromised your happiness and your family.”

“Well, after all, papa, happiness is the justification of such boldness,” said she, with a touch of temper.

“Ah! Then it is merely boldness?” cried her father.

“Such boldness as my mother allowed herself,” she answered hastily.

“Refractory child! Your mother, after meeting me at a ball, told her father, who adored her, that same evening, that she believed she could be happy with me.—Now, be candid, Modeste; is there any resemblance between love, at first sight

it is true, but under a father's eye, and the mad act of writing to an unknown man?"

"An unknown man? Nay, papa, one of our greatest poets, whose character and life are under the light of day, exposed to gossip and calumny; a man clothed in glory, to whom, my dear father, I was but a dramatic, literary personage—a girl of Shakespeare's—till the moment when I felt I must know whether the man were as attractive as his soul is beautiful."

"Bless me, my poor child, you are dreaming of poetry in connection with marriage. But if, in all ages, girls have been cloistered in the family; if God and social law have placed them under the stern yoke of paternal sanction, it is precisely and on purpose to spare them the misfortunes to which the poetry that fascinates you must lead while it dazzles you, and which you therefore cannot estimate at its true worth. Poetry is one of the graces of life; it is not the whole of life."

"Papa, it is an action for ever undecided before the tribunal of facts, for there is a constant struggle between our hearts and the family authority."

"Woe to the girl who should find happiness by means of such resistance!" said the Colonel gravely. "In 1813 one of my fellow-officers, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, married his cousin against her father's warnings, and the household paid dearly for the obstinacy that a girl could mistake for love.—In these matters the family is supreme."

"My *fiancé* has told me all that," said she. "He assumed the part of *Orgon* for some time, and had the courage to run down the personal character of poets."

"I have read the correspondence," said her father, with a meaning smile that made Modeste uneasy. "And I may, on that point, remark that your last letter would hardly be allowable in a girl who had been seduced—in a Julie d'Étanges. Good God! what mischief comes of romances!"

"If they were never written, my dear father, we should still enact them. It is better to read them. There are fewer romantic adventures now than in the time of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., when fewer novels were published.—Besides, if you have read our letters, you must have perceived that I

have found you for a son-in-law the most respectful son, the most angelic nature, the strictest honesty, and that we love each other at least as much as you and mamma did. . . . Well, I will admit that the affair has not been conducted exactly as etiquette requires. I made a mistake, if you like——”

“I have read your letters,” repeated her father, interrupting her, “so I know how he justified you in your own eyes for a step which might perhaps be excusable in a woman who knows life, who is carried away by passion, but which in a girl of twenty is a monstrous fault——”

“A fault in common people’s eyes, in those of narrow-minded Gobenheim, who measure out life with a T square! But do not let us go beyond the artistic and poetic world, papa.—We young girls live between two alternatives: we may show a man that we love him by mincing graces, or we may go to meet him frankly. And is not this last method really great and noble? We French girls are disposed of by our family like merchandise, at three months’ date, sometimes much sooner, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, Switzerland, and Germany they are married more nearly on the system I have adopted. What can you say to that? Am I not half German?”

“Child,” exclaimed the Colonel, looking at his daughter, “the superiority of France lies precisely in the common-sense, the strict logic to which our splendid language compels the mind. France is the Reason of the world! England and Germany are romantic in this point; but even there the great families follow our customs.—You girls would rather not believe, then, that your parents, who know life, have the charge of your souls and your happiness, and that it is their duty to steer you clear of the rocks! . . . Good God!” he went on, “is this their fault or ours? Ought we to bend our children under a yoke of iron? Must we always be punished for the tenderness which prompts us to make them happy, which, unfortunately, makes them heart of our heart!”

As she heard this ejaculation, spoken almost with tears, Modeste cast a side glance at her father.

“Is it wrong in a girl whose heart is free,” said she, “to

choose for her husband a man who is not only charming in himself, but who is also a man of genius, of good birth, and in a fine position—a gentleman as gentle as myself?”

“Then you love him?” said the Colonel.

“I tell you, father,” said she, laying her head on his breast, “if you do not want to see me die——”

“That is enough,” said the Colonel; “your passion is, I see, unchangeable.”

“Unchangeable.”

“Nothing could move you?”

“Nothing in the world.”

“You can conceive of no alteration, no betrayal,” her father went on. “You love him for better, for worse, for the sake of his personal charm; and if he should be a d’Estourny, you still would love him?”

“Oh, papa, you do not know your child! Could I love a coward, a man devoid of truth and honor—a gallows-bird!”

“Then supposing you have been deceived?”

“By that charming young fellow, so candid—almost melancholy?—You are laughing at me, or you have not seen him.”

“I see; happily your love is not so imperative as you say. I have suggested conditions which might modify your poem.—Well, then you will admit that fathers are of some use?”

“You wanted to give me a lesson, papa—a sort of object-lesson, it would seem.”

“Poor misled girl!” said her father severely; “the lesson is not of my giving; I have nothing to do with it beyond trying to soften the blow.”

“Say no more, papa; do not trifle with my very life,” said Modeste, turning pale.

“Nay, my child, summon up your courage. It is you who have trifled with life, and life now laughs you to scorn.”

Modeste looked at her father in bewilderment.

“Listen; if the young man you love, whom you saw in church at le Havre four days ago, were a contemptible wretch——”

“It is not true!” said she. “That pale, dark face, so noble and full of poetry——”

“Is a lie!” said the Colonel, interrupting her. “He is no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that fisherman hauling up his sail to go out——”

“Do you know what you are killing in me?” said Modeste.

“Be comforted, my child; though fate has made your fault its own punishment, the mischief is not irreparable. The youth you saw, with whom you have exchanged hearts by correspondence, is an honest fellow; he came to me to confess his dilemma. He loves you, and I should not object to him as a son-in-law.”

“And if he is not Canalis, who is he?” asked Modeste, in a broken voice.

“His secretary. His name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not of superior birth, but he is one of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like. And what does it matter to us, after all? You have seen him; nothing can change your feelings; you have chosen him, you know his soul—it is as noble as he is good-looking.”

The Comte de la Bastie was checked by a sign from Modeste. The poor child, perfectly white, her eyes fixed on the sea, and as rigid as the dead, had been struck as by a pistol-shot by the words, “*One of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like.*”

“Deceived!” she said at last.

“As your poor sister was, but less seriously.”

“Let us go home, papa,” she said, rising from the knoll on which they had been sitting. “Listen, father; I swear before God to obey your wishes, whatever they may be, in the business of marriage.”

“Then you have already ceased to love?” asked her father sarcastically.

“I loved a true man without a falsehood on his face, as honest as you yourself, incapable of disguising himself like an actor, of dressing himself up in another man’s glory.”

“You said that nothing could move you!” said the Colonel ironically.

“Oh, do not make game of me!” cried she, clasping her hands, and looking at her father in an agony of entreaty.

“You do not know how you are torturing my heart and my dearest beliefs by your satire——”

“God forbid! I have said the exact truth.”

“You are very good, father,” she replied, after a pause, with a certain solemnity.

“And he has your letters! Heh?” said Charles Mignon. “If those crazy effusions of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, according to Dumay, use them for pipe-lights——”

“Oh, that is going too far.”

“So Canalis told him.”

“He saw Canalis?”

“Yes,” replied the Colonel.

They walked on a little way in silence.

“That, then,” said Modeste, when they had gone a few steps, “was why that gentleman spoke so ill of poets and poetry! Why did that little secretary talk of—— But, however,” she added, interrupting herself, “were not his virtues, his qualities, his fine sentiments, a mere epistolary make-up? The man who steals another’s fame and name may very well——”

“Pick locks, rob the Treasury, murder on the highway,” said Charles Mignon, smiling. “That is just like you—you girls, with your uncompromising feelings and your ignorance of life. A man who can deceive a woman has either escaped the scaffold or must end there.”

This raillery checked Modeste’s effervescence, and again they were both silent.

“My child,” the Colonel added, “men in the world—as in nature, for that matter—are bound to try to win your hearts, and you to defend them. You have reversed the position. Is that well? In a false position everything is false. Yours, then, was the first wrong step.—No, a man is not a monster because he tries to attract a woman; our rights allow us to be the aggressors, with all the consequences, short of crime and baseness. A man may still have virtues even after throwing over a woman, for this simply means that he has failed to find the treasure he sought in her; while no woman but a queen, an actress, or a woman so far above the man in rank that to him



she is like a queen, can take the initiative without incurring much blame.—But a girl! She is false to everything that God has given her, every flower of saintliness, dignity, and sweetness, whatever grace, poetry, or precaution she may infuse into the act.”

“To seek the master and find the servant! To play the old farce of Love and Chance on one side only!” she exclaimed, with bitter feeling. “Oh, I shall never hold up my head again!”

“Foolish child! Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, in my eyes, at least the equal of Monsieur de Canalis; he has been private secretary to a Prime Minister, he is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer, he is a man of heart, he adores you,—but he does not write verses.—No, I confess it, he is not a poet; but he may have a heart full of poetry. However, my poor child,” he added, in reply to Modeste’s face of disgust, “you will see them both—the false and the real Canalis——”

“Oh, papa!”

“Did you not swear to obey me in everything that concerns the *business* of your marriage? Well, you may choose between them the man you prefer for your husband. You began with a poem, you may end with a page of bucolics by trying to detect the true nature of these gentlemen in some rustic excursions, a shooting or fishing party.”

Modeste bent her head and returned to the Chalet with her father, listening to what he said, and answering in monosyllables. She had fallen humiliated into the depths of a bog, from the Alp where she fancied she had flown up to an eagle’s nest. To adopt the poetical phraseology of an author of that period, “After feeling the soles of her feet too tender to tread on the glass sherds of reality, Fancy, which had united every characteristic of woman in that fragile form, from the day-dreams of a modest girl, all strewn with violets, to the unbridled desires of a courtesan, had now led her to the midst of her enchanted gardens, where, hideous surprise! instead of an exquisite blossom, she found growing from the soil the hairy and twisted limbs of the Mandragora.”

From the mystic heights of her love, Modeste had dropped on to the dull, flat road, lying between ditches and plowed

lands—the road, in short, that is paved with vulgarity. What girl with an ardent spirit but would be broken by such a fall? At whose feet had she cast her promises?

The Modeste who returned to the Chalet bore no more resemblance to the girl who had gone out two hours before, than the actress in the street resembles the heroine on the stage. She sank into a state of apathy that was painful to behold. The sun was darkened, nature was under a shroud, the flowers had no message for her. Like every girl of a vehement disposition, she drank a little too deep of the cup of disenchantment. She rebelled against reality, without choosing as yet to bend her neck to the yoke of the family and of society; she thought it too heavy, too hard, too oppressive. She would not even listen to the comfort offered by her father and mother, and felt an indescribable savage delight in abandoning herself to her mental sufferings.

“Then poor Butscha was right!” she exclaimed one evening.

This speech shows how far she had traveled in so short a time on the barren plains of Reality, guided by her deep dejection. Grief, when it comes of the upheaval of all our hopes, is an illness; it often ends in death. It would be no mean occupation for modern physiology to investigate the process and means by which a thought can produce the same deadly effects as a poison; how despair can destroy the appetite, injure the pylorus, and change all the functions of the strongest vitality. This was the case with Modeste. In three days she presented an image of morbid melancholy; she sang no more, it was impossible to make her smile; her parents and friends were alarmed. Charles Mignon, uneasy at seeing nothing of the two young men, was thinking of going to fetch them; but on the fourth day Monsieur Latournelle had news of them, and this was how.

Canalis, immensely tempted by such a rich marriage, would neglect no means of outdoing La Brière, while Ernest could not complain of his having violated the laws of friendship. The poet thought that nothing put a lover at a greater disadvantage in a young lady's eyes than figuring in an inferior

position; so he proposed, in the most innocent manner possible, that he and La Brière should keep house together, taking a little country place at Ingouville, where they might live for a month under pretext of recruiting their health.

As soon as La Brière had consented to this proposal, at first regarding it as very natural, Canalis insisted on his being his guest, and made all the arrangements himself. He sent his man-servant to le Havre, desiring him to apply to Monsieur Latournelle for the choice of a country cottage at Ingouville, thinking that the notary would certainly talk over the matter with the Mignon family. Ernest and Canalis, it may be supposed, had discussed every detail of their adventure; and La Brière, always prolix, had given his rival a thousand valuable hints

The servant, understanding his master's intentions, carried them out to admiration; he trumpeted the advent of the great poet, to whom his doctors had ordered some sea-baths to recruit him after the double fatigues of politics and literature. This grand personage required a house of at least so many rooms; for he was bringing his secretary, his cook, two men-servants, and a coachman, not to mention Monsieur Germain Bonnet, his body-servant. The traveling carriage the poet selected and hired for a month was very neat, and could serve for making some excursions; and Germain was in search of two saddle-horses for hire in the neighborhood, as Monsieur le Baron and his secretary were fond of horse-exercise. In the presence of little Latournelle, Germain, as he went over various houses, spoke much of the secretary, and rejected two villas on the ground that Monsieur de la Brière would not be well accommodated.

“Monsieur le Baron,” said he, “regards his secretary as his best friend. Oh, I should catch it handsomely if Monsieur de la Brière were not as well served as Monsieur le Baron himself. And, after all, Monsieur de la Brière is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer.”

Germain was never seen dressed otherwise than in a suit of black, with good gloves and boots, turned out like a gentleman. Imagine the effect he produced, and the notion that was formed of the great poet from this specimen. A clever

man's servant becomes clever too; the master's cleverness presently "runs" and colors the man. Germain did not overact his part; he was straightforward and genial, as Canalis had instructed him to be. Poor La Brière had no suspicion of the injury Germain was doing him, or of the depreciation to which he had exposed himself; for some echoes of public report rose from the lower depths to Modeste's ears. Thus Canalis was bringing his friend in his retinue, in his carriage; and Ernest's simple nature did not allow him to perceive his false position soon enough to remedy it.

The delay which so provoked Charles Mignon was caused by the poet's desire to have his arms painted on the doors of the chaise, and by his orders to the tailor; for Canalis took in the wide world of such trivialities, of which the least may influence a girl.

"Make yourself easy," said Latournelle to the Colonel on the fifth day. "Monsieur de Canalis' man came to a determination this morning. He has taken Madame Amaury's cottage at Sanvic, furnished, for seven hundred francs, and has written to his master that he can start, and will find everything ready on his arrival. So the gentlemen will be here by Sunday. I have also had this note from Butscha. Here—it is not long: 'My dear Master, I cannot get back before Sunday. Between this and then I must get some important information which nearly concerns someone in whom you are interested.'"

The announcement of this arrival did not make Modeste at all less sad; the sense of a fall, of humiliation, still held sway over her, and she was not such a born coquette as her father thought her. There is a charming and permissible kind of flirtation, the coquetry of the soul, which might be called the good breeding of love; and Charles Mignon, when reproving his daughter, had failed to distinguish between the desire to please and the factitious love of the mind, between the craving to love and self-interest. Just like a soldier of the Empire, he saw in the letters he had so hastily read a girl throwing herself at a poet's head; but in many letters—omitted here for the sake of brevity—a connoisseur would have admired the maidenly and graceful reserve which Modeste had

immediately substituted for the aggressive and frivolous pertness of her first effusions—a transition very natural in a woman.

On one point her father had been cruelly right. It was her last letter—in which Modeste, carried away by threefold love, had spoken as though their marriage were a decided thing, which really brought her to shame. Still, she thought her father very hard, very cruel, to compel her to receive a man so unworthy of her, towards whom her soul had flown almost unveiled. She had questioned Dumay as to his interview with the poet; she had ingeniously extracted from him every detail, and she could not think Canalis such a barbarian as the Lieutenant thought him. She could smile at the fine papal chest containing the letters of the *mille et trois* ladies of this literary Don Giovanni. Again and again she was on the point of saying to her father, “I am not the only girl who writes to him; the cream of womankind send leaves for the poet’s crown of bay.”

In the course of this week Modeste’s character underwent a transformation. This catastrophe—and it was a great one to so poetical a nature—aroused her latent acumen and spirit of mischief, and her suitors were to find her a formidable adversary. For, in fact, in any girl, if her heart is chilled, her head grows clear; she then observes everything with a certain swiftness of judgment and a spirit of mockery, such as Shakespeare has admirably painted in the person of Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Modeste was seized by intense disgust of mankind, since the most distinguished of them had deceived her hopes. In love, what a woman mistakes for disgust is simply seeing clearly; but in matters of feeling no woman, especially no young girl, ever sees truly. When she ceases to admire, she contemns. So Modeste, after going through fearful tortures of mind, inevitably put on the armor on which, as she declared, she had stamped the word Contempt; thenceforward she could look on as a disinterested spectator at what she called the Farce of Suitors, although she filled the part of leading lady. More especially was she bent on pertinaciously humiliating Monsieur de la Brière.

“Modeste is saved,” said Madame Mignon to her husband

with a smile. "She means to be revenged on the false Canalis by trying to fall in love with the true one."

This was, indeed, Modeste's plan. It was so obvious that her mother, to whom she confided her vexation, advised her to treat Monsieur de la Brière with oppressive civility.

"These two young fellows," said Madame Latournelle on the Saturday, "have no suspicion of the troops of spies at their heels, for here are eight of us to keep an eye on them."

"What, my dear—two?" cried little Latournelle; "there are three of them!—Gobenheim is not here, yet, so I may speak."

Modeste had looked up, and all the others, following her example, gazed at the notary.

"A third lover, and he is a lover, has put himself on the list——"

"Bless me!" said Charles Mignon.

"But he is no less a person," the notary went on pompously, "than His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, Marquis de Saint-Séver, Duc de Nivron, Comte de Bayeux, Vicomte d'Essigny, High Equerry of France, and Peer of the Realm, Knight of the Orders of the Spur and of the Golden Fleece, Grandee of Spain, and son of the last Governor of Normandy.—He saw Mademoiselle Modeste when he was staying with the Vilquins, and he then only regretted—as his notary told me, who arrived yesterday from Bayeux—that she was not rich enough for him, since his father, on his return from exile, had found nothing left but his Château of Hérouville, graced by his sister's presence.—The young Duke is three-and-thirty. I am definitely charged to make overtures, Monsieur le Comte," added Latournelle, turning respectfully to the Colonel.

"Ask Modeste," said her father, "whether she wishes to have another bird in her aviary; for, so far as I am concerned, I am quite willing that this fine gentleman equerry should pay his addresses to her."

Notwithstanding the care with which Charles Mignon avoided seeing anybody, stayed in the Chalet, and never went

out but with Modeste, Gobenheim, whom they could hardly cease to receive at the Chalet, had gossiped about Dumay's wealth; for Dumay, a second father to Modeste, had said to Gobenheim when he left his service, "I shall be my Colonel's steward, and all my money, excepting what my wife may keep, will go to my little Modeste's children."

So everyone at le Havre had echoed the plain question that Latournelle had asked himself—

"Must not Monsieur Charles Mignon have made an enormous fortune if Dumay's share amounts to six hundred thousand francs, and if Dumay is to be his steward?"

"Monsieur Mignon came home in a ship of his own," said the gossips on 'Change, "loaded with indigo. The freight alone, not to mention the vessel, is worth more than he gives out to be his fortune."

The Colonel would not discharge the servants he had so carefully chosen during his travels, so he was obliged to hire a house for six months in the lower part of Ingouville; he had a body-servant, a cook, and a coachman—both negroes—and a mulatto woman and two mulatto men on whose faithfulness he could rely. The coachman was inquiring for riding horses for Mademoiselle and his master, and for carriage horses for the chaise in which the Colonel and the Lieutenant had come home. This traveling carriage, purchased in Paris, was in the latest fashion, and bore the arms of la Bastie with a Count's coronet. All these things, mere trifles in the eyes of a man who had been living, for four years, in the midst of the unbounded luxury of the Indies, of the Hongkong merchants, and the English at Canton, were the subject of comment to the traders of le Havre and the good folks of Graville and Ingouville. Within five days there was a hubbub of talk which flashed across Normandy like a fired train of gunpowder.

"Monsieur Mignon has come home from China with millions," was said at Rouen, "and it would seem that he has become a Count in the course of his travels."

"But he was Comte de la Bastie before the Revolution," somebody remarked.

"So a Liberal, who for five-and-twenty years was known as

Charles Mignon, is now called Monsieur le Comte! What are we coming to?"

Thus, in spite of the reserve of her parents and intimates, Modeste was regarded as the richest heiress in Normandy, and all eyes could now see her merits. The Duc d'Hérouville's aunt and sister, in full drawing-room assembly at Bayeux, confirmed Monsieur Charles Mignon's right to the arms and title of Count conferred on Cardinal Mignon, whose Cardinal's hat and cords were, out of gratitude, assumed in place of a crest and supporters. These ladies had caught sight of Mademoiselle de la Bastie from the Vilquins', and their solicitude for the impoverished head of the house at once scented an opportunity.

"If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is as rich as she is handsome," said the young Duke's aunt, "she will be the best match in the province. And she, at any rate, is of noble birth!"

The last words were a shot at the Vilquins, with whom she could not come to terms after enduring the humiliation of paying them a visit.

Such were the little events which led to the introduction of another actor in this domestic drama, contrary to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace. But the portrait and biography of this personage, so tardy in his appearance, will not detain us long, since he is of the smallest importance. Monsieur le Duc will not fill more space here than he will in history.

His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, the fruit of the matrimonial autumn of the last Governor of Normandy, was born at Vienna in 1796, during the Emigration. The old Marshal, who returned with the King in 1814, died in 1819 without seeing his son married, though he was Duc de Nivron; he had nothing to leave him but the immense Château of Hérouville, with the park, some outlying ground and a farm, all painfully repurchased, and worth about fifteen thousand francs a year. Louis XVIII. gave the young Duke the post of Master of the Horse; and under Charles X. he received the allowance of twelve thousand francs a year granted to impecunious peers.



But what were twenty-seven thousand francs a year for such a family? In Paris, indeed, the young Duke had the use of the Royal carriages, and his official residence at the King's stables in the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre; his salary paid the expenses of the winter, and the twenty-seven thousand francs paid those of the summer in Normandy.

Though this great man was still a bachelor, the fault was less his own than that of his aunt, who was not familiar with La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's pretensions were stupendous, quite out of harmony with the spirit of the age; for great names without money can hardly meet with any wealthy heiresses among the high French nobility, which finds it difficult enough to enrich its sons, ruined by the equal division of property. To find an advantageous match for the young Duc d'Hérouville she should have cultivated the great financial houses, and this haughty daughter of the noble house offended them all by her cutting speeches. During the early years of the Restoration, between 1817 and 1825, while looking out for millions, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville refused Mademoiselle Mongenod, the banker's daughter, with whom Monsieur de Fontaine was content. And now, after various good matches had been marred by her pride, she had just decided that the fortune of the Nucingens had been amassed by too vile means to allow of her lending herself to Madame de Nucingen's ambitious desire to see her daughter a duchess. The King, anxious to restore the splendor of the Hérouvilles, had almost made the match himself, and he publicly taxed Mademoiselle d'Hérouville with folly. Thus the aunt made her nephew ridiculous, and the Duke laid himself open to ridicule.

It is a fact that when the great things of humanity vanish they leave some fragments (*frusteaux*, Rabelais would call them); and the French nobility in our day shows too many fag-ends. In this long study of manners neither the clergy nor the nobility have anything to complain of. Those two great and magnificent social necessaries are well represented; but would it not be false to the proud title of Historian to be other than impartial, to fail to show here the degeneracy of the race—just as you will elsewhere find the study of an

*émigré*, the Comte de Mortsauf (*Le Lys dans la Vallée*), and every noblest feature of the noble, in the Marquis d'Espard (*L'Interdiction*)?

How was it that a race of brave and strong men, that the house of d'Hérouville, which gave the famous Marshal to the Royal cause, cardinals to the Church, captains to the Valois, and brave men to Louis XIV., ended in a frail creature smaller than Butscha? It is a question we may ask ourselves in many a Paris drawing-room, as we hear one of the great names of France announced, and see a little slender slip of a man come in who seems only to breathe, or a prematurely old fellow, or some eccentric being, in whom the observer seeks, but scarcely finds, a feature in which imagination can see a trace of original greatness. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of that selfish time, have produced the etiolated generation in which fine manners are the sole survivors of extinct great qualities. Style is the only inheritance preserved by the nobility. Thus, apart from certain exceptions, the defection which left Louis XVI. to perish may be to some extent explained by the miserable heritage of the reign of Madame de Pompadour.

The Master of the Horse, a young man with blue eyes, fair, pale, and slight, had a certain dignity of mind; but his small size, and his aunt's mistake in having led him to be uselessly civil to the Vilquins, made him excessively shy. The d'Hérouvilles had had a narrow escape of dying out in the person of a cripple (*l'Enfant maudit*). But the Grand Marshal—as the family always called the d'Hérouville whom Louis XIII. had created Duke—had married at the age of eighty-two, and, of course, the family had been continued. The young Duke liked women; but he placed them too high, he respected them too much, he adored them, and was not at his ease but with those whom no one respects. This character had led to his living a twofold life. He avenged himself on women of easy life for the worship he paid in the drawing-rooms, or, if you like, the boudoirs of Saint-Germain. His ways and his tiny figure, his weary face, his blue eyes, with their somewhat ecstatic expression, had added to the ridicule poured on him, most unjustly, for he was full of

apprehensiveness and wit; but his wit had no sparkle, and was never seen excepting when he was quite at his ease. Fanny Beaupré, the actress, who was supposed to be his highly paid and most intimate friend, used to say of him, "It is good wine, but so tightly corked up that you break your corkscrews."

\* The handsome Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the Master of the Horse could only adore, crushed him by a speech which, unluckily, was repeated, as all clever but ill-natured speeches are.

"He reminds me," said she, "of a trinket, beautifully wrought, but which we show more than we use, and always keep in cotton wool."

Even his title of Master of the Horse would, by force of contrast, make good King Charles X. laugh, though the Duc d'Hérouville was a capital horseman. Men, like books, are sometimes valued too late. Modeste had had a glimpse of the Duke during his fruitless visit to the Vilquins, and as he went by, all these remarks involuntarily recurred to her mind; but in the position in which she now stood, she perceived how valuable the Duc d'Hérouville's suit would be to save her from being at the mercy of a Canalis.

"I do not see," said she to Latournelle, "why the Duc d'Hérouville should not be allowed to call. In spite of our indigence," she added, with a mischievous glance at her father, "I am supposed to be an heiress. I shall have at last to publish a card of the field.—Have you not noticed how Gobenheim's looks have changed in the course of this week? He is in despair because he cannot set down his faithful attendance for whist to the score of mute admiration of me!"

"Hush, my darling! here he is," said Madame Latournelle.

"Old Althor is in despair," said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he came in.

"What about?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"Vilquin is going to fail, they say, and on 'Change here you are said to have several millions——"

"No one knows," said Charles Mignon very dryly, "what my obligations in India may amount to, and I do not care to admit the public to my confidence in business matters.—"

Dumay," he added in his friend's ear, "if Vilquin is in difficulties, we may be able to get the place back for what he gave for it in ready money."

Such was the state of affairs brought about by chance when, on Sunday morning, Canalis and La Brière, preceded by a courier, arrived at Madame Amaury's villa. They were told that the Duc d'Hérouville and his sister had arrived on the previous Tuesday at a hired house in Gravelle, for the benefit of their health. This competition led to a jest in the town that rents would rise at Ingouville.

"She will make the place a perfect hospital if this goes on!" remarked Mademoiselle Vilquin, disgusted at not becoming a duchess.

The perennial comedy of *The Heiress*, now to be performed at the Chalet, might certainly, from the frame of mind in which it found Modeste, have been, as she had said in jest, a competition, for she was firmly resolved, after the overthrow of her illusions, to give her hand only to the man whose character should prove perfectly satisfactory.

On the morrow of their arrival, the rivals—still bosom friends—prepared to make their first visit to the Chalet that evening. They devoted the whole of Sunday and all Monday morning to unpacking, to taking possession of Madame Amaury's house, and to settling themselves in it for a month. Besides, the poet, justified by his position as Minister's apprentice in allowing himself some craft, had thought of everything; he wished to get the benefit of the excitement that might be caused by his arrival, of which some echoes might reach the Chalet. Canalis, supposed to be much fatigued, did not go out; La Brière went twice to walk past the Chalet, for he loved with a sort of desperation, he had the greatest dread of having repelled Modeste, his future seemed wrapped in thick clouds.

The two friends came down to dinner on that Monday in array for their first visit, the most important of all. La Brière was dressed as he had been in church on that famous Sunday; but he regarded himself as the satellite to a planet, and trusted wholly to the chance of circumstances. Canalis, on his part, had not forgotten his black coat, nor his orders,

nor the drawing-room grace perfected by his intimacy with the Duchesse de Chaulieu, his patroness, and with the finest company of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Canalis had attended to every detail of dandyism, while poor Ernest was prepared to appear in the comparative carelessness of a hopeless man.

As he waited on the two gentlemen at table, Germain could not help smiling at the contrast. At the second course he came in with a diplomatic, or, to be exact, a disturbed air.

“Monsieur le Baron,” said he to Canalis in a low voice, “did you know that Monsieur the Master of the Horse is coming to Gravelle to be cured of the same complaint as you and Monsieur de la Brière?”

“The little Duc d’Hérouville?” cried Canalis.

“Yes, sir.”

“Can he have come for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?” asked La Brière, coloring.

“For Mademoiselle Mignon,” replied Germain.

“We are done!” cried Canalis, looking at La Brière.

“Ah!” Ernest eagerly replied, “that is the first time you have said *we* since we left Paris. Till this moment you have said *I*.”

“You know me!” cried Melchior with a burst of laughter. “Well, we are not in a position to hold our own against an officer of the Household, against the titles of Duke and Peer, nor against the marsh-lands which the Privy Council has just conferred, on the strength of my report, on the House of Hérouville.”

“His Highness,” said La Brière with mischievous gravity, “offers you a plum of consolation in the person of his sister.”

Just at this moment the Comte de la Bastie was announced. The two young men rose to receive him, and La Brière hastened to meet him and introduce Canalis.

“I had to return the visit you paid me in Paris,” said Charles Mignon to the young Referendary, “and I knew that by coming here I should have the added pleasure of seeing one of our great living poets.”

“Great?—Monsieur,” the poet replied with a smile, “there can be nothing great henceforth in an age to which the reign

of Napoleon was the preface. To begin with, we are a perfect tribe of so-called great poets. And besides, second-rate talent apes genius so well that it has made any great distinction impossible."

"And is that what has driven you into politics?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"It is the same in that field too," said Canalis. "There will be no more great statesmen; there will be only men who are more or less in touch with events. Under the system produced by the Charter, Monsieur, which regards the schedule of the rates you pay as a patent of nobility, there is nothing substantial but what you went to find in China—a fortune."

Melchior, well pleased with himself, and satisfied with the impression he was making on his future father-in-law, now turned to Germain.

"Give us coffee in the drawing-room," said he, bowing to the merchant to leave the dining-room.

"I must thank you, Monsieur le Comte," said La Brière, "for having spared me the embarrassment of not knowing how I might introduce my friend at your house. To your kind heart you add a happy wit——"

"Oh, such wit as is common to the natives of Provence," said Mignon.

"Ah, you come from Provence?" cried Canalis.

"Forgive my friend," said La Brière; "he has not studied the history of the la Basties, as I have."

At the word friend, Canalis shot a deep look at Ernest.

"If your health permits," said the Provençal to the great poet, "I claim the honor of receiving you this evening under my roof. It will be a day to mark, as the ancients have it, *albo notanda lapillo*. Though we are somewhat shy of receiving so great a glory in so small a house, you will gratify my daughter's impatience, for her admiration has led her even to set your verses to music."

"You possess what is better than glory," said Canalis. "You have beauty in your home, if I may believe Ernest."

"Oh, she is a good girl, whom you will find quite provincial," said the father.

“Provincial as she is, she has a suitor in the Duc d’Hérouville,” cried Canalis in a hard tone.

“Oh,” said Monsieur Mignon, with the deceptive frankness of a southerner, “I leave my daughter free to choose. Dukes, princes, private gentlemen, they are all the same to me, even men of genius. I will pledge myself to nothing; the man my Modeste may prefer will be my son-in-law, or rather my son,” and he looked at La Brière. “Madame de la Bastie is a German; she cannot tolerate French etiquette, and I allow myself to be guided by my two women. I would always rather ride inside a carriage than on the box. We can discuss such serious matters in jest, for we have not yet seen the Duc d’Hérouville, and I do not believe in marriages arranged by proxy any more than in suitors forced on girls by their parents.”

“That is a declaration equally disheartening and encouraging to two young men who seek in marriage the philosopher’s stone of happiness,” said Canalis.

“Do not you think it desirable, necessary, and indeed good policy, to stipulate for perfect liberty for the parents, the daughter, and the suitors?” said Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a glance from La Brière, made no reply, and the conversation continued on indifferent subjects. After walking two or three times round the garden, the father withdrew, begging the two friends to pay their visit.

“That is our dismissal,” cried Canalis. “You understood it as I did. After all, in his place I should not hesitate between the Master of the Horse and either of us, charming fellows as we may be.”

“I do not think so,” said La Brière. “I believe that the worthy officer came simply to gratify his own impatience to see you, and to declare his neutrality while opening his house to us. Modeste, bewitched by your fame, and misled as to my identity, finds herself between Poetry and hard Fact. It is my misfortune to be the hard Fact.”

“Germain,” said Canalis to the servant who came in to clear away the coffee, “order the carriage round. We will go out in half an hour, and take a drive before going to the Chalet.”

The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but La Brière dreaded the meeting, while Canalis looked forward to it with a confidence inspired by conceit. Ernest's impulsive advances to her father, and the flattery by which he had soothed the merchant's aristocratic pride while showing up the poet's awkwardness, made Canalis determine that he would play a part. He resolved that he would display all his powers of attraction, but at the same time affect indifference, seem to disdain Modeste, and so goad the girl's vanity. A disciple of the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, he here showed himself worthy of his reputation as a man who knew women well; though he did not really know them, since no man does who is the happy victim of an exclusive passion. While the luckless Ernest, sunk in a corner of the carriage, was crushed by the terrors of true love and the anticipated wrath, scorn, contempt—all the lightnings of an offended and disappointed girl—and kept gloomy silence, Canalis, not less silent, was preparing himself, like an actor studying an important part in a new play.

Neither of them certainly looked like a happy man.

For Canalis, indeed, the matter was serious. To him the mere fancy for marrying involved the breach of the serious friendship which had bound him for nearly ten years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Though he had screened his journey under the common excuse of overwork—in which no woman ever believes, even if it is true—his conscience troubled him somewhat; but to La Brière the word Conscience seemed so Jesuitical that he only shrugged his shoulders when the poet spoke of his scruples.

“Your conscience, my boy, seems to me to mean simply your fear of losing the gratifications of vanity, some solid advantages, and a pleasant habit in sacrificing Madame de Chaulieu's affection; for, if you are successful with Modeste, you will certainly have nothing to regret in the aftermath of a passion so constantly reaped during these eight years past. If you tell me that you are afraid of offending your protectress, should she learn the real reason of your visit here, I can easily believe you. To throw over the Duchess and fail at the Chalet is staking too



much! And you mistake the distress of this alternative for remorse!”

“You know nothing about sentiment!” cried Canalis, nettled, as a man always is when he asks for a compliment and hears the truth.

“That is just what a bigamist would say to a dozen jurymen,” said La Brière, laughing.

This epigram made a yet more disagreeable impression on Canalis; he thought La Brière much too clever and too free for a secretary.

The arrival of a handsome carriage, with a coachman in Canalis’ livery, made all the greater sensation at the Chalet, because the two gentlemen were expected, and all the persons of this tale, excepting only the Duke and Butscha, were assembled there.

“Which is the poet?” asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay, as they stood in the window-bay, where she had posted herself on hearing the carriage-wheels.

“The one who marches like a drum-major,” replied the cashier.

“Ah, ha!” said the lady, studying Melchior, who strutted like a man on whom the world has its eye.

Though rather severe, Dumay’s judgment—a simple soul, if ever man was—had hit the mark. Canalis was, morally speaking, a sort of Narcissus; this was the fault of the great lady who flattered him immensely, and spoilt him as women older than their adorers always will flatter and spoil men. A woman past her first youth, who means to attach a man permanently, begins by glorifying his faults, so as to make all rivalry impossible; for her rival cannot at once be in the secret of that subtle flattery to which a man so easily becomes accustomed. Coxcombs are the product of this feminine industry, when they are not coxcombs by nature.

Hence Canalis, caught young by the beautiful Duchess, justified himself for his airs and graces by telling himself that they pleased a woman whose taste was law. Subtle as these shades of feeling are, it is not impossible to render them. Thus Melchior had a real talent for reading aloud, which had been much admired, and too flattering praise had led him

into an exaggerated manner, which neither poet nor actor can set bounds to, and which made de Marsay say—always de Marsay—that he did not declaim, but brayed out his verses, so fully would he mouth the vowels as he listened to himself. To use the slang of the stage, he pumped himself out, and made too long pauses. He would examine his audience with a knowing look, and give himself self-satisfied airs, with the aids to emphasis of “sawing the air” and “windmill action”—picturesque phrases, as the catchwords of Art always are. Canalis indeed had imitators, and was the head of a school in this style. This melodramatic emphasis had slightly infected his conversation and given it a declamatory tone, as will have been seen in his interview with Dumay. When once the mind has become foppish, manners show the influence. Canalis had come at last to a sort of rhythmic gait, he invented attitudes, stole looks at himself in the glass, and made his language harmonize with the position he assumed. He thought so much of the effect to be produced, that more than once Blondet, a mocking spirit, had bet he would pull him up short—and had done it—merely by fixing a set gaze on the poet’s hair, or boots, or the tail of his coat.

At the end of ten years these antics, which at first had passed under favor of youthful exuberance, had grown stale, and all the more so as Melchior himself seemed somewhat worn. Fashionable life is as fatiguing for men as for women, and perhaps the Duchess’s twenty years’ seniority weighed on Canalis more than on her; for the world saw her still handsome, without a wrinkle, without rouge, and without heart. Alas! neither men nor women have a friend to warn them at the moment when the fragrance of modesty turns rancid, when a caressing look is like a theatrical trick, when the expressiveness of a face becomes a grimace, when the mechanism of their liveliness shows its rusty skeleton. Genius alone can renew its youth like the serpent, and in grace, as in all else, only the heart never grows stale. Persons of genuine feeling are single-hearted. Now in Canalis, as we know, the heart was dry. He wasted the beauty of his gaze by assuming at inappropriate moments the intensity that deep thought gives to the eyes.

And, then, praise to him was an article of exchange, in which he wanted to have all the advantage. His way of paying compliments, which charmed superficial persons, to those of more refined taste might seem insultingly commonplace, and the readiness of his flattery betrayed a set purpose. In fact, Melchior lied like a courtier. To the Duc de Chaulieu, who had proved an ineffective speaker when, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, he had been obliged to mount the Tribune, Canalis had unblushingly said, "Your Excellency was sublime!"

Many men like Canalis might have had their affectations eradicated by failure administered in small doses. Trifling, indeed, as such faults are in the gilded drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—where everyone contributes a quota of absurdities, and this kind of audacity, artificiality, inflation if you will, has a background of excessive luxury and magnificent dress which is perhaps an excuse for it—they are monstrously conspicuous in the depths of the country, where what is thought ridiculous is the very opposite of all this. Canalis, indeed, at once pompous and mannered, could not now metamorphose himself; he had had time to set in the mold into which the Duchess had cast him, and he was, moreover, very Parisian, or, if you prefer it, very French. The Parisian is amazed that everything, everywhere, is not what it is in Paris, and the Frenchman that it is not what it is in France. Good taste consists in accommodating one's self to the manners of other places without losing too much of one's native character, as Alcibiades did—the model of a gentleman. True grace is elastic. It yields to every circumstance, it is in harmony with every social atmosphere, it knows how to walk in the street in a cheap dress, remarkable only for its fitness, instead of parading the feathers and gaudy hues which some vulgar people flaunt.

Now, Canalis, influenced by a woman who loved him for her own sake rather for his, wanted to be himself a law, and to remain what he was wherever he might go. He believed that he carried his private public with him—a mistake shared by some other great men in Paris.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the little drawing-room, La Brière sneaked in like a dog that is afraid of being beaten.

“Ah, here is my soldier!” said Canalis, on seeing Dumay, after paying Madame Mignon his respects, and bowing to the other women. “Your anxieties are relieved, I hope?” he went on, offering him his hand with a flourish. “But the sight of Mademoiselle sufficiently explains their gravity. I spoke only of earthly beings, not of angels.”

The hearers by their expression asked for a clew to this riddle.

“Yes, I shall regard it as a triumph,” the poet went on, understanding that everybody wanted an explanation, “that I succeeded in alarming one of those men of iron whom Napoleon succeeded in finding to form the piles on which he tried to found an empire too vast to be permanent. Only time can serve to cement such a structure!—But have I any right to boast of triumph? I had nothing to do with it; it was the triumph of fancy over fact. Your battles, dear Monsieur Dumay; your heroic cavalry charges, Monsieur le Comte; in short, War, was the form assumed by Napoleon’s thoughts. And of all these things what remains? The grass that grows over them knows nothing of them, nor will harvests mark the spot; but for history, but for writing, the future might know nothing of this heroic age! Thus your fifteen years of struggle are no more than ideas, and that is what will save the Empire; poets will make a poem of it. A land that can win such battles ought to be able to sing them!”

Canalis paused to collect, by a sweeping glance at their faces, the tribute of admiration due to him from these country folks.

“You cannot doubt, Monsieur,” said Madame Mignon, “how much I regret being unable to see you, from the way you indemnify me by the pleasure I feel in listening to you.”

Modeste, dressed as she had been on the day when this story opens, having made up her mind to think Canalis sublime, sat speechless, and dropped her embroidery, which hung from her fingers at the end of the needleful of cotton.

“Modeste, this is Monsieur de la Brière.—Monsieur Ernest

—my daughter,” said Charles Mignon, thinking that the secretary was thrown rather too much into the background.

The young lady bowed coldly to Ernest, giving him a look intended to convey to the whole party that she had never seen him before.

“I beg your pardon,” said she, without a blush, “the fervent admiration I profess for our greatest poet is, in my friends’ eyes, a sufficient excuse for my having seen no one else.”

The clear young voice, with a ring in it like the famous tones of Mademoiselle Mars, enchanted the poor Referendary, already dazzled by Modeste’s beauty, and in his amazement he spoke a few words which, had they been true, would have been sublime—

“But he is my friend,” said he.

“Then you will have forgiven me,” she replied.

“He is more than a friend,” cried Canalis, taking Ernest by the shoulder, and leaning on him as Alexander leaned on Hephæstion. “We love each other like two brothers——”

Madame Latournelle cut the poet short in the middle of his speech by saying to her husband—

“Surely Monsieur is the gentleman we saw in church?”

“Why not?” said Charles Mignon, seeing Ernest color.

Modeste gave no sign, but took up her work again.

“You may be right; I have been twice to le Havre,” said La Brière, sitting down by the side of Dumay.

Canalis, bewildered by Modeste’s beauty, misunderstood the admiration she expressed, and flattered himself that his efforts had been perfectly successful.

“I should think a man of genius devoid of heart if he had not about him some attached friend,” said Modeste, to revive the subject interrupted by Madame Latournelle’s awkwardness.

“Mademoiselle, Ernest’s devotion is enough to make me believe that I am good for something,” said Canalis. “For my dear Pylades is full of talent; he was quite half of the greatest Minister we have had since the Peace. Though he fills a distinguished position, he consents to be my tutor in politics. He teaches me business, he feeds me with his experience, while

he might aspire to the highest office. Oh! he is much superior to me——”

At a gesture from Modeste, Melchior added gracefully—

“The poetry I write he bears in his heart; and if I dare speak so to his face, it is because he is as diffident as a nun.”

“Come, come, that will do,” said La Brière, who did not know how to look. “My dear fellow, you might be a mother wanting to get her daughter married.”

“How can you think, Monsieur, of becoming a politician?” said Charles Mignon to Canalis.

“For a poet it is abdication!” said Modeste. “Politics are the stand-by of men without imagination.”

“Nay, Mademoiselle, in these days the Tribune is the grandest stage in the world; it has taken the place of the lists of chivalry; it will be the meeting-place of every kind of intellect, as of old the army was of every form of courage.”

Canalis had mounted his war-horse; for ten minutes he declaimed on the subject of political life:—Poetry was the preface to a statesman. In these days the orator’s province was lofty generalization; he was the pastor of ideas. If a poet could show his countrymen the road of the future, did he cease to be himself? He quoted Chateaubriand, asserting that he would some day be more important on his political than on his literary side. The French Chambers would be the guiding light of humanity. Contests by words henceforth had taken the place of fighting on the battlefield. Such or such a sitting had been a second Austerlitz, and the speakers had risen to the dignity of generals; they spent as much of their life, courage, and strength, they wore themselves out as much as generals in war. Was not speech almost the most exhausting expenditure of vital power that man could indulge in, etc., etc.

This long harangue, made up of modern commonplace, but clothed in high-sounding phrases, newly-coined words, and intended to prove that the Baron de Canalis must some day be one of the glories of the Tribune, made a deep impression on the notary, on Gobenheim, on Madame Latournelle, and Madame Mignon. Modeste felt as if she were at the play

and fired with enthusiasm for the actor, exactly as Ernest was in her presence; for though the secretary knew all these fine phrases by heart, he was listening to them by the light of the girl's eyes, and falling in love to the verge of madness. To this genuine lover Modeste had eclipsed all the different Modestes he had pictured to himself when reading or answering her letters.

This visit, of which Canalis had fixed the limits beforehand, for he would not give his admirers time to get tired of him, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

"We shall no longer be at the Chalet," said the Comte de la Bastie; "it is Dumay's home once more. I am going back to my old house by an agreement for six months, with the right of redemption, which I have just signed with Monsieur Vilquin in my friend Latournelle's office."

"I only hope," said Dumay, "that Vilquin may not be in a position to repay the sum you have lent him on it."

"You will be in a home suitable to your fortune," said Canalis.

"To the fortune I am supposed to have," Charles Mignon put in.

"It would be a pity," said the poet, with a charming bow to Modeste, "that this Madonna should lack a frame worthy of her divine perfections."

This was all that Canalis said about Modeste, for he had affected not to look at her, and to behave like a man who is not at liberty to think of marriage.

"Oh, my dear Madame Mignon, he is immensely clever!" exclaimed the notary's wife, when the gravel was heard crunching under the Parisian's feet.

"Is he rich? that is the question," said Gobenheim.

Modeste stood at the window, not missing a single gesture of the great poet's, and never casting a glance on Ernest de la Brière. When Monsieur Mignon came into the room again, and Modeste, after receiving a parting bow from the two young men as the carriage turned, had resumed her seat, a deep discussion ensued, such as country people indulge in on Paris visitors after a first meeting. Gobenheim reiterated

his remark, "Is he rich?" in reply to the trio of praise sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

"Rich?" retorted Modeste. "What can it matter? Cannot you see that Monsieur de Canalis is a man destined to fill the highest posts in the Government? He has more than wealth; he has the means of acquiring wealth!"

"He will be an Ambassador or a Minister," said Monsieur Mignon.

"The taxpayers may have to pay for his funeral nevertheless," said little Latournelle.

"Why?" asked Charles Mignon.

"He strikes me as being a man to squander all the fortunes which Mademoiselle Modeste so liberally credits him with the power of earning."

"How can Modeste help being liberal to a man who regards her as a Madonna?" said Dumay, faithful to the aversion Canalis had roused in him.

Gobenheim was preparing the whist-table, with all the more eagerness because since Monsieur Mignon's return Latournelle and Dumay had allowed themselves to play for ten sous a point.

"Now, my little darling," said the father to his daughter in the window recess, "you must own that papa thinks of everything. In a week, if you send orders this evening to the dressmaker you used to employ in Paris and to your other tradesmen, you may display yourself in all the magnificence of an heiress, while I take time to settle into our old house. You shall have a nice pony, so take care to have a habit made—the Master of the Horse deserves that little attention."

"All the more so as we must show our friends the country," said Modeste, whose cheeks were recovering the hues of health.

"The secretary," observed Madame Mignon, "is not much to speak of."

"He is a little simpleton," said Madame Latournelle. "The poet was attentive to everybody. He remembered to thank Latournelle for finding him a house, by saying to me that he seemed to have consulted a lady's taste. And the other stood there as gloomy as a Spaniard, staring hard,



looking as if he could swallow Modeste. If he had looked at me so, I should have been frightened."

"He has a very pleasant voice," Madame Mignon observed.

"He must have come to le Havre to make inquiries about the house of Mignon for the poet's benefit," said Modeste, with a sly look at her father. "He is certainly the man we saw in church."

Madame Dumay and the Latournelles accepted this explanation of Ernest's former journey.

"I tell you what, Ernest," said Canalis when they had gone twenty yards, "I see no one in the Paris world, not a single girl to marry, that can compare with this adorable creature!"

"Oh! it is all settled," replied La Brière, with concentrated bitterness; "she loves you—or, if you choose, she will love you. Your fame half won the battle. In short, you have only to command. You can go there alone next time; Modeste has the deepest contempt for me, and she is right, but I do not see why I should condemn myself to the torture of going to admire, desire, and adore what I never can possess."

After a few condoling speeches, in which Canalis betrayed his satisfaction at having produced a new edition of Cæsar's famous motto, he hinted at his wish to be "off" with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. La Brière, who could not endure the conversation, made an excuse of the loveliness of a rather doubtful night to get out and walk; he flew like a madman to the cliffs, where he stayed till half-past ten, given up to a sort of frenzy, sometimes walking at a great pace and spouting soliloquies, sometimes standing still or sitting down without observing the uneasiness he was giving to two coast-guards on the look-out. After falling in love with Modeste's mental culture and aggressive candor, he now added his adoration of her beauty, that is to say, an unreasoning and inexplicable passion, to all the other causes that had brought him ten days ago to church at le Havre.

Then he wandered back to the Chalet, where the Pyrenean dogs barked at him so furiously that he could not allow himself the happiness of gazing at Modeste's windows. In love.

all these things are of no more account than the under-painting covered by the final touches is to the painter; but they are nevertheless the whole of love, as concealed painstaking is the whole of art: the outcome is a great painter and a perfect lover, which the public and the woman worship at last—often too late.

“Well!” cried he aloud, “I will stay, I will endure. I shall see her and love her selfishly, for my own joy! Modeste will be my sun, my life, I shall breathe by her breath, I shall rejoice in her joys, I shall pine over her sorrows, even if she should be the wife of that egoist Canalis——”

“That is something like love, Monsieur!” said a voice proceeding from a bush by the wayside. “Bless me! is everybody in love with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?”

Butscha started forth and gazed at La Brière. Ernest sheathed his wrath as he looked at the dwarf in the moonlight, and walked on a few steps without replying.

“Two soldiers serving in the same company should be on better terms than that,” said Butscha. “If you are not in love with Canalis, I am not very sweet on him myself.”

“He is my friend,” said Ernest.

“Oh! then you are the little secretary?” replied the hunchback.

“I would have you to know, Monsieur,” said La Brière, “that I am no man’s secretary. I have the honor to call myself councilor to one of the High Courts of Justice of this realm.”

“I have the honor, then, of making my bow to Monsieur de la Brière,” said Butscha. “I have the honor to call myself head clerk to Maître Latournelle, the first notary in le Havre, and I certainly am better off than you are.—Yes—for I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie almost every afternoon for the last four years, and I propose to live within her ken as one of the King’s household lives at the Tuileries. If I were offered the throne of Russia, I should reply, ‘I like the sun too well!’—Is not that as much as to say, Monsieur, that I care more for her than for myself—with all respect and honor? And do you suppose that the high and mighty Duchesse de Chaulieu will

look with a friendly eye on the happiness of Madame de Canalis, when her maid, who is in love with Monsieur Germain, and is already uneasy at that fascinating valet's long absence at le Havre, as she dresses her mistress's hair complains . . .”

“How do you know all this?” said La Brière, interrupting him.

“In the first place, I am a notary's clerk,” replied Butscha. “And have you not observed that I have a hump? It is full of ingenuity, Monsieur. I made myself cousin to Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, of Honfleur, where my mother was born, also a Jacmin—there are eleven branches of Jacmins at Honfleur.—And so my fair cousin, tempted by the hope of a highly improbable legacy, told me a good many things.”

“And the Duchess is vindictive?” said La Brière.

“As vengeful as a queen, said Philoxène. She has not yet forgiven the Duke for being only her husband,” replied Butscha. “She hates as she loves. I am thoroughly informed as to her temper, her dress, her tastes, her religion, and her meannesses, for Philoxène stripped her soul and body. I went to the Opera to see Madame de Chaulieu, and I do not regret my ten francs—I am not thinking of the piece. If my hypothetical cousin had not told me that her mistress had seen fifty springs, I should have thought it lavish to give her thirty; she has known no winter, my lady the Duchess!”

“True,” said La Brière, “she is a cameo preserved by the onyx.—Canalis would be in great difficulties if the Duchess knew of his plans; and I hope, Monsieur, that you will go no further in an espionage so unworthy of an honest man.”

“Monsieur,” said Butscha proudly, “to me Modeste is the State. I do not spy, I forestall. The Duchesse de Chaulieu will come here if necessary, or will remain quietly where she is if I think it advisable.”

“You?”

“I.”

“And by what means?” asked La Brière.

“Ah, that is the question,” said the little hunchback. He plucked a blade of grass. “This little plant imagines

that man builds palaces for its accommodation, and one day it dislodges the most firmly cemented marble, just as the populace, having found a foothold in the structure of the feudal system, overthrew it. The power of the weakest that can creep in everywhere is greater than that of the strong man who relies on his cannon. There are three of us, a Swiss league, who have sworn that Modeste shall be happy, and who would sell our honor for her sake.—Good-night, Monsieur. If you love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation, and give me your hand to shake, for you seem to me to have a heart!—I was pining to see the Chalet; I got here just as she put out her candle. I saw you when the dogs gave tongue, I heard you raging; and so I took the liberty of telling you that we serve under the same colors, in the regiment of loyal devotion!”

“Good,” replied Brière, pressing the hunchback’s hand. “Then be kind enough to tell me whether Mademoiselle Modeste ever fell in love with a man before her secret correspondence with Canalis?”

“Oh!” cried Butscha, “the mere question is an insult!—And even now who knows whether she is in love? Does she herself know? She has rushed into enthusiasm for the mind, the genius, the spirit of this verse-monger, this vendor of literary pinchbeck; but she will study him—we shall all study him; I will find some means of making his true character peep out from beneath the carapace of the well-mannered man, and we shall see the significant head of his ambition, and his vanity,” said Butscha, rubbing his hands. “Now unless Mademoiselle is mad enough to die of it——”

“Oh, she sat entranced before him as if he were a miracle!” cried La Brière, revealing the secret of his jealousy.

“If he is really a good fellow, and loyal, and loves her, if he is worthy of her,” Butscha went on, “if he gives up his Duchess, it is the Duchess I will spread a net for!—There, my dear sir, follow that path, and you will be at home in ten minutes.”

But Butscha presently turned back and called to the hapless Ernest, who, as an ardent lover, would have stayed all night to talk of Modeste.

“Monsieur,” said Butscha, “I have not yet had the honor of seeing our great poet; I am anxious to study that splendid phenomenon in the exercise of his functions; do me the kindness to come and spend the evening at the Chalet the day after to-morrow; and stay some time, for a man does not completely betray himself in an hour. I shall know, before anyone, if he loves, or ever will love, or ever could love Mademoiselle Modeste.”

“You are very young to——”

“To be a professor!” said Butscha, interrupting La Brière. “Ah, Monsieur, the deformed come into the world a hundred years old. Besides, a sick man, you see, when he has been ill a long time, becomes more knowing than his doctor; he understands the ways of the disease, which is more than a conscientious doctor always does. Well, in the same way, a man who loves a woman while the woman cannot help scorning him for his ugliness or his misshapen person, is at last so qualified in love that he could pass as a seducer, as the sick man at last recovers his health. Folly alone is incurable.—Since the age of six, and I am now five-and-twenty, I have had neither father nor mother; public charity has been my mother, and the King’s commissioner my father.—Nay, do not be distressed,” he said, in reply to Ernest’s expression, “I am less miserable than my position—— Well, since I was six years old, when the insolent eyes of a servant of Madame Latournelle’s told me that I had no right to wish to love, I have loved and have studied women. I began with ugly ones—it is well to take the bull by the horns. So I took for the first subject of my studies Madame Latournelle herself, who has been really angelic to me. I was perhaps wrong; however, so it was. I distilled her in my alembic, and I at last discovered hidden in a corner of her soul this idea, ‘I am not as ugly as people think!’—And in spite of her deep piety, by working on that idea, I could have led her to the brink of the abyss—to leave her there.”

“And have you studied Modeste?”

“I thought I had told you,” replied the hunchback, “that my life is hers, as France is the King’s! Now do you understand my playing the spy in Paris? I alone know all the

nobleness and pride, the unselfishness, and unexpected sweetness that lie in the heart and soul of that adorable creature—the indefatigable kindness, the true piety, the light-heartedness, information, refinement, affability——”

Butscha drew out his handkerchief to stop two tears from falling, and La Brière held his hand for some time.

“I shall live in her radiance! It comes from her, and it ends in me, that is how we are united, somewhat as nature is to God by light and the word.—Good-night, Monsieur, I never chattered so much in my life; but seeing you below her windows, I guessed that you loved her in my way.”

Butscha, without waiting for an answer, left the unhappy lover, on whose heart this conversation had shed a mysterious balm. Ernest determined to make Butscha his friend, never suspecting that the clerk’s loquacity was chiefly intended to open communications with Canalis’ house. In what a flow and ebb of thoughts, resolutions, and schemes was Ernest lapped before falling asleep; and his friend Canalis was sleeping the sleep of the triumphant, the sweetest slumber there is next to that of the just.

At breakfast the friends agreed to go together to spend the evening of the following day at the Chalet, and be initiated into the mild joys of provincial whist. To get rid of this day they ordered out the horses, both warranted to ride and drive, and ventured forth into a country certainly as unknown to them as China; for the least known thing in France to a Frenchman, is France.

As he reflected on his position as a lover rejected and scorned, the secretary made somewhat such a study of himself as he had been led to make by the question Modeste had put to him at the beginning of their correspondence. Though misfortune is supposed to develop virtues, it only does so in virtuous people; for this sort of cleaning up of the conscience takes place only in naturally cleanly persons. La Brière determined to swallow his griefs with Spartan philosophy, to preserve his dignity, and never allow himself to be betrayed into a mean action; while Canalis, fascinated by such an enormous fortune, vowed to himself that he would neglect

nothing that might captivate Modeste. Egoism and unselfishness, the watchwords of these two natures, brought them by a moral law, which sometimes has whimsical results, to behave in opposition to their characters. The selfish man meant to act self-sacrifice, the man who was all kindness would take refuge on the Aventine Hill of pride. This phenomenon may also be seen in politics. Men often turn their natures inside out, and not unfrequently the public do not know the right side from the wrong.

After dinner they heard from Germain that the Master of the Horse had arrived; he was introduced at the Chalet that evening by Monsieur Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville managed to offend the worthy lawyer at once, by sending a message through a footman, desiring him to call at her house, instead of simply sending her nephew to take up the lawyer, who would certainly have talked till his dying day of the visit paid by the Master of the Horse. So when his lordship offered to take him to Ingouville in his carriage, the little notary merely said that he must return home to accompany his wife. Seeing by his sullen manner that there was something wrong, the Duke graciously replied, "If you will allow me, I shall have the honor of going round to fetch Madame Latournelle."

In spite of an emphatic shrug of his despotic aunt's shoulders, the Duke set out with the little notary. Intoxicated with the delight of seeing a magnificent carriage at her door, and men in the royal livery to let down the steps, the lawyer's wife did not know which way to turn for her gloves, her parasol, her bag, and her dignity, when it was announced to her that the Master of the Horse had come to fetch her. As soon as she was in the carriage, while pouring out civilities to the little Duke, she suddenly exclaimed with kindly impulse—

"Oh, and Butscha?"

"Bring Butscha too," said the Duke, smiling.

As the harbor-men, who had collected round the dazzling vehicle, saw these three little men with that tall meager woman, they looked at each other and laughed.

"If you stuck them together end to end, perhaps you

might make a man tall enough for that long May-pole," said a sailor from Bordeaux.

"Have you anything else to take with you, Madame?" the Duke asked jestingly, as the footman stood waiting for his orders.

"No, Monseigneur," replied she, turning scarlet, and looking at her husband as much as to say, "What have I done wrong?"

"His Lordship," said Butscha, "does me too much honor in speaking of me as a thing; a poor clerk like me is a nameless object."

Though he spoke lightly, the Duke colored and made no reply. Grand folks are always in the wrong to bandy jests with those below them. Banter is a game, and a game implies equality. And, indeed, it is to obviate the unpleasant results of such a transient familiarity that, when the game is over, the players have a right not to recognize each other.

The Duke's visit to le Havre was ostensibly for the settlement of an immense undertaking, namely, the reclaiming of a vast tract of land, left dry by the sea between two streams, of which the ownership had just been confirmed to the Hérouville family by the High Court of Appeal. The proposed scheme was no less a matter than the adjustment of sluice gates to two bridges, to drain a tract of mud flats extending for about a kilometer, with a breadth of three or four hundred acres, to embank roads and dig dykes. When the Duc d'Hérouville had explained the nature and position of the land, Charles Mignon observed that he would have to wait till nature had enabled the soil to settle by the consolidation of its still shifting natural constituents.

"Time, which has providentially enriched your estate, Monsieur le Duc, must be left to complete its work," said he, in conclusion. "You will do well to wait another fifty years before setting to work."

"Do not let that be your final opinion, Monsieur le Comte," said the Duke. "Come to Hérouville, see, and judge for yourself."

Charles Mignon replied that some capitalist would need to look into the matter with a cool head; and this remark had



given Monsieur d'Hérouville an excuse for calling at the Chalet.

Modeste made a deep impression on him; he begged the favor of a visit from her, saying that his aunt and sister had heard of her, and would be happy to make her acquaintance. On this, Charles Mignon proposed to introduce his daughter to the two ladies, and invited them to dine with him on the day when he should be re-established in his former home; this the Duke accepted. The nobleman's blue ribbon, his title, and, above all, his rapturous glances, had their effect on Modeste: still, she was admirably calm in speech, manner, and dignity. The Duke when he left seemed loath to depart, but he had received an invitation to go to the Chalet every evening, on the pretext that, of course, no courtier of Charles X. could possibly endure an evening without a game of whist.

So, on the following evening, Modeste was to see her three admirers all on the stage at once.

Say what she will, it is certainly flattering to a girl to see several rivals fluttering around her, men of talent, fame, or high birth, all trying to shine and please her, though the logic of the heart will lead her to sacrifice everything to personal predilection. Even if Modeste should lose credit by the admission, she owned, at a later day, that the feelings expressed in her letters had paled before the pleasure of seeing three men, so different, vying with each other—three men, each of whom would have done honor to the most exacting family pride. At the same time, this luxury of vanity gave way before the misanthropical spirit of mischief engendered by the bitter affront which she already thought of merely as a disappointment. So when her father said to her with a smile—

“Well, Modeste, would you like to be a duchess?”

“Ill fortune has made me philosophical,” she replied, with a mocking courtesy.

“You are content to be Baroness?” said Butscha.

“Or Viscountess?” replied her father.

“How could that be?” said Modeste quickly.

“Why, if you were to accept Monsieur de la Brière, he

would certainly have influence enough with the King to get leave to take my title and bear my arms."

"Oh, if it is a matter of borrowing a disguise, he will make no difficulties!" replied Modeste bitterly.

Butscha did not understand this sarcasm, of which only Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay knew the meaning.

"As soon as marriage is in question, every man assumes a disguise," said Madame Latournelle, "and women set them the example. Ever since I can remember I have heard it said, 'Monsieur this or Mademoiselle that is making a very good match'—so the other party must be making a bad one, I suppose?"

"Marriage," said Butscha, "is like an action at law; one side is always left dissatisfied; and if one party deceives the other, half the married couples one sees certainly play the farce at the cost of the other."

"Whence you conclude, Sire Butscha?" asked Modeste.

"That we must keep our eyes sternly open to the enemy's movements," replied the clerk.

"What did I tell you, my pet?" said Charles Mignon, alluding to his conversation with his daughter on the sea-shore.

"Men, to get married," said Latournelle, "play as many parts as mothers make their daughters play in order to get them off their hands."

"Then you think stratagem allowable?" said Modeste.

"On both sides," cried Gobenheim. "Then the game is even."

This conversation was carried on in a fragmentary manner, between the deals, and mixed up with the opinions each one allowed himself to express about Monsieur d'Hérouville, who was thought quite good-looking by the little notary, by little Dumay, and by little Butscha.

"I see," said Madame Mignon, with a smile, "that Madame Latournelle and my husband are quite monsters here!"

"Happily for him the Colonel is not excessively tall," replied Butscha, while the lawyer was dealing, "for a tall man who is also intelligent is always a rare exception."

But for this little discussion on the legitimate use of matrimonial wiles, the account of the evening so anxiously expected

by Butscha might seem lengthy; but wealth, for which so much secret meanness was committed, may perhaps lend to the minutiae of private life the interest which is always aroused by the social feeling so frankly set forth by Ernest in his reply to Modeste.

In the course of the next morning Desplein arrived. He stayed only so long as was needful for sending to le Havre for a relay of post-horses, which were at once put in—about an hour. After examining Madame Mignon, he said she would certainly recover her sight, and fixed the date for the operation a month later. This important consultation was held, of course, in the presence of the family party at the Chalet, all anxiously eager to hear the decision of the Prince of Science. The illustrious member of the Academy of Science asked the blind woman ten short questions, while examining her eyes in the bright light by the window. Modeste, amazed at the value of time to this famous man, noticed that his traveling chaise was full of books, which he intended to read on the way back to Paris, for he had come away on the previous evening, spending the night in sleeping and traveling.

The swiftness and clearness of Desplein's decisions on every answer of Madame Mignon's, his curt speech, his manner, all gave Modeste, for the first time, any clear idea of a man of genius. She felt the enormous gulf between Canalis, a man of second-rate talents, and Desplein, a more than superior mind.

A man of genius has in the consciousness of his talent, and the assurance of his fame, a domain, as it were, where his legitimate pride can move and breathe freely without incommoding other people. Then the incessant conflict with men and things gives him no time to indulge the coquettish conceits in which the heroes of fashion indulge, as they hastily reap the harvest of a passing season, while their vanity and self-love are exacting and irritable, like a sort of custom-house alert to seize a toll on everything that passes within its ken.

Modeste was all the more delighted with the great surgeon

because he seemed struck by her extreme beauty—he, under whose hands so many women had passed, and who for years had been scrutinizing them with the lancet and microscope.

“It would really be too bad,” said he, with the gallantry which he could so well assume, in contrast to his habitual abruptness, “that a mother should be deprived of seeing such a lovely daughter.”

Modeste herself waited on the great surgeon at the simple luncheon he would accept. She, with her father and Dumay, escorted the learned man, for whom so many sick were longing, as far as the chaise which waited for him at the side gate, and there, her eyes beaming with hope, she said once more to Desplein—

“Then dear mamma will really see me?”

“Yes, my pretty Will-o'-the-Wisp, I promise you she shall,” he replied, with a smile; “and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I too have a daughter.”

The horses whirled him off as he spoke the words, which had an unexpected touch of feeling. Nothing is more bewitching than the unforeseen peculiar to very clever men.

This visit was the event of the day, and it left a track of light in Modeste's soul. The enthusiastic child admired without guile this man whose life was at everybody's command, and in whom the habit of contemplating physical suffering had overcome every appearance of egoism.

In the evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles, Canalis, Ernest, and the Duc d'Hérouville had assembled, they congratulated the Mignon family on the good news given them by Desplein. Then, of course, the conversation, led by Modeste, as we know her from her letters, turned on this man whose genius, unfortunately for his glory, could only be appreciated by the most learned men and the Medical Faculty. And Gobenheim uttered this speech, which is in our days the sanctifying anointing of genius in the ears of economists and bankers—

“He makes enormous sums.”

“He is said to be very greedy!” replied Canalis.

The praise lavished on Desplein by Modeste annoyed the

poet. Vanity behaves like Woman. They both believe that they lose something by praise or affection bestowed on another. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a man whom Paris admired for two days, just as a duchess takes offense at a glance bestowed on her waiting maid. So great is the avarice of these two feelings, that they feel robbed of a pittance bestowed on the poor.

“And do you think, Monsieur,” asked Modeste, with a smile, “that a genius should be measured by the ordinary standard?”

“It would first be necessary, perhaps,” said Canalis, “to define a man of genius. One of his prime characteristics is inventiveness—the invention of a type, of a system, of a power. Napoleon was an inventor, apart from his other characteristics of genius. He invented his method of warfare. Walter Scott was an inventor, Linnæus was an inventor, so are Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier. Such men are geniuses above all else. They renew, or expand, or modify science or art. But Desplein is a man whose immense talent consists of applying laws that were previously discovered; in detecting, by natural intuition, the final tendency of every temperament, and the hour marked out by nature for the performance of an operation. He did not, like Hippocrates, lay the foundations of Science itself. He has not discovered a system, like Galen, Broussais, or Rasori. His is the genius of the executant, like Moscheles on the piano, Paganini on the violin, or Farinelli on his own larynx—men who display immense powers, but who do not create music. Between Beethoven and Madame Catalani you will allow that to him should be awarded the crown of genius and suffering; to her a vast heap of five-franc pieces. We can pay our debt to one, while the world must forever remain in debt to the other! We owe more and more to Molière every day, and we have already overpaid Baron.”

“It seems to me that you are giving too large a share to ideas, my dear fellow,” said La Brière, in a sweet and gentle voice that was in startling contrast to the poet’s peremptory style, for his flexible voice had lost its insinuating tone and assumed the dominant ring of rhetoric. “Genius ought to

be estimated chiefly for its utility. Parmentier, Jacquard, and Papin, to whom statues will one day be erected, were also men of genius. They have in a certain direction altered, or will alter, the face of nations. From this point of view Desplein will always appear in the eyes of thinking men accompanied by a whole generation whose tears and sufferings have been alleviated by his mighty hand."

That Ernest should have expressed this opinion was enough to prompt Modeste to contest it.

"In that case, Monsieur," said she, "the man who should find means to reap corn without spoiling the straw, by a machine that should do the work of ten laborers, would be a man of genius?"

"Oh yes, my child," said Madame Mignon, "he would be blessed by the poor, whose bread would then be cheaper; and he whom the poor bless is blessed by God."

"That is to give utility the preference over art," said Modeste, with a toss of her head.

"But for utility," said her father, "on what would art be founded? On what basis would it rest, on what would the poet live, and who would give him shelter, who would pay him?"

"Oh, my dear father, that is quite the view of a merchant captain, a Philistine, a counter-jumper. That Gobenheim or Monsieur de la Brière should hold it I can understand; they are interested in the solution of such social problems; but you, whose life has been so romantically useless to your age, since your blood spilt on the soil of Europe, and the terrible sufferings required of you by a Colossus, have not hindered France from losing ten departments which the Republic had conquered,—how can you subscribe to a view so excessively *out of date*, as the Romantics have it?—It is easy to see that you have dropped from China."

The disrespect of Modeste's speech was aggravated by the scornful and contemptuous flippancy of the tone in which she intentionally spoke, and which astonished Madame Latournelle, Madame Mignon, and Dumay. Madame Latournelle, though she opened her eyes wide enough, could not see what Modeste was driving at; Butscha, who was as alert as a

spy, looked significantly at Monsieur Mignon on seeing his face flush with deep and sudden indignation.

“A little more, Mademoiselle, and you would have failed in respect to your father,” said the Colonel with a smile, enlightened by Butscha’s glance. “That is what comes of spoiling a child.”

“I am an only daughter!” she retorted insolently.

“Unique!” said the notary, with emphasis.

“Monsieur,” said Modeste to Latournelle, “my father is very willing that I should educate him. He gave me life, I give him wisdom—he will still be my debtor.”

“But there is a way of doing it—and, above all, a time for it,” said Madame Mignon.

“But Mademoiselle is very right,” said Canalis, rising, and placing himself by the chimney-piece in one of the finest postures of his collection of attitudes. “God in His foresight has given man food and clothing, and has not directly endowed him with Art! He has said to man, ‘To eat, you must stoop to the earth; to think, you must uplift yourself to Me!’—We need the life of the soul as much as the life of the body. Hence there are two forms of utility—obviously we do not wear books on our feet. From the utilitarian point of view, a canto of an epic is not to compare with a bowl of cheap soup from a charity kitchen. The finest idea in the world cannot take the place of the sail of a ship. An automatic boiler, no doubt, by lifting itself two inches, supplies us with calico thirty sous a yard cheaper; but this machine and the inventions of industry do not breathe the life of the people, and will never tell the future that it has existed; whereas Egyptian art, Mexican art, Greek or Roman art, with their masterpieces, stigmatized as useless, have borne witness to the existence of these nations through a vast space of time in places where great intermediate nations have vanished without leaving even a name-card, for lack of men of genius! Works of genius form the *summum* of a civilization, and presuppose a great use. You, no doubt, would not think a pair of boots better in itself than a drama, nor prefer a windmill to the Church of Saint-Ouen? Well, a nation is moved by the same spirit as an individual,

and man's favorite dream is to survive himself morally, as he reproduces himself physically. What survives of a nation is the work of its men of genius.

"At this moment France is a vigorous proof of the truth of this proposition. She is assuredly outdone by England in industry, commerce, and navigation; nevertheless, she leads the world, I believe, by her artists, her gifted men, and the taste of her products. There is not an artist, not a man of mark anywhere, who does not come to Paris to win his patent of mastery. There is at this day no school of painting but in France; and we shall rule by the Book more surely perhaps, and for longer, than by the Sword.

"Under Ernest's system the flowers of luxury would be suppressed—the beauty of woman, music, painting, and poetry. Society would not, indeed, be overthrown; but who would accept life on such terms? All that is useful is horrible and ugly. The kitchen is indispensable in a house, but you take good care never to stay in it; you live in a drawing-room, ornamented, as this is, with perfectly superfluous things. Of what use are those beautiful pictures and all this carved woodwork? Nothing is beautiful but what we feel to be useless. We have called the sixteenth century the age of the Renaissance with admirable accuracy of expression. That century was the dawn of a new world; men will still talk of it when some preceding ages are forgotten, whose sole merit will be that they have existed—like the millions of beings that are of no account in a generation."

"*Guenille, soit! ma guenille m'est chère*"—"A poor thing, but mine own," said the Duc d'Hérouville playfully, during the silence that followed this pompous declamation of prose.

"But," said Butscha, taking up the cudgels against Canalis, "does the art exist which, according to you, is the sphere in which genius should disport itself? Is it not rather a magnificent fiction which social man is madly bent on believing? What need have I for a landscape in Normandy hanging in my room, when I can go and see it so well done by God? We have in our dreams finer poems than the *Iliad*. For a very moderate sum I can find at Valognes, at Carentan,



as in Provence, at Arles, Venuses 'quite as lovely as Titian's. The *Police News* publishes romances, different indeed from Walter Scott's, but with terrible endings, in real blood, and not in ink. Happiness and virtue are far above art and genius!"

"Bravo, Butscha!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What did he say?" asked Canalis of La Brière, ceasing to watch Modeste, in whose eyes and attitude he read the delightful evidence of her artless admiration.

The scorn with which he had been treated, and, above all, the girl's disrespectful speech to her father, had so depressed the unhappy La Brière that he made no reply; his gaze, sadly fixed on Modeste, betrayed absorbed meditation. The little clerk's argument was, however, repeated with some wit by the Duc d'Hérerville, who ended by saying that the raptures of Saint Theresa were far superior to the inventions of Lord Byron.

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc," remarked Modeste, "that is wholly personal poetry, while Lord Byron's or Molière's is for the benefit of the world——"

"Then you must make your peace with the Baron," interrupted her father quickly. "Now you are insisting that genius is to be useful, as much so as cotton; but you will, perhaps, think logic as stale and out of date as your poor old father."

Butscha, La Brière, and Madame Latournelle exchanged half-laughing glances, which spurred Modeste on in her career of provocation, all the more because for a moment she was checked.

"Nay, Mademoiselle," said Canalis with a smile, "we have not fought nor even contradicted each other. Every work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture, carries with it a positive social utility, like that of any other form of commercial produce. Art is the truest form of commerce; it takes it for granted. A book in these days helps its writer to pocket about ten thousand francs, and its production involves printing, paper-making, type-founding, and the bookseller's trade; that is to say, the occupation of thousands of hands. The performance of a

symphony by Beethoven or of an opera by Rossini demands quite as many hands, machines, and forms of industry.

“The cost of a building is a still more tangible answer to the objection. It may, indeed, be said that works of genius rest on a very costly basis, and are necessarily profitable to the working man.”

Fairly started on this text, Canalis talked on for some minutes with a lavish use of imagery, and reveling in his own words; but it befell him, as often happens with great talkers, to find himself at the end of his harangue just where he started, and agreeing with La Brière, though he failed to perceive it.

“I discern with pleasure, my dear Baron,” said the little Duke slyly, “that you will make a great constitutional Minister.”

“Oh,” said Canalis, with an ostentatious flourish, “what do we prove by all our discussions? The eternal truth of this axiom, ‘Everything is true and everything is false.’ Moral truths, like living beings, may be placed in an atmosphere where they change their appearance to the point of being unrecognizable?”

“Society lives by condemned things,” said the Duc d’Hérouville.

“What flippancy!” said Madame Latournelle in a low voice to her husband.

“He is a poet,” said Gobenheim, who overheard her.

Canalis, who had soared ten leagues above his audience, and who was, perhaps, right in his final philosophical dictum, took the sort of chill he read on every face for a symptom of ignorance; but he saw that Modeste understood him, and was content, never discerning how offensive such a monologue is to country folks, whose one idea is to prove to Parisians the vitality, intelligence, and good judgment of the provinces.

“Is it long since you last saw the Duchesse de Chaulieu?” asked the Duke of Canalis, to change the subject.

“I saw her six days ago,” replied Canalis.

“And she is well?”

“Perfectly well.”

“Remember me to her, pray, when you write.”

“I hear she is charming,” Modeste remarked to the Duke.

“Monsieur le Baron,” said he, “knows more about that than I do.”

“She is more than charming,” said Canalis, accepting the Duke’s perfidious challenge. “But I am partial, Mademoiselle; she has been my friend these ten years. I owe to her all that may be good in me; she has sheltered me from the perils of the world. Besides, the Duc de Chaulieu started me in the way I am going. But for their influence the King and Princesses would often have forgotten a poor poet as I am; my affection, therefore, is always full of gratitude.”

And he spoke with tears in his voice.

“How much we all ought to love the woman who has inspired you with such sublime song and such a noble sentiment,” said Modeste with feeling. “Can one conceive of a poet without a Muse?”

“He would have no heart,” said Canalis; “he would write verse as dry as Voltaire’s—who never loved anyone but Voltaire.”

“When I was in Paris,” said Dumay, “did you not do me the honor of assuring me that you felt none of the feelings you expressed?”

“A straight hit, my worthy soldier,” replied the poet with a smile; “but you must understand that at the same time it is allowable to have a great deal of heart in the intellectual life as well as in real life. A man may express very fine sentiments without feeling them, or feel them without being able to express them. La Brière, my friend there, loves to distraction,” said he generously, as he looked at Modeste. “I, who love at least as much as he does, believe—unless I am under an illusion—that I can give my passion a literary form worthy of its depth.—Still, I will not answer for it, Mademoiselle,” said he, turning to Modeste with a rather over-elaborate grace, “that I shall not be bereft of wits by to-morrow——”

And thus the poet triumphed over every obstacle, burning in honor of his love the sticks they tried to trip him up with, while Modeste was dazzled by this Parisian brilliancy,

which was unfamiliar to her, and which lent a glitter to the orator's rhetoric.

"What a mountebank!" said Butscha in a whisper to Latournelle, after listening to a magniloquent tirade on the Catholic religion, and the happiness of having a pious wife, poured out in response to an observation from Madame Mignon.

Modeste had a bandage over her eyes; the effect of his delivery, and the attention she intentionally devoted to Canalis, prevented her perceiving what Butscha saw and noted—the declamatory tone, the lack of simplicity, rant taking the place of feeling, and all the incoherence which prompted the clerk's rather too severe epithet.

While Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha, and Latournelle wondered at the poet's want of sequence, overlooking, indeed, the inevitable digressions of conversation, which in France is always very devious, Modeste was admiring the poet's versatility, saying to herself as she led him to follow the tortuous windings of her fancy, "He loves me!"

Butscha, like all the other spectators of this performance, as we must call it, was struck by the chief fault of all egoists, which Canalis shows a little too much, like all men who are accustomed to speechify in drawing-rooms. Whether he knew beforehand what the other speaker meant to say, or merely did not listen, or had the power of listening while thinking of something else, Melchior wore the look of inattention which is as disconcerting to another man's flow of words as it is wounding to his vanity.

Not to attend to what is said is not merely a lack of politeness; it is an expression of contempt. And Canalis carries this habit rather too far, for he often neglects to reply to a remark that requires an answer, and goes off to the subject he is absorbed in without any polite transition. Though this form of impertinence may be accepted without protest from a man of position, it nevertheless creates a leaven of hatred and vengeful feeling at the bottom of men's hearts; in an equal, it may even break up a friendship.

When by any chance Melchior compels himself to listen, he falls into another failing—he only lends himself, he does

not give himself up. Nothing in social intercourse pays better than the bestowal of attention. "Blessed are they that hear!" is not only a precept of the Gospel, it is also an excellent speculation; act on it, and you will be forgiven everything, even vices. Canalis took much upon him in the intention of charming Modeste; but while he was sacrificing himself to her, he was himself all the while with the others.

Modeste, pitiless for the ten persons she was martyring, begged Canalis to read them some piece of his verse; she wanted to hear a specimen of that much-praised elocution.

Canalis took the volume offered him by Modeste and cooed—for that is the correct word—the poem that is supposed to be his finest, an imitation of Moore's "Loves of the Angels," entitled "Vitalis," which was received with some yawns by Mesdames Latournelle and Dumay, by Gobenheim, and the cashier.

"If you play whist well, Monsieur," said Gobenheim, offering him five cards spread out in a fan, "I have never met with so accomplished a gentleman."

The question made everyone laugh, for it was the expression of the common wish.

"I play it well enough to be able to end my days in a country town," replied Canalis. "There has, I dare say, been more of literature and conversation than whist players care to have," he added in an impertinent tone, flinging the book on to the side table.

This incident shows what dangers are incurred by the hero of a salon when, like Canalis, he moves outside his orbit; he is then in the case of an actor who is a favorite with one particular public, but whose talent is wasted when he quits his own stage and ventures on to that of a superior theater.

The Baron and the Duke were partners; Gobenheim played with Latournelle. Modeste sat down at the great poet's elbow, to the despair of Ernest, who marked on the capricious girl's countenance the progress of Canalis' fascination. La Brière had not known the power of seduction possessed by Melchior, and often denied by nature to genuine souls, who are generally shy. This gift demands a boldness and readi-

ness of spirit which might be called the acrobatic agility of the mind; it even allows of a little part-playing; but is there not, morally speaking, always something of the actor in a poet? There is, indeed, a wide difference between expressing feelings we do not experience though we can imagine them in all their variety, and pretending to have them when they seem necessary to success on the stage of private life; and yet, if the hypocrisy needful to a man of the world has cankered the poet, he easily transfuses the powers of his talent into the expression of the required sentiment, just as a great man who has buried himself in solitude at last finds his heart overflowing into his brain.

“He is playing for millions,” thought La Brière in anguish; “and he will act passion so well that Modeste will believe in it!”

And instead of showing himself more delightful and wittier than his rival, La Brière, like the Duc d’Hérouville, sat gloomy, uneasy, and on the watch; but while the courtier was studying the heiress’s vagaries, Ernest was a prey to the misery of black and concentrated jealousy, and had not yet won a single glance from his idol. He presently went into the garden for a few minutes with Butscha.

“It is all over, she is crazy about him,” said he. “I am worse than disagreeable and, after all, she is right! Canalis is delightful, he is witty even in his silence, he has passion in his eyes, poetry in his harangues——”

“Is he an honest man?” asked Butscha.

“Oh yes,” replied La Brière. “He is loyal, chivalrous, and under Modeste’s influence he is quite capable of getting over the little faults he has acquired under Madame de Chaulieu——”

“You are a good fellow!” exclaimed the little hunchback. “But is he capable of loving—will he love her?”

“I do not know——” replied Ernest. “Has she mentioned me?” he asked after a short silence.

“Yes,” said Butscha, and he repeated what Modeste had said about borrowing a disguise.

The young fellow threw himself on a seat and hid his face in his hands. He could not restrain his tears, and would

not let Butscha see them; but the dwarf was the man to guess them.

“What is wrong, Monsieur?” said he.

“She is right!” cried La Brière, suddenly sitting up. “I am a wretch.”

He told the story of the trick he had been led into by Canalis, explaining to Butscha that he had wished to undeceive Modeste before she had unmasked; and he overflowed in rather childish lamentations over the perversity of his fate. Butscha’s sympathy recognized this as love in its most vigorous and youthful artlessness, in its genuine and deep anxiety.

“But why,” said he, “do you not make the best of yourself to Mademoiselle Modeste, instead of leaving your rival to prance alone?”

“Ah! you evidently never felt your throat tighten as soon as you tried to speak to her,” said La Brière. “Do you not feel a sensation at the roots of your hair, and all over your skin, when she looks at you, even without seeing you?”

“Still you had your wits about you sufficiently to be deeply grieved when she as good as told her father that he was an old woman.”

“Monsieur, I love her too truly not to have felt it like a dagger-thrust when I heard her thus belie the perfection I ascribed to her!”

“But Canalis, you see, justified her,” replied Butscha.

“If she has more vanity than good feeling, she would not be worth regretting!” said Ernest.

At this moment Modeste came out to breathe the freshness of the starlit night with Canalis, who had been losing at cards, her father, and Madame Dumay. While his daughter walked on with Melchior, Charles Mignon left her and came up to La Brière.

“Your friend ought to have been an advocate, Monsieur,” said he with a smile, and looking narrowly at the young man.

“Do not be in a hurry to judge a poet with the severity you might exercise on an ordinary man, like me, for instance, Monsieur le Comte,” said La Brière. “The poet has his mission. He is destined by nature to see the poetical side of every question, just as he expresses the poetry of everything;

thus when you fancy that he is arguing against himself, he is faithful to his calling. He is a painter ready to represent either a Madonna or a courtesan. Molière is alike right in his pictures of old men and young men, and Molière certainly had a sound judgment. These sports of fancy which corrupt second-rate minds have no influence over the character of really great men."

Charles Mignon pressed the young fellow's hand, saying, "At the same time, this versatility might be used by a man to justify himself for actions diametrically antagonistic, especially in politics."

At this moment Canalis was saying in an insinuating voice, in reply to some saucy remark of Modeste's: "Ah, Mademoiselle, never believe that the multiplicity of emotions can in any degree diminish strength of feeling. Poets, more than other men, must love with constancy and truth. In the first place, do not be jealous of what is called 'The Muse.' Happy is the wife of a busy man! If you could but hear the lamentations of the wives who are crushed under the idleness of husbands without employment, or to whom wealth gives much leisure, you would know that the chief happiness of a Parisian woman is liberty, sovereignty in her home. And we poets allow the wife to hold the scepter, for we cannot possibly condescend to the tyranny exerted by small minds. We have something better to do.—If ever I should marry, which I vow is a very remote disaster in my life, I should wish my wife to enjoy the perfect moral liberty which a mistress always preserves, and which is perhaps the source of all her seductiveness."

Canalis put forth all his spirit and grace in talking of love, marriage, the worship of women, and arguing with Modeste, till presently Mignon, who came to join them, seized a moment's silence to take his daughter by the arm and lead her back to Ernest, whom the worthy Colonel had advised to attempt some explanation.

"Mademoiselle," said Ernest in a broken voice, "I cannot possibly endure to remain here the object of your scorn. I do not defend myself, I make no attempt at justification; I only beg to point out to you that before receiving your flatter-



ing letter addressed to the man and not to the poet—your last letter—I desired, and by a letter written at le Havre I intended, to dispel the mistake under which you wrote. All the feelings I have had the honor of expressing to you are sincere. A hope beamed on me when, in Paris, your father told me that he was poor;—but now, if all is lost, if nothing is left to me but eternal regrets, why should I stay where there is nothing for me but torture?—Let me only take away with me one smile from you. It will remain graven on my heart.”

“Monsieur,” said Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, “I am not the mistress here; but I certainly should deeply regret keeping anyone here who should find neither pleasure nor happiness in staying!”

She turned away, and took Madame Dumay’s arm to go back into the house. A few minutes later all the personages of this domestic drama, once more united in the drawing-room, were surprised to see Modeste sitting by the Duc d’Hérouville, and flirting with him in the best style of the most wily Parisienne. She watched his play, gave him advice when he asked it, and took opportunities of saying flattering things to him, placing the chance advantage of noble birth on the same level as that of talent or of beauty.

Canalis knew, or fancied he knew, the reason for this caprice: he had tried to pique Modeste by speaking of marriage as a disaster, and seeming to be averse to it; but like all who play with fire, it was he who was burnt. Modeste’s pride and disdain alarmed the poet; he came up to her, making a display of jealousy all the more marked because it was assumed. Modeste, as implacable as the angels, relished the pleasure she felt in the exercise of her power, and naturally carried it too far. The Duc d’Hérouville had never been so well treated: a woman smiled on him!

At eleven o’clock, an unheard-of hour at the Chalet, the three rivals left, the Duke thinking Modeste charming, Canalis regarding her as a coquette, and La Brière heartbroken by her relentlessness.

For a week the heiress still remained to her three admirers just what she had been on that evening, so that the poet

seemed to have triumphed, in spite of the whims and freaks which from time to time inspired some hopes in the Duc d'Hérouville. Modeste's irreverence to her father, and the liberties she took with him; her irritability towards her blind mother, as she half-grudgingly did her the little services which formerly had been the delight of her filial affection, seemed to be the outcome of a wayward temper and liveliness tolerated in her childhood. When Modeste went too far she would assert a code of her own, and ascribe her levity and fractiousness to her spirit of independence. She owned to Canalis and the Duke that she hated obedience, and regarded this as an obstacle in the way of marriage, thus sounding her suitors' character after the manner of those who pierce the soil to bring up gold, coal, stone, or water.

"I shall never find a husband," said she, the day before that on which the family were to reinstate themselves in the Villa, "who will endure my caprices with such kindness as my father's, which has never failed for an instant, or the indulgence of my adorable mother."

"They know that you love them, Mademoiselle," said La Brière.

"Be assured, Mademoiselle, that your husband will know the full value of his treasure," added the Duke.

"You have more wit and spirit than are needed to break in a husband," said Canalis, laughing.

Modeste smiled, as Henri IV. may have smiled when, by extracting three answers to an insidious question, he had revealed to some foreign Ambassador the character of his three leading Ministers.

On the day of the dinner, Modeste, led away by her preference for Canalis, walked alone with him for some time up and down the graveled walk leading from the house to the lawn with its flower-beds. It was easy to perceive, from the poet's gestures and the young heiress's demeanor, that she was lending a favorable ear to Canalis, and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville came out to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* that scandalized them. With the tact natural to women in such cases, they turned the conversation to the subject of the Court, of the high position conferred by an office under the Crown, ex-

plaining the difference subsisting between an appointment to the Household and one held under the Crown; they tried, in fact, to intoxicate Modeste by appealing to her pride, and displaying to her one of the highest positions which a woman at that time could hope to attain.

“To have a Duke in your son,” cried the old lady, “is a positive distinction. The mere title is a fortune out of reach of reverses, to bequeath to your children.”

“To what ill-fortune,” said Canalis, very ill pleased at this interruption to his conversation, “must we attribute the small success that the Master of the Horse has hitherto achieved in the matter in which that title is supposed to be of most service as supporting a man’s pretensions?”

The two unmarried ladies shot a look at Canalis as full of venom as a viper’s fangs, but were so put out of countenance by Modeste’s sarcastic smile that they had not a word in reply.

“The Master of the Horse,” said Modeste to Canalis, “has never blamed you for the diffidence you have learnt from your fame; why then grudge him his modesty?”

“Also,” said the Duke’s aunt, “we have not yet met with a wife worthy of my nephew’s rank. Some we have seen who had merely the fortune that might suit the position; others who, without the fortune, had indeed the right spirit; and I must confess that we have done well to wait till God should give us the opportunity of making acquaintance with a young lady in whom should be united both the noble soul and the handsome fortune of a Duchesse d’Hérouville!”

“My dear Modeste,” said Héléne d’Hérouville, walking away a few steps with her new friend, “there are a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, and a hundred poets in Paris who are as good as he; and he is so far from being a great man, that I, a poor girl, fated to take the veil for lack of a dower, would have nothing to say to him!—And you do not know, I dare say, that he is a man who has, for the last ten years, been at the beck and call of the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Really, none but an old woman of sixty could put up with the endless little ailments with which, it is said, the poet is afflicted, the least of which was unendurable in Louis XVI. Still, the

Duchess, of course, does not suffer from them as his wife would; he is not so constantly with her as a husband would be——”

And so by one of the maneuvers peculiar to woman against woman, Hélène d'Hérouville whispered in every ear the calumnies which women, jealous of Madame de Chaulieu, propagated concerning the poet. This trivial detail, not rare in the gossip of young girls, shows that the Comte de la Bastie's fortune was already made the object of ardent rivalry.

Within ten days, opinions at the Chalet had varied considerably about the three men who aspired to Modeste's hand. This change, wholly to the disadvantage of Canalis, was founded on considerations calculated to make the hero of any form of fame reflect deeply. When we see the passion with which an autograph is craved, it is impossible to doubt that public curiosity is strongly excited by celebrity. Most provincials, it is evident, have no very exact idea of the manner in which illustrious persons fasten their cravat, walk on the Boulevard, gape at the crows, or eat a cutlet; for, as soon as they see a man wearing the halo of fashion, or resplendent with popularity—more or less transient, no doubt, but always the object of envy—they are ready to exclaim, “Ah! so that is the thing!” or, “Well, that is odd!” or something equally absurd. In a word, the strange charm that is produced by every form of renown, even when justly acquired, has no permanence. To superficial minds, especially to the sarcastic and the envious, it is an impression as swift as a lightning-flash, and never repeated. Glory, it would seem, like the sun, is hot and luminous from afar, but, when we get near, it is as cold as the peak of an Alp. Perhaps a man is really great only to his peers; perhaps the defects inherent in the conditions of humanity are more readily lost to their eyes than to those of vulgar admirers. Thus, to be constantly pleasing, a poet would be compelled to display the deceptive graces of those persons who can win forgiveness for their obscurity by amiable manners and agreeable speeches, since, besides genius, the rapid drawing-room virtues and harmless domestic twaddle are exacted from him.

The great poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who re-

fused to yield to this law of society, found that insulting indifference soon took the place of the fascination at first caused by his conversation at evening parties. Cleverness too prodigally displayed produces the same effect on the mind as a shop full of cut glass has on the eyes; this sufficiently explains that Canalis' glitter soon wearied those people who, to use their own words, like something solid. Then, under the necessity of appearing an ordinary man, the poet found many rocks ahead where La Brière could win the good opinion of those who, at first, had thought him sullen. They felt the desire to be revenged on Canalis for his reputation by making more of his friend. The most kindly people are so made. The amiable and unpretentious Referendary shocked nobody's vanity; falling back on him, everyone discerned his good heart, his great modesty, the discretion of a strong box, and delightful manners. On political questions the Duc d'Hérerville held Ernest far above Canalis. The poet, as erratic, ambitious, and mutable as Tasso, loved luxury and splendor, and ran into debt; while the young lawyer, even-minded, living prudently, and useful without officiousness, hoped for promotion without asking it, and was saving money meanwhile.

Canalis had indeed justified the good people who were watching him. For the last two or three days he had given way to fits of irritability, of depression, of melancholy, without any apparent cause—the caprices of temper that come of the nervous poetical temperament. These eccentricities—as they are called in a country town—had their cause in the wrong, which each day made worse, that he was doing to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, to whom he knew he ought to write, without being able to make up his mind to do it; they were anxiously noted by the gentle American and worthy Madame Latournelle, and more than once came under discussion between them and Madame Mignon. Canalis, knowing nothing of these discussions, felt their effect. He was no longer listened to with the same attention, the faces round him did not express the rapture of the first days, while Ernest was beginning to be listened to. For the last two days the poet had, therefore, been bent on captivating Modeste, and seized every moment when he could be alone with her to cast over her

the tangles of the most impassioned language. Modeste's heightened color plainly showed the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville with what pleasure the heiress heard insinuating conceits charmingly spoken; and, uneasy at the poet's rapid advances, they had recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in such predicaments—to calumny, which rarely misses its aim when it appeals to vehement physical repulsion.

As he sat down to dinner, the poet saw a cloud on his idol's brow, and read in it Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's perfidy; so he decided that he must offer himself as a husband to Modeste at the first opportunity he should have of speaking to her. As he and the two noble damsels exchanged some subacid, though polite remarks, Gobenheim nudged Butscha, who sat next to him, to look at the poet and the Master of the Horse.

"They will demolish each other," said he in a whisper.

"Canalis has genius enough to demolish himself unaided," said the dwarf.

In the course of the dinner, which was extremely splendid, and served to perfection, the Duke achieved a great triumph over Canalis. Modeste, whose riding-habit had arrived the evening before, talked of the various rides to be taken in the neighborhood. In the course of the conversation that ensued she was led to express a strong wish to see a hunt—a pleasure she had never known. The Duke at once proposed to arrange a hunt for Mademoiselle Mignon's benefit in one of the Crown forest-lands a few leagues from le Havre. Thanks to his connection with the Master of the King's Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan, he had it in his power to show Modeste a scene of royal magnificence, to charm her by showing her the dazzling world of a Court, and making her wish to enter it by marriage. The glances exchanged by the Duke and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, which Canalis happened to catch, distinctly said, "The heiress is ours!"—enough to urge the poet, who was reduced to mere personal glitter, to secure some pledge of her affection without loss of time.

Modeste, somewhat scared at having gone further than she intended with the d'Hérouvilles, after dinner, when they were walking in the grounds, went forward a little distance in a

rather marked manner, accompanied by Melchior. With a young girl's not illegitimate curiosity, she allowed him to guess the calumnies repeated by H el ene, and on a remonstrance from Canalis she pledged him to secrecy, which he promised.

"These lashes of the tongue," said he, "are fair war in the world of fashion; your simplicity is scared by them; for my part, I can laugh at them—nay, I enjoy them. Those ladies must think his lordship's interests seriously imperiled, or they would not have recourse to them."

Then, profiting by the opportunity given by such a piece of information, Canalis justified himself with so much mocking wit, and passion so ingeniously expressed, while thanking Modeste for her confidence, in which he insisted in seeing a slight strain of love, that she found herself quite as deeply compromised towards the poet as she was towards the Duke. Canalis felt that daring was necessary; he declared himself in plain terms. He paid his vows to Modeste in a style through which his poetic fancy shone like a moon ingeniously staged, with a brilliant picture of herself—beautifully fair, and arrayed to admiration for this family festival. The inspiration so cleverly called up, and encouraged by the complicity of the evening, the grove, the sky, and the earth, led the grasping lover beyond all reason; for he even talked of his disinterestedness, and succeeded by the flowers of his eloquence in giving a new aspect to Diderot's stale theme of "*Five hundred francs and my Sophie*," or the "*Give me a cottage and your heart!*" of every lover who knows that his father-in-law has a fortune.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, after enjoying the music of this concerto so admirably composed on "a familiar theme," "my parents leave me such freedom as has allowed me to hear you; but you must address yourself to them."

"Well, then," cried Canalis, "only tell me that if I get their consent you will be quite satisfied to obey them."

"I know beforehand," said she, "that my father has some wishes which might offend the legitimate pride of a family as old as yours, for he is bent on transmitting his title and his name to his grandsons."

“Oh, my dear Modeste, what sacrifice would I not make to place my life in the hands of such a guardian angel as you are!”

“You must allow me not to decide my fate for life in one moment,” said she, going to join the Demoiselles d’Hérouville.

These two ladies were at that minute flattering little La-tournelle’s vanity in the hope of securing him to their interests. Mademoiselle d’Hérouville, to whom we must give the family name to distinguish her from her niece Hélène, was conveying to the notary that the place of President of the Court at le Havre, which Charles X. would give to a man recommended by them, was an appointment due to his honesty and talents as a lawyer. Butscha, who was walking with La Brière, in great alarm at Melchior’s audacity and rapid progress, found means to speak to Modeste for a few minutes at the bottom of the garden steps as the party went indoors to give themselves up to the vexations of the inevitable rubber.

“Mademoiselle, I hope you do not yet address him as Melchior,” said he in an undertone.

“Not far short of it, my Mysterious Dwarf,” she replied, with a smile that might have seduced an angel.

“Good God!” cried the clerk, dropping his hands, which almost touched the steps.

“Well, and is not he as good as that odious gloomy Referendary in whom you take so much interest?” cried she, putting on for Ernest a haughty look of scorn, such as young girls alone have the secret of, as though their maidenhood lent them wings to soar so high. “Would your little Monsieur de la Brière take me without a settlement?” she added after a pause.

“Ask your father,” replied Butscha, going a few steps on, so as to lead Modeste to a little distance from the windows. “Listen to me, Mademoiselle. You know that I who speak to you am ready to lay down not my life only, but my honor for you, at any time, at any moment. So you can believe in me, you can trust me with things you would not perhaps tell your father.—Well, has that sublime Canalis ever spoken to



you in the disinterested way that allows you to cast such a taunt at poor Ernest?"

"Yes."

"And you believe him?"

"That, Malignant Clerk," said she, giving him one of the ten or twelve nicknames she had devised for him, "is, as it seems to me, casting a doubt on the strength of my self-respect."

"You can laugh, dear Mademoiselle, so it cannot be serious. I can only hope that you are making a fool of him."

"What would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I thought I had any right to mock at either of the gentlemen who do me the honor to wish for me as a wife? I can tell you, Maître Jean, that even when she appears to scorn the most contemptible admiration, a girl is always flattered at having it offered to her."

"Then I flatter you——?" said the clerk, his face lighting up as a town is illuminated on some great occasion.

"You——?" said she. "You give me the most precious kind of friendship, a feeling as disinterested as that of a mother for her child! Do not compare yourself to anyone else, for even my father is obliged to yield to me." She paused. "I cannot tell you that I love you, in the sense men give to the word; but what I feel for you is eternal, and can never know any change."

"Well, then," said Butscha, stooping to pick up a pebble that he might leave a kiss and a tear on the tip of Modeste's shoe, "let me watch over you as a dragon watches over a treasure.—The poet spreads before you just now all the fligree of his elaborate phrases, the tinsel of his promises. He sang of love to the sweetest chord of his lyre no doubt. If when this noble lover is fully assured of your having but a small fortune, you should see his demeanor change; if you then find him cold and embarrassed, will you still make him your husband, still honor him with your esteem?"

"Can he be a Francisque Althor?" she asked, with an expression of the deepest disgust.

"Let me have the pleasure of working this transformation scene," said Butscha. "Not only do I intend that it shall be

sudden, but I do not despair of restoring your poet to you afterwards, in love once more, of making him blow hot and cold on your heart with as good a grace as when he argues for and against the same thing in the course of a single evening, sometimes without being aware of it——”

“And if you are right,” said she, “whom can I trust?”

“The man who truly loves you.”

“The little Duke?”

Butscha looked at Modeste. They both walked on a few steps in silence. The girl was impenetrable; she did not wince.

“Mademoiselle, will you allow me to put into words the thoughts that lurk at the bottom of your heart like water-mosses in a pool, and that you refuse to explain to yourself even?”

“Why, indeed!” cried Modeste, “is my privy councilor-in-waiting a mirror too?”

“No, but an echo,” he replied, with a little bow stamped with the utmost modesty. “The Duke loves you, but he loves you too well. I, a dwarf, have fully understood the exquisite delicacy of your soul. You would hate to be adored like the holy wafer in a monstrance. But, being so eminently a woman, you could no more bear to see a man of whom you were always secure perpetually at your feet, than you could endure an egoist like Canalis, who would always care more for himself than for you. . . . Why? I know not. I would I could be a woman, and an old woman, to learn the reason of the programme I can read in your eyes, which is perhaps that of every girl.

“At the same time, your lofty soul craves for adoration. When a man is at your feet you cannot throw yourself at his. ‘But you cannot go far in that way,’ Voltaire used to say. So the little Duke has, morally speaking, too many genuflexions, and Canalis not enough—not to say none at all. And I can read the mischief hidden in your smile when you are speaking to the Master of the Horse, when he speaks to you and you reply. You would never be unhappy with the Duke; everybody would be pleased if you chose him for your husband; but you would not love him. The coldness of egoism and the

excessive fervor of perennial raptures no doubt have a negative effect on the heart of every woman.

“Obviously this is not the perpetual triumph that you would enjoy in the infinite delights of such a marriage as that you dream of, in which you would find a submission to be proud of, great little sacrifices that are gladly unconfessed, successes looked forward to with rapture, and unforeseen magnanimity to which it is a joy to yield; in which a woman finds herself understood even to her deepest secrets, while her love is sometimes a protection to her protector——”

“You are a wizard!” cried Modeste.

“Nor will you meet with that enchanting equality of feeling, that constant sharing of life, and that certainty of giving happiness which makes marriage acceptable, if you marry a Canalis, a man who thinks only of himself, to whom *I* is the only note in the scale, and whose attention has not yet condescended so low as to listen to your father or the Duke. An ambitious man, not of the first class, to whom your dignity and supremacy matter little, who will treat you as a necessary chattel in his house, who insults you already by his indifference on points of honor. Yes, if you allowed yourself to go so far as to slap your mother, Canalis would shut his eyes that he might not see your guilt, so hungry is he for your fortune!

“So, Mademoiselle, I was not thinking of the great poet, who is but a little actor, nor of my lord Duke, who would be for you a splendid match, but not a husband——”

“Butscha, my heart is a blank page on which you yourself write what you read,” replied Modeste. “You are carried away by your provincial hatred of everything that compels you to look above your head. You cannot forgive the poet for being a political man, for having an eloquent tongue, and a splendid future; you calumniate his purpose——”

“His, Mademoiselle! He would turn his back on you within twenty-four hours with the meanness of a Vilquin.”

“Well, make him play such a farcical scene, and——”

“Ay, and in every key; in three days—on Wednesday—do not forget. Until then, Mademoiselle, amuse yourself by making the musical box play all its airs, that the vile discords of the antiphony may come out all the more clearly.”

Modeste gayly returned to the drawing-room, where of all the men present, La Brière alone, seated in the recess of a window—whence, no doubt, he had been looking at his idol—rose at her entrance, as if an usher had shouted, “The Queen!” It was a respectful impulse, full of the eloquence peculiar to action, which surpasses that of the finest speech. Spoken love is not to be compared with love in action—every girl of twenty is fifty as concerns this axiom; this is the seducer’s strongest argument.

Instead of looking Modeste in the face, as Canalis did, bowing to her as an act of public homage, the disdained lover watched her with a slow side glance, as humble as Butscha’s, almost timid. The young heiress observed this demeanor as she went to place herself by Canalis, in whose game she affected an interest. In the course of the conversation, La Brière learnt, from a remark she made to her father, that Modeste intended to begin riding again on the following Wednesday, and she mentioned that she had no riding-whip suitable to match with her handsome new habit. Ernest flashed a glance at the dwarf like a spark of fire, and a few minutes later they were walking together on the terrace.

“It is now nine o’clock,” said La Brière. “I am off to Paris as fast as my horse will carry me. I can be there by ten to-morrow morning. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept a gift with pleasure, for she has a great regard for you; let me give her a riding-whip in your name; and, believe me, in return for such an immense favor you have in me not indeed a friend, but a slave!”

“Go; you are happy,” said the clerk. “You have money.”

“Tell Canalis from me that I shall not be in to-night, and that he must invent some excuse for my absence for two days.”

An hour later Ernest had set out on horseback for Paris, where he arrived after twelve hours’ riding, his first care being to secure a place in the mail coach for le Havre on the following day. He then went to the three first jewelers in Paris, comparing handles of riding-whips, and seeking what art could produce of the most royal perfection. He found one made by Stidmann for a Russian lady, who, after ordering it,

had been unable to pay for it—a fox-hunt wrought in gold, with a ruby at the top, and exorbitantly expensive as compared with a Referendary's stipend; all his savings were swallowed up, amounting to seven thousand francs. Ernest gave a sketch of the arms of la Bastie, allowing twenty hours for them to be engraved instead of those that were on it. This handle, a masterpiece of workmanship, was fitted to an india-rubber whip, and placed in a red morocco case, lined with velvet, with a monogram of two M's on the top.

By Wednesday morning La Brière had returned by the mail, in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had explained his secretary's absence by saying that he was busy with some work forwarded from Paris. Butscha, who had gone to the coach office to hold out a welcoming hand to Ernest on the arrival of the mail, flew to give this work of art to Françoise Cochet, desiring her to place it on Modeste's dressing-table.

"You are going out riding, no doubt, with Mademoiselle Modeste," said Butscha, on returning to Canalis' villa to inform Ernest, by a side glance, that the whip had safely reached its destination.

"I!" said La Brière. "I am going to bed."

"Well!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at his friend, "I do not understand you at all."

Breakfast was ready, and the poet naturally invited the clerk to sit down with them. Butscha had stayed, intending to get himself invited if necessary by La Brière, seeing on Germain's countenance the success of a hunchback's trick, of which his promise to Modeste may have given a hint.

"Monsieur was very wise to keep Monsieur Latournelle's clerk," said Germain in his master's ear. Canalis and Germain, on a hint from the latter, passed into the drawing-room. "This morning I went out to see some fishing, an expedition to which I was invited the day before yesterday by the owner of a boat I have made acquaintance with."

Germain did not confess that he had had such bad taste as to play billiards in a café in le Havre, where Butscha had surrounded him with a number of his friends in order to be able to work upon him.

“What then?” said Canalis. “Come to the point, and at once.”

“Monsieur le Baron, I heard a discussion about Monsieur Mignon, which I did my best to keep going—no one knew who I lived with. I tell you, Monsieur le Baron, everybody in le Havre says that you are running your head against a wall. Mademoiselle de la Bastie’s fortune is, like her name, very modest. The ship on which the father came home is not his own; it belongs to some China merchants, with whom he has to settle, and things are said about it that are far from flattering to the Colonel.—Having heard that you and Monsieur le Duc were rivals for Mademoiselle de la Bastie, I take the liberty of mentioning it; for, between you and him, it is better that his Lordship should swallow the bait. On my way back I took a turn on the quay, past the theater, where the merchants walk up and down, and I pushed my way boldly among them. These worthy folks, seeing a well-dressed man, began to talk about the affairs of the town; from one thing to another I led them to speak of Colonel Mignon; and they were so much of the same mind as the fisherman that I felt it my duty to speak. That is why I left you, sir, to get up and dress alone . . .”

“What is to be done?” cried Canalis, feeling that he was too deeply pledged to withdraw from his promises to Modeste.

“You know my attachment to you, sir,” said Germain, seeing that the poet was thunderstruck, “and you will not be surprised if I offer a piece of advice. If you can make this clerk drunk, he will let the cat out of the bag, and if he won’t open his mouth for two bottles of champagne, he certainly will for the third. It would be a strange thing, too, if Monsieur, who will certainly be an ambassador one day, for Philoxène heard Madame la Duchesse say so,—if you, sir, cannot get round a country lawyer’s clerk.”

At this moment Butscha, the unknown author of this fishing expedition, was begging the Referendary to say nothing about his journey to Paris, and not to interfere with his maneuvers at breakfast. Butscha meant to take advantage of a reaction of feeling unfavorable to Charles Mignon, which had set in at le Havre.

This was the cause of this reaction. Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie had entirely ignored those of his former friends who, during his absence, had neglected his wife and children. On hearing that a dinner was to be given at the Villa Mignon, each one flattered himself he would be among the guests, and expected an invitation; but when it was known that only Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the Duke, and the two Parisians were to be asked, there was a loud outcry at the merchant's arrogance; his marked avoidance of seeing anybody, and of ever going down to le Havre, was commented on, and attributed to scorn, on which the whole town avenged itself by casting doubts on Mignon's sudden wealth. By dint of gossip everybody soon ascertained that the money advanced to Vilquin on the Villa had been found by Dumay. This fact gave the most malignant persons grounds for the libelous supposition that Charles had confided to Dumay's known devotion the funds concerning which he anticipated litigation on the part of his so-called partners in Canton. Charles's reticence, for his constant aim was to conceal his wealth, and the gossip of his servants, who had been put on their guard, lent an appearance of truth to these monstrous fables, believed by all who were governed by the spirit of detraction that animates rival traders. In proportion as parochial pride had formerly cried up his immense fortune as one of the makers of le Havre, so now provincial jealousy cast doubts on it.

Butscha, to whom the fishermen of the port owed more than one good turn, desired them to be secret, and to cram their new friend. He was well served. The owner of the boat told Germain that a cousin of his, a sailor, was coming from Marseilles, having just been paid off in consequence of the sale of the brig in which the Colonel had come home. The vessel was being sold by order of one Castagnould, and the cargo—according to the cousin—was worth only three or four hundred thousand francs at most.

"Germain," said Canalis, as the servant was leaving the room, "bring us up some Champagne and some Bordeaux. A member of the legal faculty of Normandy must carry away some memories of a poet's hospitality.—And he has the wit of *le Figaro*," added Canalis, laying his hand on the dwarf's

shoulder; "that *petit-journal* brilliancy must be made to sparkle and foam with the wine of Champagne; we will not spare ourselves either, Ernest! Why, it is two years at least since I last got tipsy," he added, turning to La Brière.

"With wine?—That I can quite understand," replied the clerk. "You get tipsy with yourself every day! In the matter of praise, you drink your fill. You are handsome; you are famous during your lifetime; your conversation is on a level with your genius; and you fascinate all the women, even my master's wife. Loved as you are by the most beautiful Sultana Valideh I ever saw—it is true, I have never seen another—you can, if you choose, marry Mademoiselle de la Bastie.—Why, merely with making this inventory of your present advantages, to say nothing of the future—a fine title, a peerage, an embassy!—I am quite fuddled, like the men who bottle wine for other people to drink."

"All this social magnificence is nothing," replied Canalis, "without that which gives them value—a fortune! Here we are men among men; fine sentiments are delightful in stanzas."

"And in certain *circumstanzas*," said Butscha, with a significant shrug.

"You, a master of the mystery of settlements," said the poet, smiling at the pun, "must know as well as I do that cottage rhymes to nothing better than pottage."

At table Butscha played with signal success the part of le Rigaudin in *La Maison en Loterie*, alarming Ernest, to whom the jests of a lawyer's office were unfamiliar; they are a match for those of the studio. The clerk repeated all the scandal of le Havre, the history of every fortune, of every boudoir, and of all the crimes committed just outside the pale of the law, what is called sailing as close hauled as possible (in Normandy, *se tirer d'affaire comme on peut*). He spared no one, and his spirits rose with the stream of wine he poured down his throat like storm water through a gutter.

"Do you know, La Brière," said Canalis, filling up Butscha's glass, "that this brave boy would be a first-rate secretary to an Ambassador?"

"And cut out his master!" retorted the dwarf with a look at Canalis, of insolence redeemed by the sparkle of carbonic



acid gas. "I have enough spirit of intrigue and little enough gratitude to climb on to your shoulders. A poet supporting an abortion!—Well, it has been seen, and pretty frequently—in libraries. Why, you are staring at me as if I were swallowing swords. Heh! my dear, great genius, you are a very superior man; you know full well that gratitude is a word for idiots; it is to be found in the dictionary, but not in the human heart. I O U is a formula unhonored on the green banks of Parnassus or Pindus. Do you suppose I feel the debt to my master's wife for having brought me up? Why, the whole town has paid it off in esteem, praise, and admiration, the most precious of all coin. I do not see the virtue that is merely an investment for the benefit of one's vanity. Men make a trade of reciprocal services; the word gratitude represents the debit side, that is all.

"As to intrigue, I adore it!—What!" he went on, in reply to a gesture from Canalis, "do you not delight in the faculty which enables a crafty man to get the upper hand of a man of genius, which requires constant observation of the vices and weaknesses of our betters, and a sense of the nick of time for everything? Ask diplomacy whether the triumph of cunning over strength is not the most delightful success there is. If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you would soon be Prime Minister, because it would be to my interest!—Now, would you like a sample of my little talents of that kind? Harken! You love Mademoiselle Modeste to distraction, and you are very right. In my opinion, the girl is a genuine Parisienne, for here and there a Parisienne sprouts in the country. Our Modeste would be a wife to push a man. She has that sort of thing," said he, giving his hand a twirl in the air. "You have a formidable rival in the Duke. Now, what will you give me to pack him off within three days?"

"Let us finish this bottle," said the poet, refilling Butscha's glass.

"You will make me drunk!" said the clerk, swallowing down his ninth glass of champagne. "Is there a bed where I may sleep for an hour? My master is as sober as a camel, the old fox, and Madame Latournelle too. They would both be

hard upon me, and they would have good reason, while I should have lost mine, and I have some work to do."

Then going back to a former subject without any transition, after the manner of a man when he is screwed, he exclaimed—

"And then, what a memory I have! It is a match for my gratitude."

"Butscha!" exclaimed the poet, "just now you said that you had no gratitude; you are contradicting yourself."

"Not at all," said the clerk. "Forgetting almost always means remembering!—Now, then, on we go! I am made to be a secretary."

"And how will you set to work to get rid of the Duke?" asked Canalis, charmed to find the conversation tending naturally to the subjects he aimed at.

"That—is no concern of yours," said Butscha, with a tremendous hiccough.

Butscha rolled his head on his shoulders, and his eyes from Germain to La Brière, and from La Brière to Canalis, in the manner of a man who feels intoxication creeping over him, and wants to know in what esteem he is held; for in the wreck of drunkenness it may be noted that self-esteem is the last sentiment to float.

"Look here, great poet, you are a jolly fellow, you are. Do you take me for one of your readers, you who sent your friend to Paris to procure information concerning the house of Mignon? I humbug, you humbug, we humbug. Well and good; but do me the honor to believe that I am clear-headed enough always to keep as much conscience as I need in my sphere of life. As head clerk to Maître Latournelle my heart is a padlocked dispatch-box, my lips never breathe a word of any paper concerning the clients. I know everything, and I know nothing. And then, passion is no secret: I love Modeste, she is a pupil of mine, she must marry well; and I could get round the Duke if necessary. But you are going to marry——"

"Germain, coffee and liqueurs," said Canalis.

"Liqueurs?" repeated Butscha, holding up a forbidding hand like a too knowing maiden putting aside some little

temptation. "Oh, my poor work! By the way, there is a marriage contract to be drawn up, and my second clerk is as stupid as a matrimonial bargain, and quite capable of p-p-poking a penknife through the bride's personal property. He thinks himself a fine fellow because he measures nearly six-feet—the idiot!"

"Here, this is Crème de Thé, a West Indian liqueur," said Canalis.—"You are Mademoiselle Modeste's adviser——"

"Her adviser?——"

"Well, do you think she loves me?"

"Ye-e-es, more than she loves the Duke," drawled the dwarf, rousing himself from a sort of torpor, which he acted to admiration. "She loves you for your disinterestedness. She told me that for you she felt equal to the greatest sacrifices, to giving up dress, spending only a thousand francs a year, devoting her life to prove to you that in marrying her you would have done a stroke of business. And she is devilish honest [hiccough], I can tell you, and well informed; there is nothing that girl does not know."

"That and three hundred thousand francs," said Canalis.

"Oh! there may be as much as you say," replied the clerk with enthusiasm. "Mignon Papa—and you see he is really a Mignon, a dear papa, that's what I like him for—to marry his only daughter—well, he would strip himself of everything. The Colonel has been accustomed under your Restoration to live on half-pay [hiccough], and he will be quite happy living with Dumay, speculating in a small way at le Havre; he will be sure to give the child his three hundred thousand francs.—Then we must not forget Dumay, who means to leave his fortune to Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton; his birth gives security to the bargain; he never changes his mind, and his fortune is quite equal to his master's. At the same time, since they listen to me at least as much as to you, though I do not talk so much nor so well, I said to them, 'You are putting too much money into your house; if Vilquin leaves it on your hands, there are two hundred thousand francs that will bring you no return. There will be only a hundred thousand francs left to turn over, and that, in my opinion, is

not enough.'—At this moment the Colonel and Dumay are talking it over. Take my word for it, Modeste is rich. The people of the town talk nonsense, they are envious. Why, who in the department has such a portion?" said Butscha, holding up his fingers to count. "Two to three hundred thousand francs in hard cash!" said he, folding down his left thumb with the forefinger of his right hand. "That is for one. The freehold of the Villa Mignon," and he doubled down his left forefinger, "for two; Dumay's fortune for three," he added, ticking it off on the middle finger. "Why, little Mother Modeste is a lady with six hundred thousand francs of her own when the two old soldiers shall have gone aloft to take further orders from God A'mighty."

This blunt and artless communication, broken by sips of liqueur, sobered Canalis as much as it seemed to intoxicate Butscha. To the lawyer's clerk, a mere provincial, this fortune was evidently colossal. He let his head drop on the palm of his right hand, and with the elbow majestically resting on the table, he sat blinking and talking to himself: "In twenty years, at the pace the Code is taking us, melting down fortunes by the process of subdivision, an heiress with six hundred thousand francs will be as rare as disinterestedness in a money-lender. You may say that Modeste will spend at least twelve thousand francs a year, the interest of her fortune; but she is a very nice girl—very nice—very nice. She is as you may say—a poet must have imagery—she is an ermine as knowing as a monkey."

"And what did you tell me?" cried Canalis in an undertone to La Brière. "That she had six millions?"

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "allow me to remark that I could say nothing. I am bound by an oath, and it is perhaps saying more than I ought to tell you——"

"An oath? and to whom?"

"To Monsieur Mignon."

"Why, Ernest! when you know how indispensable fortune is to me"—Butscha was snoring—"you who know my position, and all I should lose in the Rue de Grenelle by marrying—you would have coolly allowed me to plunge in?" said Canalis, turning pale. "But this is a matter between friends;

and our friendship, my boy, is a compact of a far older date than this that the wily Provençal has required of you."

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "I love Modeste too well to——"

"Idiot, take her!" cried the poet. "So break your oath——"

"Do you solemnly promise, on your honor as a man, to forget what I tell you, and to be just the same to me as though I had never confided it to you, come what may?"

"I swear it by the sacred memory of my mother!"

"Well, when I was in Paris, Monsieur Mignon told me that he was very far from having such a colossal fortune as the Mongenods had spoken of. The Colonel intends to give his daughter two hundred thousand francs. But then, Melchior, was the father suspicious? or was he sincere? It is no concern of mine to solve that question. If she should condescend to choose me, Modeste, with nothing, should be my wife."

"A blue-stocking, appallingly learned, who has read everything and knows everything—in theory," cried Canalis, in reply to a protesting gesture of La Brière's; "a spoilt child, brought up in luxury during her early years, and weaned from it for the last five! Oh, my poor friend, pause, consider——"

"Ode and Code!" said Butscha, rousing himself. "You go in for the Ode, and I for the Code; there is only a C between. Code, from coda, a tail! You have treated me handsomely, and I like you—don't have anything to do with the Code.—Listen; a piece of good advice is not a bad return for your wine and your Crème de Thé. Old Mignon is cream too, the cream of good fellows. Well, trot out your horse, he is riding out with his daughter; you can speak frankly to him; ask him about her marriage portion; he will give you a plain answer, and you will see to the bottom of things as sure as I am tipsy and you are a great man; but then there must be no mistake, we leave le Havre together, I suppose? I am to be your secretary, since this little chap, who thinks I am drunk, and is laughing at me, is going to leave you.—Go ahead. March!—and leave him to marry the girl."

Canalis went to dress.

“Not a word; he is rushing on suicide,” said Butscha, as cool as Gobenheim, to La Brière, very quietly; and he telegraphed behind Canalis a signal of scorn familiar to the Paris street boy. “Good-by, Master,” he went on at the top of his voice, “may I go and get forty winks in Madame Amaury’s summer-house?”

“Make yourself at home,” replied the poet.

The clerk, loudly laughed at by Canalis’ three servants, made his way to the summer-house, plunging into flower-beds and baskets with the perverse grace of an insect describing its endless zigzags as it tries to escape through a closed window. He scrambled up into the gazebo, and when the servants had got indoors, he sat down on a wooden bench and gave himself up to the joys of triumph. He had fooled the superior man; not only had he snatched off his mask, but he had seen him untie the strings, and he laughed as an author laughs at his piece, with a full appreciation of the value of this *vis comica*.

“Men are tops!” cried he; “you have only to find the end of the string that is wound round them. Why, anyone could make me faint away by simply saying, ‘Mademoiselle Modeste has fallen off her horse and broken her leg.’”

A few minutes later, Modeste, wearing a bewitching habit of dark-green kerseymere, a little hat with a green veil, doe-skin gloves, and velvet boots, over which the lace frills of her drawers fell gracefully, had mounted her handsomely-saddled pony, and was showing to her father and the Duc d’Hérouville the pretty gift she had just received; she was delighted with it, seeing in it one of those attentions which most flatter a woman.

“Was it you, Monsieur le Duc?” said she, holding out the sparkling end of her whip. “There was a card on it with the words, ‘Guess if you can,’ and a row of dots. Françoise and Madame Dumay ascribe this charming surprise to Butscha; but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to pay for such fine rubies! And my father, on my saying on Sunday evening that I had no whip, sent for that one from Rouen.”

Modeste pointed to a whip in her father's hand with a handle set closely with turquoises, a fashionable novelty then, but now rather common.

"I only wish, Mademoiselle—I would give ten years of my life to have the right of offering such a magnificent jewel," replied the Duke politely.

"Ah! then here is the audacious man," cried Modeste, seeing Canalis come up on horseback. "None but a poet can find such exquisite things.—Monsieur," she went on to Melchior, "my father will be angry with you; you are justifying those who blame you for your extravagance."

"Hah!" cried Canalis simply, "then that is what took La Brière from le Havre to Paris as fast as he could ride."

"Your secretary took such a liberty!" said Modeste, turning pale, and flinging the whip to Françoise Cochet with a vehemence expressive of the deepest contempt. "Give me back that whip, father!"

"The poor boy is lying on his bed broken with fatigue!" Melchior went on, as they followed the girl, who had gone off at a gallop. "You are hard, Mademoiselle. 'I have this chance alone of reminding her of my existence,' was what he said."

"And could you esteem a woman who was capable of preserving keepsakes from every comer?" said Modeste.

Modeste, who was surprised at receiving no reply from Canalis, ascribed his inattention to the sound of the horse's hoofs.

"How you delight in tormenting those who are in love with you!" said the Duke. "Your pride and dignity so entirely belie your vagaries that I am beginning to suspect that you do yourself injustice by deliberately planning your malicious tricks."

"What! you have just discovered that, Monsieur le Duc?" said she, with a laugh. "You have exactly as much insight as a husband!"

For about a kilometer they rode on in silence. Modeste was surprised at being no longer aware of the flaming glances of Canalis, whose admiration for the beauties of the landscape seemed rather more than was natural. On the preceding

evening Modeste had pointed out to the poet a beautiful effect of color in the sunset over the sea, and, finding him as speechless as a mute, had said—

“ Well, do not you see it all? ”

“ I see nothing but your hand,” he had replied.

“ Does Monsieur de la Brière know how to ride? ” Modeste asked, to pique him.

“ He is not a very good horseman, but he goes,” replied the poet, as cold as Gobenheim had been before the Colonel’s return.

As they went along a cross-road, down which Monsieur Mignon turned to go through a pretty valley to a hill overlooking the course of the Seine, Canalis let Modeste and the Duke go forward, slacking his speed so as to bring his horse side by side with the Colonel’s.

“ Monsieur le Comte,” said he, “ you are a frank soldier, so you will regard my openness as a claim to your esteem. When an offer of marriage, with all the too barbarous, or, if you will, too civilized discussions to which it gives rise, is made through a third person, everyone suffers. You and I are both men of perfect discretion, and you, like me, are past the age for surprises, so let us speak as man to man.—I will set the example. I am nine-and-twenty, I have no landed estate, I am an ambitious man. That I ardently admire Mademoiselle Modeste you must have seen. Now, in spite of the faults your charming daughter delights in affecting——”

“ To say nothing of those she really has,” said the Colonel, smiling.

“ I should be glad indeed to make her my wife, and I believe I could make her happy. The whole question of my future life turns on the point of fortune. Every girl who is open to marriage must be loved whatever comes of it; at the same time, you are not the man to get rid of your dear Modeste without a portion, and my position would no more allow of my marrying ‘ for love,’ as the phrase is, than of my proposing to a girl without a fortune at least equal to my own. My salary, and some sinecures, with what I get from the Academy and my writings, come to about thirty thousand francs a year, a fine income for a bachelor. If my wife and



I between us have sixty thousand francs a year, I could continue to live on much the same footing as at present. Have you a million francs to give Mademoiselle Modeste?"

"Oh! Monsieur, we are very far from any agreement," said the Colonel jesuitically.

"Well, then, we have said nothing about the matter—only whistled," said Canalis anxiously. "You will be quite satisfied with my conduct, Monsieur le Comte; I shall be one more of the unfortunate men crushed by that charming young lady. Give me your word that you will say nothing of this to anybody, not even to Mademoiselle Modeste; for," he added, by way of consolation, "some change might occur in my position which would allow of my asking her hand without a settlement."

"I swear it," said the Colonel. "You know, Monsieur, with what exaggerated language the public, in the provinces as in Paris, talk of fortunes made and lost. Success and failure are alike magnified, and we are never so lucky or so unlucky as report says. In business there is no real security but investment in land when cash transactions are settled. I am awaiting with anxious impatience the reports of my various agents; nothing is as yet concluded—neither the sale of my merchandise and my ship, nor my account with China. I shall not for the next ten months know the amount of my capital. However, in Paris, when talking to Monsieur de la Brière, I guaranteed a settlement on my daughter of two hundred thousand francs in money down. I intend to purchase a landed estate and settle it in tail on my grand-children, obtaining for them a grant of my titles and coat-of-arms."

After the first words of this speech Canalis had ceased to listen.

The four riders now came out on a wide road and rode abreast up to the plateau, which commands a view of the rich valley of the Seine towards Rouen, while on the other horizon they could still see the line of the sea.

"Butscha was indeed right, God is a great landscape maker," said Canalis, as he looked down on the panorama, unique among those for which the hills above the Seine are justly famous.

“But it is when out hunting, my dear Baron,” said the Duke, “when nature is roused by a voice, by a stir in the silence, that the scenery, as we fly past, seems most really sublime with the rapid change of effect.”

“The sun has an inexhaustible palette,” said Modeste, gazing at the poet in a sort of bewilderment. On her making a remark as to the absence of mind she observed in Canalis, he replied that he was reveling in his own thoughts, an excuse which writers can make in addition to those common to other men.

“Are we really blest when we transfer our life to the center of the world, and add to it a thousand factitious needs and over-wrought vanities?” said Modeste, as she contemplated the calm and luxuriant champaign which seemed to counsel philosophical quietude.

“Such bucolics, Mademoiselle, are always written on tables of gold,” said the poet.

“And imagined, perhaps, in a garret,” replied the Colonel.

Modeste gave Canalis a piercing look, and saw him flinch; there was a sound of bells in her ears; for a moment everything grew dark before her; then, in a hard, cold tone, she exclaimed—

“Ah! it is Wednesday!”

“It is not with the idea of flattering a merely transient fancy of yours, Mademoiselle,” said the Duc d’Hérouville solemnly—for this little scene, so tragical to Modeste, had given him time for thought—“but, I assure you, I am so utterly disgusted with the world, the Court, and Paris life, that, for my part, with a Duchesse d’Hérouville so full of charms and wit as you are, I could pledge myself to live like a philosopher in my château, doing good to those about me, reclaiming my alluvial flats, bringing up my children——”

“This shall be set down to your credit, Duke,” said Modeste, looking steadily at the noble gentleman. “You flatter me,” she added, “for you do not think me frivolous, and you believe that I have enough resources in myself to live in solitude.—And that perhaps will be my fate,” she added, looking at Canalis with a compassionate expression.

“It is the lot of all small fortunes,” replied the poet.

“Paris requires Babylonian luxury. I sometimes wonder how I have managed to live till now.”

“The King is Providence to you and me,” said the Duke frankly, “for we both live on His Majesty’s bounty. If, since the death of Monsieur le Grand, as Cinq-Mars was called, we had not always held office in our family, we should have had to sell Hérouville to be demolished by the *Bande Noire*. Believe me, Mademoiselle, it is to me a terrible humiliation to mix up financial considerations with the thought of marriage——”

The candor of this avowal, which came from the heart, and the sincerity of this regret, touched Modeste.

“In these days,” said the poet, “nobody in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to commit the folly of marrying a woman for her personal merits; her charm, her character, or her beauty——”

The Colonel looked at Canalis with a strange expression, after studying his daughter, whose face no longer expressed any astonishment.

“Then for a man of honor,” he said, “it is a noble use of riches to devote them to repair the ravages that time has wrought on our old historical families.”

“Yes, papa,” said the girl gravely.

The Colonel asked the Duke and Canalis to dine at the villa, without ceremony, in their riding dress, and set them the example by not changing his for dinner. When, on their return, Modeste went to change her dress, she looked curiously at the trinket that had come from Paris, and that she had so cruelly disdained.

“How exquisitely such work is done nowadays,” said she to Françoise Cochet, who was now her maid.

“And that poor young gentleman, Mademoiselle, ill of a fever——”

“Who told you so?”

“Monsieur Butscha. He came here just now to bid me say you had no doubt found out that he had kept his word on the day he named.”

Modeste went downstairs, dressed with queenly simplicity.

“My dear father,” said she, quite audibly, taking the

Colonel's arm, "will you go and ask after Monsieur de la Brière, and oblige me by taking back his present. You may put it to him that my small fortune, as well as my own taste, prohibits my using such toys as are fit only for a queen or a courtesan. Besides, I can only accept presents from the man I may hope to marry. Beg your excellent young friend to keep the whip till you find yourself rich enough to buy it of him."

"Then my little girl is full of good sense!" said the Colonel, kissing her on the forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation between the Duc d'Hérouville and Madame Mignon to go out on the terrace, where Modeste presently joined him, urged by curiosity, while he believed it was by her desire to become Madame Canalis. Somewhat alarmed at his own audacity in thus executing what a soldier would call "right about face," though, according to the jurisprudence of ambitious souls, every man in his place would have done the same, and just as suddenly, he tried to find some plausible reason as he saw the ill-starred Modeste come out to him.

"Dear Modeste," said he, in insinuating tones, "as we are on such terms of friendship, will you be offended if I point out to you how painful your replies with regard to Monsieur d'Hérouville must be to a man who loves you, and, above all, to a poet, whose soul is a woman, is all nerves, and suffering from the myriad jealousies of a genuine passion. I should be a poor diplomat indeed if I had not understood that your preliminary flirtations, your elaborate recklessness, were the outcome of a plan to study our characters——"

Modeste raised her head with a quick, intelligent, and pretty movement, of a type that may perhaps be traced to certain animals to which instinct gives wonderful grace.

"And so, thrown back on myself, I was no longer deceived by them. I marveled at your subtle wit, in harmony with your character and your countenance. Be satisfied that I never imagined your assumed duplicity to be anything but an outer wrapper, covering the most adorable candor. No, your intelligence, your learning, have left untainted the exquisite innocence we look for in a wife. You are the very

wife for a poet, a diplomatist, a thinker, a man fated to live through hazardous moments, and I admire you as much as I feel attached to you. I entreat you, unless you were merely playing with me yesterday when you accepted the pledges of a man whose vanity will turn to pride if he is chosen by you, whose faults will turn to virtues at your divine touch—I beseech you, do not crush the feeling he has indulged till it is a vice!

“Jealousy in me is a solvent, and you have shown me what its violence is; it is fearful; it eats into everything! Oh! it is not the jealousy of Othello!” said he, in reply to a movement on Modeste’s part. “No, no! I myself am in question; I am spoilt in this regard. You know of the one affection to which I owe the only form of happiness I have ever known—and that very incomplete [he shook his head].

“Love is depicted as a child by every nation, because it cannot be conceived of but as having all life before it. Well, this love of mine had its term fixed by nature; it was still-born. The most intuitive motherliness discerned and soothed this aching spot in my heart, for a woman who feels—who sees—that she is dying to the joys of love, has angelic consideration; the Duchess has never given me a pang of that kind. In ten years not a word, not a look, has failed of its mark. I attach more importance than ordinary people do to words, thoughts, and looks. To me a glance is an infinite possession, the slightest doubt is a mortal poison, and acts instantaneously: I cease to love. In my opinion—which is opposed to that of the vulgar, who revel in trembling, hoping, waiting—love ought to dwell in absolute assurance, childlike, infinite. To me the enchanting purgatory which women delight in inflicting on us with their caprices is an intolerable form of happiness which I will have nothing to say to; to me, love is heaven or hell. Hell I will not have; I feel that I am strong enough to endure the sempiternal blue of Paradise. I give myself unreservedly, I will have no secrets, no doubts, no delusions, in my future life, and I ask for reciprocity. Perhaps I offend you by doubting you! But, remember, I am speaking only of myself——”

“And a great deal,” said Modeste, hurt by all the lancet

points of this harangue, in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu was used as a sledge-hammer, "but it can never be too much; I have a habit of admiring you, my dear poet."

"Well, then, can you promise me the dog-like fidelity I offer you? Is it not fine? Is it not what you wish for?"

"But why, my dear poet, do you not look for a wife who is dumb and blind and something of a fool? I am quite prepared to please my husband in all things; but you threaten to deprive a girl of the very happiness you promise her, to snatch it from her at the slightest movement, the slightest word, the slightest look! You cut the bird's wings and want to see it fly! I knew that poets were accused of inconsistency—Oh! quite unjustly," she added, as Canalis protested by a gesture, "for the supposed fault is merely the result of a vulgar misapprehension of the suddenness of their impulses. Still, I had not thought that a man of genius would devise the contradictory conditions of such a game, and then call it life! You insist on the impossibilities just to have the pleasure of putting me in the wrong, like those enchanters who in fairy tales set tasks to persecuted damsels whom good fairies rescue——"

"In this case true love will be the fairy," said Canalis, rather dryly, seeing that his motive for a separation had been detected by the acute and delicate intelligence which Butscha had put on the scent.

"You, at this moment, my dear poet, are like those parents who inquire as to a girl's fortune before mentioning what their son's will be. You make difficulties with me, not knowing whether you have any right to do so. Love cannot be based on agreements discussed in cold blood. The poor Duke allows himself to be managed with all the submissiveness of Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel, with this difference, that I am not the widow Wadman, though bereaved at this moment of many illusions concerning poetry.—Yes! we hate to believe anything, we girls, that can overthrow our world of fancy!—I had been told all this beforehand!—Oh! you are trying to quarrel with me in a way unworthy of you! I cannot recognize the Melchior of yesterday."

“Because Melchior has detected in you an ambition you still cherish——”

Modeste looked at Canalis from head to foot with an imperial glance.

“But I shall some day be an ambassador and a peer as he is——”

“You take me for a vulgar schoolgirl!” she said, as she went up the steps. But she turned hastily, and added in some confusion, for she felt suffocating—

“That is less insolent than taking me for a fool. The change in your demeanor is due to the nonsense current in le Havre, which Françoise, my maid, has just repeated to me.”

“Oh, Modeste, can you believe that?” cried Canalis, with theatrical emphasis. “Then you think that I want to marry you only for your fortune!”

“If I do you this injustice after your edifying remarks on the hills by the Seine, it lies with you to undeceive me, and thenceforth I will be what you would wish me to be,” said she, blighting him with her scorn.

“If you think you can catch me in that trap, my lady,” said the poet to himself as he followed her, “you fancy me younger than I am. What an ado, to be sure, for a little slut for whose esteem I care no more than for that of the King of Borneo. However, by ascribing to me an ignoble motive she justifies my present attitude. Isn’t she cunning?—La Brière will be saddled, like the little fool that he is; and five years hence we shall laugh at him well, she and I.”

The coolness produced by this dispute between Modeste and Canalis was obvious to all eyes that evening. Canalis withdrew early, on the pretext of La Brière’s illness, leaving the field free to the Master of the Horse. At about eleven Butscha, who had come to escort Madame Latournelle home, said in an undertone to Modeste—

“Was I right?”

“Alas, yes!” said she.

“But have you done as we agreed, and left the door ajar so that he may return?”

“My anger was too much for me,” replied Modeste.

“Such meanness brought the blood to my head, and I told him my mind!”

“Well, so much the better! When you have quarreled so that you cannot speak civilly to each other, even then I undertake to make him so devoted and pressing that you yourself are taken in by him”

“Come, come, Butscha; he is a great poet, a gentleman, and a man of intellect.”

“Your father’s eight millions will be more than all that.”

“Eight millions!” said Modeste.

“My master, who is selling his business, is setting out for Provence to look into Castagnould’s investments as your father’s agent. The sum-total of the contracts for repurchasing the lands of la Bastie amounts to four millions of francs, and your father has consented to every item. Your settlement is to be two millions, and the Colonel allows one for establishing you in Paris with a house and furniture. Calculate.”

“Ah, then I may be Duchesse d’Hérouville,” said Modeste, looking at Butscha.

“But for that ridiculous Canalis, you would have kept *his* whip, as sent by me,” said Butscha, putting in a word for La Brière.

“Monsieur Butscha, do you really expect me to marry the man you may choose?” said Modeste, laughing.

“That worthy young fellow loves as truly as I do; you loved him yourself for a week, and he is a man of genuine heart,” replied the clerk.

“And can he compare with a Crown appointment, do you think? There are but six—the High Almoner, the Chancellor, the Lord Chamberlain, the Master of the Horse, the High Constable, the High Admiral.—But there are no more Lords High Constable.”

“But in six months, Mademoiselle, the people, composed of an infinite number of malignant Butschas, may blow upon all this grandeur. Besides, what does nobility matter in these days? There are not a thousand real noblemen in France. The d’Hérouvilles are descended from an Usher of the Rod under Robert of Normandy. You will have many a vexa-



tion from those two knife-faced old maids.—If you are bent on being a Duchess—well, you belong to Franche Comté, the Pope will have at least as much consideration for you as for the tradespeople, he will sell you a duchy ending in *nia* or *agno*.—Do not trifle with your happiness for the sake of a Crown appointment!”

The reflections indulged in by Canalis during the night were all satisfactory. He could imagine nothing in the world worse than the situation of a married man without a fortune. Still tremulous at the thought of the danger he had been led into by his vanity, which he had pledged, as it were, to Modeste by his desire to triumph over the Duc d'Hérouville, and by his belief in Monsieur Mignon's millions, he began to wonder what the Duchesse de Chaulieu must be thinking of his stay at le Havre, aggravated by five days' cessation from letter-writing, whereas in Paris they wrote each other four or five notes a week.

“And the poor woman is struggling to get me promoted to be Commander of the Legion of Honor, and to the place of Minister to the Grand Duchy of Baden!” cried he.

Forthwith, with the prompt decisiveness which in poets, as in speculators, is the result of a clear intuition of the future, he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

*To Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu.*

“MY DEAR ÉLÉONORE,—You are no doubt astonished at having had no news of me, but my stay here is not merely a matter of health; I also have had to do my duty in some degree to our little friend La Brière. The poor boy has fallen desperately in love with a certain Demoiselle Modeste de la Bastie, a little pale-faced, insignificant thread-paper of a girl, who, by the way, has as a vice a mania for literature, and calls herself poetical to justify the whims, the tantrums, and changes of a pretty bad temper. You know Ernest, he is so easily made a fool of, that I would not trust him alone. Mademoiselle de la Bastie set up a strange flirtation with your Melchior; she was very well inclined to be your rival, though she has lean arms and scraggy shoul-

ders, like most young girls, hair more colorless than Madame de Rochefide's, and a very doubtful expression in her little gray eye. I pulled up this Immodeste's advances pretty short—perhaps rather too roughly; but that is the way of an absorbing passion. What do I care for all the women on earth, who, all put together, are not worth you?

“The people with whom we spend our time, who surround this heiress, are *bourgeois* enough to make one sick. Pity me; I spend my evenings with notaries' clerks, their wives, their cashiers, and a provincial money-lender; wide indeed is the gulf between this and the evenings in the Rue de Grenelle. The father's trumped-up fortune—he has just come home from China—has secured us the company of that omnipresent suitor the Master of the Horse, hungrier for millions than ever, since it will cost six or seven, they say, to reclaim and work the much-talked-of alluvion of Hérouville. The King has no idea what a fatal gift he has made to the little Duke. His Grace, who does not suspect how small a fortune his hoped-for father-in-law possesses, is jealous only of me. La Brière is making his way with his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a screen.

“In spite of Ernest's raptures, I, the poet, think of the substantial; and the information I have gathered as to the gentleman's wealth casts a gloomy hue over our secretary's prospects, for his lady-love has sharp enough teeth to eat a hole in any fortune. Now, if my angel would redeem some of our sins, she would try to find out the truth about this matter, by sending for her banker, Mongenod, and cross-questioning him with the skill that distinguishes her. Monsieur Charles Mignon, formerly a Colonel in the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard, has for seven years been in constant communication with Mongenod's house. They talk here of two hundred thousand francs in settlement, at most; and before making an offer in form for the young lady on Ernest's behalf, I should be glad to have positive data. As soon as the good folks are agreed, I return to Paris. I know a way of bringing the business to a satisfactory conclusion for our lover. All that is needed is to secure permission for Monsieur Mignon's son-in-law to take his title of Count, and no

man is more likely to obtain such a grant than Ernest, in view of his services, especially when seconded by us three—you, the Duke, and myself. With his tastes, Ernest, who will undoubtedly rise to be a Master of the Exchequer, will be perfectly happy living in Paris if he is certain of twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent office, and a wife—poor wretch!

“ Oh, my dear! how I long to see the Rue de Grenelle again! A fortnight’s absence, when it does not kill love, revives the ardor of its early days, and you know, better perhaps than I, all the reasons that make my love eternal. My bones in the tomb will love you still! Indeed, I cannot hold out! If I am compelled to remain ten days longer, I must go to Paris for a few hours.

“ Has the Duke got me rope to hang myself? And you, dear life, shall you have to take the Baden waters this season? The cooing of our *beau ténébreux*, as compared with the accents of happy love—always the same, and true to itself for nearly ten years past—has given me a deep contempt of marriage; I had never seen all this so close to my eyes before. Ah! my dear, what is called wrongdoing is a far closer tie between two souls than the law—is it not? ”

This idea served as the text for two pages of reminiscences and of aspirations of too private a nature for publication.

On the day before Canalis posted this letter, Butscha, who wrote under the name of Jean Jacmin to his imaginary cousin Philoxène, had sent off his answer twelve hours in advance of the poet’s letter. The Duchess, for the last fortnight extremely alarmed and offended by Melchior’s silence, had dictated Philoxène’s letter to her cousin; and now, after reading the clerk’s reply—somewhat too decisive for the vanity of a lady of fifty—had made minute inquiries as to Colonel Mignon’s fortune. Finding herself betrayed, deserted for money, Éléonore gave herself up to a paroxysm of rage, hatred, and cold malignancy. Philoxène, knocking at the door of her mistress’s luxurious room, on going in, found her with tears in her eyes, and stood amazed at this unprecedented phenomenon, which she had never before seen during fifteen years of service.

“We expiate the happiness of ten years in ten minutes!” exclaimed the Duchess.

“A letter from le Havre, Madame.”

Éléonore read Canalis’ effusion of prose without observing Philoxène’s presence, and the maid’s surprise was heightened as she saw the Duchess’s face recover its serenity as she read the letter. If you hold out to a drowning man a pole as thick as a walking stick, he will regard it as the king’s highway to safety; and so the happy Éléonore believed in the poet’s good faith as she perused these sheets in which love and business, lies and truth, elbowed each other.

Just now, when the banker had left her, she had sent for her husband to hinder Melchior’s promotion if there were time yet; but a generous regret came over her that rose to a sublime impulse.

“Poor boy!” thought she, “he has not the smallest thought of ill. He loves me as he did the first day; he tells me everything.—Philoxène!” said she, noticing her head maid loitering about, and affecting to arrange the toilet-table.

“Madame la Duchesse?”

“My hand-glass, child.”

Éléonore looked at herself, noted the razor-fine lines grooving her forehead, but invisible at a distance; and she sighed, for she believed that in that sigh she was taking leave of love. Then she had a man’s thought, above the pettiness of woman—a thought which is sometimes intoxicating; an intoxication which may perhaps account for the clemency of the Semiramis of the North when she made her young and lovely rival Momonoff’s wife.

“Since he has not failed me, I will get the millions and the girl for him,” thought she, “if this little Mademoiselle Mignon is as plain as he says she is.”

Three knocks, delicately rapped out, announced the Duke, for whom his wife herself opened the door.

“Ah! you are better, my dear,” cried he, with the assumed gladness that courtiers so well know how to put on, and by which simpletons are taken in.

“My dear Henri,” said she, “it is really inconceivable that you should not by this time have secured Melchior’s

appointment, after sacrificing yourself for the King during your year's ministry, knowing that it would scarcely endure so long!"

The Duke glanced at Philoxène; and the maid, by an almost imperceptible jerk of the head, showed him the letter from le Havre on the dressing-table. "You would be bored to death in Germany, and quarrel with Melchior before your return," said the Duke artlessly.

"Why?"

"Well, would you not always be together?" replied the erewhile Ambassador with comical candor.

"Oh! no," said she; "I mean to get him married."

"If d'Hérouville is to be believed, our dear Canalis has not waited for your good offices," replied the Duke, smiling. "Grandlieu yesterday read me some passages of a letter to him from the Master of the Horse, which was no doubt edited by his aunt to come to your ears; for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the look-out for a fortune, knows that Grandlieu and I play whist together almost every evening. That good little d'Hérouville invites the Prince de Cadignan to a Royal Hunt in Normandy, begging him to persuade the King to go, so as to turn the damsel's head when she finds herself the object of such a chivalrous procession. In fact, two words from Charles X. would settle everything. D'Hérouville says the girl is incomparably lovely."

"Henri, let us go to le Havre!" cried the Duchess, interrupting her husband.

"But on what excuse?" said he gravely—a man who had been in the intimate confidence of Louis XVIII.

"I never saw a hunt."

"That would be all very well if the King should be there, but to go so far for a hunt would be ridiculous; and he will not go, I have just spoken to him about it."

"MADAME perhaps would go——"

"That is a better plan," said the Duke; "and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse may help you to get her away from Rosny. Then the King would make no objection to his hounds being taken out.—But do not go to le Havre, my dear," said the Duke, in a paternal tone; "it would make you conspicuous.

Look here; this, I think, will be a better plan. Gaspard has his Château of Rosebray on the further side of the forest of Brotonne; why not give him a hint to receive all the party there?"

"Through whom?"

"Why, his wife the Duchess, who attends the Holy Table with Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, might ask Gaspard to do it if the old maid hinted it to her."

"You are the dearest man!" said Éléonore. "I will write two lines to the old lady, and to Diane; for we must have hunting-suits made. The little hat, now I think of it, makes one look very much younger.—Did you win yesterday at the English Embassy?"

"Yes," said the Duke; "I wiped out my score."

"And, above all, Henri, set everything aside till Melchior's two promotions are settled."

After writing a few lines to the fair Diane de Maüfrigneuse, and a note to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Éléonore flung this reply like the smack of a horse-whip across Canalis' lies:—

*To Monsieur le Baron de Canalis.*

"MY DEAR POET,—Mademoiselle de la Bastie is beautiful; Mongenod assures me that her father has eight millions of francs; I had thought of making her your wife, so I am deeply annoyed by your want of confidence in me. If before you started for le Havre, you aimed at getting La Brière married to her, I cannot imagine your not telling me so plainly before you went. And why pass a fortnight without writing a line to a friend so easily alarmed as I am?"

"Your letter came a little late; I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior; you try to be cunning with us. That is not right. Even the Duke is amazed at your behavior; he thinks you not quite gentlemanly—which casts a doubt on the virtue of your lady mother.

"Now, I want to see things for myself. I shall, I believe, have the honor of attending MADAME to the hunt arranged by the Duc d'Hérouville for Mademoiselle de la Bastie. I will contrive that you shall be invited to stay at Rosebray,

as the hunt will probably take place at the Duc de Verneuil's.

“Believe me, none the less, my dear poet, your friend for life,  
ÉLÉONORE.”

“There, Ernest,” said Canalis, tossing this letter, which arrived at breakfast time, across the table in La Brière's face. “That is the two thousandth love-letter I have received from that woman, and there is not one single *tu*. The noble Éléonore never compromised herself further than what you find there.—Get married, and make haste about it! The worst marriage in the world is more tolerable than the lightest of these halts.—Well, I am the veriest Nicodemus that ever dropped from the moon. Modeste has millions; she is lost to me forever; for no one ever comes back from the poles, where we now are, to the tropics where we dwelt three days ago! Besides, I have all the more reason to wish for your triumph over the little Duke, because I told the Duchesse de Chaulieu that I came here only for your sake; so now I shall work for you.”

“Alas! Melchior, Modeste must need have so superior, so mature a character, and such a noble mind, to resist the spectacle of the Court, and all the splendor so skillfully displayed in her honor and glory by the Duke, that I cannot believe in the existence of such perfection; and yet—if she is still the Modeste of her letters, there may be a hope——”

“You are a happy fellow, young Boniface, to see the world and your lady-love through such green spectacles!” exclaimed Canalis, going out to walk in the garden.

The poet, caught between two falsehoods, could not make up his mind what to do next.

“Play the game by the rules, and you lose!” cried he, as he sat in the summer-house. “Every man of sense would undoubtedly have acted as I did four days ago, and have crept out of the trap in which I found myself. For in such a case you don't wait to untie the knots; you break through everything!—Come, I must be cold, calm, dignified, hurt. Honor will not allow of any other demeanor. English rigidity is the only way to recover Modeste's respect. After all, if I only get out of the scrape by falling back on my

old felicity, my ten years' fidelity will be rewarded. Éléonore will find me a suitable match."

The hunt was destined to be the rallying point of all the passions brought into play by the Colonel's fortune and his daughter's beauty. There was a sort of truce among the contending parties during the few days needed to prepare this solemn act of forestry; the drawing-room in the Villa Mignon had the peaceful appearance of a very united family party. Canalis, intrenched in his part of a much-injured man, made a display of courtesy; he put aside his pretentiousness, gave no more specimens of oratorical talent, and was charming, as clever men are when they shed their affectations. He discussed the money-market with Gobenheim, war with the Colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, and house-keeping with Madame Latournelle, trying to win them over to La Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville frequently left the field free to the two friends, as he was obliged to go to Rosebray to consult the Duc de Verneuil and superintend the execution of the orders issued by the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan.

Meanwhile, the comic element was not lacking. Modeste found herself between the disparagement Canalis tried to cast on the Duke's gallant attentions, and the exaggerated views of the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, who came every evening. Canalis pointed out to Modeste that, far from being the heroine of the day, she would be scarcely noticed. MADAME would be attended by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the daughter-in-law of the Master of the Hounds, by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and some other ladies of the Court, and among them a mere girl would produce no sensation. Some officers would, no doubt, be invited from the garrison at Rouen, etc. Hélène was never tired of repeating to the girl, whom she looked upon as her sister-in-law, that she would, of course, be presented to MADAME; that the Duc de Verneuil would certainly invite her and her father to stay at Rosebray; that if the Colonel had any favor to ask of the King—such as a peerage—this would be an unique opportunity, for they did not despair of getting the King there



on the third day; that she would be surprised at the charming reception she would meet with from the handsomest women of the Court, the Duchesses de Chaulieu, de Mauffrigneuse, de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, etc.; Modeste's prejudices against the Faubourg Saint-Germain would disappear—and so forth, and so forth. It was a most amusing little warfare, with its marches and counter marches and strategy, which the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim and Butscha looked on at, and enjoyed, saying among themselves all manner of hard things about the nobility, as they watched their elaborate, cruel, and studied meanness.

The assurances of the d'Hérouville faction were justified by an invitation, in the most flattering terms, from the Duc de Verneuil and the Master of the King's Hounds to Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie and his daughter to be present at a Royal Hunt at Rosembray on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th of November.

La Brière, oppressed by gloomy presentiments, reveled in Modeste's presence in that spirit of concentrated avidity whose bitter joys are known only to lovers irrevocably and forever discarded. The flashes of happiness in his inmost self, mingled with melancholy reflections on the same theme, "She is lost to me!" made the poor youth a pathetic spectacle, all the more touching because his countenance and person were in harmony with this depth of feeling. There is nothing more poetical than such a living elegy that has eyes, that walks, and sighs without rhyming.

Finally, the Duc d'Hérouville came to arrange for Modeste's journey. After crossing the Seine, she was to proceed in the Duke's traveling carriage with his aunt and sister. The Duke was perfect in his courtesy: he invited Canalis and La Brière, telling them, as he told Monsieur Mignon, that they would find hunters at their service.

The Colonel asked his daughter's three lovers to breakfast on the day of the departure. Then Canalis tried to execute a scheme that had ripened in his mind during the last few days—namely, to reconquer Modeste, and to trick the Duchess, the Master of the Horse, and La Brière. A graduate in diplomacy could not remain bogged in such a

position as that in which he found himself. La Brière, on his part, had made up his mind to bid Modeste an eternal farewell. Thus each suitor, as he foresaw the conclusion of a struggle that had been going on for three weeks, proposed to put in a last word, like a pleader to the judge before sentence is pronounced.

After dinner the day before, the Colonel took his daughter by the arm and impressed on her the necessity for coming to a decision.

“Our position with the d’Hérouville family would be intolerable at Rosembray. Do you want to be a duchess?” he asked Modeste.

“No, father,” she replied.

“Then do you really love Canalis——?”

“Certainly not, papa; a thousand times, no!” said she, with childish irritability.

The Colonel looked at her with a sort of glee.

“Ah! I have not influenced you,” cried the kind father. “But I may tell you now that even in Paris I had chosen my son-in-law when, on my impressing on him that I had no fortune, he threw his arms round me, saying that I had lifted a hundredweight from his heart.”

“Of whom are you speaking?” asked Modeste, coloring.

“Of the man of solid virtues and sound morals,” said he, mockingly repeating the phrase which, on the day of his return, had scattered Modeste’s dreams.

“Oh, I am not thinking of him, papa! Leave me free to refuse the Duke myself; I know him, I know how to soothe him——”

“Then your choice is made?”

“Not yet. I still have to guess a few syllables in the riddle of my future; but after having had a glimpse of the Court, I will tell you all my secret at Rosembray.”

“You will join the hunt, will you not?” said the Colonel to Ernest, whom he saw coming down the path where he was walking with Modeste.

“No, Colonel,” replied Ernest. “I have come to take leave of you and of Mademoiselle. I am going back to Paris.”

"You have no curiosity?" said Modeste, interrupting him, and looking at the bashful youth.

"Nothing is needed to keep me," said he, "but the expression of a wish I hardly hope for."

"If that is all, it will give me pleasure, at any rate," said the Colonel, as he went forward to meet Canalis, leaving his daughter alone for a moment with the hapless Ernest.

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, looking up at her with the courage of despair; "I have a petition to make."

"To me?"

"Let me depart forgiven! My life can never be happy; I must endure the remorse of having lost my happiness, by my own fault no doubt; but at least——"

"Before we part forever," replied Modeste, interrupting him *à la* Canalis, "I want to know one thing only; and though you once assumed a disguise, I do not think that you will now be such a coward as to deceive me——"

At the word "coward" Ernest turned pale.

"You are merciless!" he exclaimed.

"Will you be frank with me?"

"You have the right to ask me such a humiliating question," said he, in a voice made husky by the violent beating of his heart.

"Well, then, did you read my letters out to Monsieur de Canalis?"

"No, Mademoiselle; and though I gave them to the Colonel to read, it was only to justify my love, by showing him how my affection had had birth, and how genuine my efforts had been to cure you of your fancy."

"But what put this ignoble masquerading into your head?" she asked, with a kind of impatience.

La Brière related, in all its details, the scene to which Modeste's first letter had given rise, and the challenge which had resulted from Ernest's high opinion in favor of a young lady yearning for glory, as a plant strives for its share of the sunshine.

"Enough," said Modeste, concealing her agitation. "If you have not my heart, Monsieur, you have my highest esteem."

This simple speech made La Brière quite dizzy. He felt himself totter, and leaned against a shrub, like a man whose senses are failing him. Modeste, who had walked away, turned her head and hastily came back.

“What is the matter?” she exclaimed, taking him by the hand to save him from falling.

Modeste felt his hand like ice, and saw a face as white as a lily; all the blood had rushed to his heart.

“Forgive me, Mademoiselle,—I had fancied myself so despised——”

“Well,” said she, with haughty scorn, “I did not say that I loved you.”

And she again left La Brière, who, notwithstanding this hard speech, thought he was walking on the upper air. The earth felt soft beneath his feet, the trees seemed decked with flowers, the sky was rosy, and the air blue, as in the temples of Hymen at the close of a fairy drama that ends happily. In such circumstances, women are Janus-like, they see what is going on behind them without turning round; and Modeste saw in her lover’s expression the unmistakable symptoms of a love such as Butscha’s, which is beyond a doubt the *ne plus ultra* of a woman’s desire. And the high value attached by La Brière to her esteem was to Modeste an infinitely sweet experience.

“Mademoiselle,” said Canalis, leaving the Colonel, and coming to meet Modeste, “in spite of the small interest you take in my sentiments, it is a point of honor with me to wipe out a stain from which I have too long suffered. Here is what the Duchess wrote to me five days after my arrival here.”

He made Modeste read the first few lines of the letter, in which the Duchess said that she had seen Mongenod, and wished that Melchior should marry Modeste; then having torn off the rest, he placed them in her hand.

“I cannot show you the remainder,” said he, putting the paper in his pocket; “but I intrust these few lines to your delicacy, that you may be able to verify the handwriting. The girl who could ascribe to me such ignoble sentiments is quite capable of believing in some collusion, some stratagem. This may prove to you how much I care to convince you

that the difference between us was not based on the vilest interest on my part. Ah! Modeste," he went on, with tears in his voice, "your poet—Madame de Chaulieu's poet—has not less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You will see the Duchess; suspend your judgment of me till then." And he left Modeste quite disconcerted.

"On my word! They are all angels," said she to herself. "All too fine for marriage! Only the Duke is a human being."

"Mademoiselle Modeste, this hunt makes me very uneasy," said Butscha, appearing on the scene with a parcel under his arm. "I dreamed that your horse ran away with you, so I have been to Rouen to get you a Spanish snaffle; I have been told that a horse can never get it between his teeth. I implore you to use it; I have shown it to the Colonel, who has thanked me more than the thing is worth."

"Poor dear Butscha!" cried Modeste, touched to tears by this motherly care.

Butscha went off skipping like a man who has suddenly heard of the death of an old uncle leaving a fortune.

"My dear father," said Modeste, on returning to the drawing-room, "I should like very much to have that handsome whip; supposing you were to offer to exchange with Monsieur de la Brière—that whip for your picture by Ostade?"

Modeste cast a side glance at Ernest while the Colonel made this proposal, standing in front of the picture—the only thing he possessed as a memorial of the campaigns he had fought in; he had bought it of a citizen of Ratisbon. And seeing the eagerness with which Ernest rushed from the room, "He will attend the hunt," said she to herself.

Thus, strange to say, Modeste's three lovers all went to Rosembray with hearts full of hope, and enraptured by her adorable charms.

Rosembray, an estate recently purchased by the Duc de Verneuil with the money that fell to his share of the thousand million francs voted to legitimize the sale of national property, is remarkable for a château comparable for mag-

nificence with those of Mesnière and Balleroy. This noble and imposing mansion is reached by an immense avenue of ancestral elms four rows deep, and across a vast courtyard on a slope, like that of Versailles, with a splendid iron screen and two gate lodges, and surrounded by large orange trees in tubs. The façade to this *cour d'honneur* displays two stories of nineteen windows in each, between two wings at right angles—tall windows with small panes, set in carved stone arches, and separated by reeded pilasters. A cornice and balustrade screen an Italian roof, whence rise stone chimneys marked by trophies of arms, Rosembray having been built in the reign of Louis XIV. by a farmer-general named Cottin. The front towards the park differs from this, having a center block of five windows projecting from the main building, with columns and a noble pediment. The Marigny family, to whom the possessions of this Cottin came by marriage with his sole heiress, had a group representing Dawn executed for this pediment by Coysevox. Below it two genii support a scroll, on which this motto is inscribed in honor of the King, instead of the old family device: *Sol nobis benignus*. The great Louis had made a Duke of the Marquis de Marigny, one of his most insignificant favorites.

From the top of the semicircular double flight of steps there is a view over a large lake, as long and wide as the grand canal of Versailles, starting from the bottom of a slope of turf worthy of the most English lawn, its banks dotted with clumps displaying the brightest autumn flowers. Beyond, on each side, a French formal parterre spreads its squared beds and paths—pages written in the most majestic style of Le Nôtre. These two gardens are set in a border of wood and shrubbery, extending the whole length to the extent of thirty acres, and cleared in places in the English fashion under Louis XV. The view from the terrace is shut in beyond by a forest belonging to Rosembray, adjoining two demesnes, one belonging to the nation, and one to the Crown. It would be hard to find a more beautiful landscape.

Modeste's arrival caused some sensation in the avenue when the carriage was seen with the royal livery of France, escorted by the Master of the Horse, the Colonel, Canalis, and

La Brière, all riding, and preceded by an outrider in the Royal livery; behind them came ten servants, among them the Colonel's negro and mulatto, and his elegant britska, in which were the two ladies' maids and the luggage. The first carriage was drawn by four horses mounted by *tigers*, dressed with the spruce perfection insisted on by the Master of the Horse—often better served in such matters than the King himself.

Modeste, as she drove up and saw this minor Versailles, was dazzled by the magnificence of these great folk; she was suddenly conscious of having to meet these famous Duchesses; she dreaded seeming affected, provincial, or parvenu, lost her head completely, and repented of ever having wished for this hunting party.

When the carriage stopped, Modeste happily saw before her an old man in a fair, frizzy wig, with small curls, whose calm, smooth, full face wore a paternal smile and an expression of monastic joviality, to which a half downcast look lent something like dignity. The Duchess, a woman of deep devotion, the only daughter of a very wealthy President of the Supreme Court, who had died in 1800, was the mother of four children: very thin and erect, she bore some resemblance to Madame Latournelle, if imagination could be persuaded to embellish the lawyer's wife with the graces of a noble lady-Prioress.

"Ah! how do you do, dear Hortense?" said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, embracing the Duchess with all the sympathy that was a tie between these two proud spirits; "allow me to introduce to you and to our dear Duke, Mademoiselle de la Bastie, who is a little angel."

"We have heard so much about you, Mademoiselle," said the Duchess, "that we have been most eager to have you here."

"We can but regret our lost time," added the Duc de Verneuil, bowing with gallant admiration.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie," added the Master of the Horse, taking the Colonel by the arm, and leading him up to the Duke and Duchess with a tinge of respect in his tone and manner.

The Colonel bowed to the Duchess, the Duke gave him his hand.

“You are very welcome, Monsieur le Comte,” said Monsieur de Verneuil. “You are the owner of many treasures,” he added, glancing at Modeste.

The Duchess drew Modeste’s hand through her arm and led her into a vast drawing-room, where half a score of women were sitting in groups round the fire. The men, led by the Duke, went to walk on the terrace, excepting only Canalis, who went in to pay his respects to the superb Éléonore. She, seated before a tapestry frame, was giving Mademoiselle de Verneuil some hints as to shading.

If Modeste had thrust her finger through with a needle when laying her hand on a cushion, she could not have felt a keener shock than she received from the icy glance, haughty and contemptuous, that the Duchesse de Chaulieu bestowed on her. From the first instant she saw no one but this woman, and guessed who she was. To know to what a pitch the cruelty can go of those sweet creatures who are exalted by our passion, women must be seen together. Modeste might have disarmed anyone but Éléonore by her amazed and involuntary admiration; for if she had not known her rival’s age, she would have taken her to be a woman of six-and-thirty; but there were greater surprises in store for her!

The poet found himself flung against the wrath of a great lady. Such anger is the most ruthless Sphinx; the face is beaming, all else is savage. Even kings do not know how to reduce the stronghold of exquisitely cold politeness which a mistress can then hide under steel armor. The lovely woman’s countenance smiles, and at the same time the steel strikes home: the hand is of steel, the arm, the body, all is steel. Canalis tried to clutch this steel, but his fingers slipped over it as his words slipped from her heart. And the gracious face, the gracious phrases, the gracious manners of the Duchess, concealed from every eye the steel of her cold fury—down to twenty-five degrees below zero. The sight of Modeste’s supreme beauty, heightened by her journey, the appearance of the girl, as well dressed as Diane de



Maufrigneuse, had fired the powders that reflection had stored up in *Éléonore's* brain.

All the women had gone to the window to see the wonder of the day step out of the carriage, followed by her three lovers.

“Do not let us show that we are so curious,” said *Madame de Chaulieu*, struck to the heart by *Diane's* exclamation, “She is divine! Where can such a creature have dropped from?”

And they had fled back to the drawing-room, where each one had composed her countenance, while the *Duchesse de Chaulieu* felt in her heart a thousand vipers all crying at once to be satisfied.

*Mademoiselle d'Hérouville* remarked in an undertone, and with marked meaning, to the *Duchesse de Verneuil*—

“*Éléonore* is not cordial in her reception of her great *Melchior*.”

“The *Duchesse de Maufrigneuse* thinks that there is a coolness between them,” replied *Laure de Verneuil* simply. This phrase, so often spoken in the world of fashion, is full of meaning. We feel in it the icy polar blast.

“Why?” asked *Modeste* of the charming girl who had left the Convent of the Sacred Heart not more than two months since.

“The great man,” replied the *Duchess*, signing to her daughter to be silent, “left her for a fortnight without writing a word to her, after setting out for *le Havre*, and saying that he had gone for his health.”

*Modeste* gave a little start which struck *Laure*, *Hélène*, and *Mademoiselle d'Hérouville*.

“And meanwhile,” the devout *Duchess* went on, “she was getting him appointed Commander of the Legion of Honor and Minister to *Baden*.”

“Oh, it is very wrong of *Canalis*, for he owes everything to her,” said *Mademoiselle d'Hérouville*.

“Why did not *Madame de Chaulieu* come to *le Havre*?” asked *Modeste* guilelessly of *Hélène*.

“My child,” said the *Duchesse de Verneuil*, “she would let herself be killed without speaking a word. Look at her.

What a queen! With her head on the block she would still smile, like Mary Stuart—indeed, our handsome Éléonore has the same blood in her veins.”

“And she did not write to him?” said Modeste.

“Diane told me,” replied the Duchess, prompted to further confidences by an elbow nudge from Mademoiselle d’Hérouville, “that she had sent a very cutting answer to the first letter Canalis wrote to her about ten days ago.”

This statement made Modeste color with shame for Canalis; she longed not to crush him under her feet, but to revenge herself by a piece of mischief more cruel than a poniard thrust. She looked proudly at Madame de Chaulieu. That glance was gilded with eight millions of francs.

“Monsieur Melchior!” said she.

All the women looked up, first at the Duchess, who was talking to Canalis over the work-frame, then at this young girl, so ill bred as to disturb two lovers who were settling their quarrel—a thing which is never done in any rank of life.

Diane de Maufrigneuse gave her head a little toss, as much as to say, “The child is in her rights.”

Finally, the twelve women smiled at each other, for they were all jealous of a woman of fifty-six who was still handsome enough to dip her hand in the common treasury and steal a young woman’s share. Melchior glanced at Modeste with a feverish irritability, the hasty look of a master to a servant, while the Duchess bent her head with the air of a lioness interrupted at her meal; her eyes, fixed on the canvas, shot flames of fire, almost red-hot, at the poet while she sifted his very soul with her epigrams, for each sentence was a vengeance for a triple injury.

“Monsieur Melchior!” repeated Modeste, in a voice that asserted its right to be heard.

“What is it, Mademoiselle?” asked the poet.

He was obliged to rise, but he stood still halfway between the work-frame, which was near the window, and the fireplace, by which Modeste was sitting on the Duchesse de Verneuil’s sofa. What cruel reflections were forced on the ambitious man when he met Éléonore’s steady eye. If he should obey Mo-

deste, all was over forever between the poet and his protectress. If he paid no heed to the girl, it would be an avowal of his serfdom, he would lose the advantages gained by five-and-twenty days of meanness, and fail in the simplest rules of gentlemanly politeness. The greater the folly, the more imperatively the Duchess insisted on it. Modeste's beauty and fortune, set in the opposite scale to Éléonore's influence and established rights, made this hesitancy between the man and his honor as terrible to watch as the peril of a matador in the ring. A man never knows such frightful palpitations as those that seemed to threaten Canalis with an aneurism, anywhere but in front of the gaming-table, where his fortune or his ruin is settled within five minutes.

"Mademoiselle d'Hérouville made me get out of the carriage in such a hurry," said Modeste to Canalis, "that I dropped my handkerchief——"

Canalis gave a highly significant shrug.

"And," she went on, in spite of this impatient gesture, "I had, tied to it, the key of a blotting-case, containing an important fragment of a letter; will you be good enough, Melchior, to ask for it——"

Between an angel and a tigress, equally irate, Canalis, who had turned pale, hesitated no longer; the tigress seemed the less dangerous. He was on the point of committing himself when La Brière appeared in the doorway, seeming to Canalis something like the archangel Michael descended from heaven.

"Here, Ernest, Mademoiselle de la Bastie wants you," said the poet, hastily retreating to his chair by the work-frame.

Ernest, on his part, went at once to Modeste without bowing to anyone else; he saw her alone, received her instructions with visible joy, and ran off with the unconfessed approbation of every woman present.

"What a position for a poet!" said Modeste to Hélène, pointing to the worsted work at which the Duchess was stitching furiously.

"If you speak to her, if you once look at her, all is ended," said Éléonore to Melchior in a low tone, for his *mezzo termine*

had not satisfied her. "And, mind, when I am absent I shall leave other eyes to watch you."

As she spoke, Madame de Chaulieu, a woman of medium height, but rather too fat—as all women are who are still handsome when past fifty—rose, walked towards the group with which Diane de Maufrigneuse was sitting, stepping out with small feet as firm and light as a fawn's. Under her full forms the exquisite refinement was conspicuous with which women of that type are gifted, and which gives them that vigorous nervous system that controls and animates the development of the flesh. It was impossible otherwise to account for her light step, which was amazingly dignified. Only those women whose quarterings of nobility date back to Noah, like Éléonore's, know how to be majestic in spite of being as large as a farmer's wife. A philosopher might, perhaps, have pitied Philoxène, while admiring the happy arrangement of the bodice and the careful details of a morning dress worn with the elegance of a queen and the ease of a girl. Boldly wearing her own abundant and undyed hair, plaited on the top of her head in a coronet like a tower, Éléonore proudly displayed her white neck, her finely shaped bust and shoulders, her dazzling bare arms, ending in hands famous for their beauty. Modeste, like all the Duchess's rivals, saw in her one of those women of whom the others say, "She is past mistress of us all!"

In fact, everyone recognized her as one of those few great ladies who are now become so rare in France. Any attempt to describe how majestic was the carriage of her head, how refined and delicate this or that curve of her neck, what harmony there was in her movements, what dignity in her mien, what nobleness in the perfect agreement of every detail with the whole result in the little arts that are a second nature, and make a woman holy and supreme,—this would be to try to analyze the sublime. We delight in such poetry, as in that of Paganini, without seeking the means, for the cause is a soul making itself visible.

The Duchess bowed, saluting Héléne and her aunt; then she said to Diane in a clear, bright voice without a trace of emotion—

“Is it not time to dress, Duchess?”

And she swept out of the room, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d’Hérouville, each giving her an arm. She was speaking in a low voice as she went away with the old maid, who pressed her to her heart, saying, “You are quite charming!” which was as much as to say, “I am wholly yours in return for the service you have just done us.”

Mademoiselle d’Hérouville returned to the drawing-room to play her part as spy, and her first glance told Canalis that the Duchess’s last words were no vain threat. The apprentice to diplomacy felt he knew too little of this minor science for so severe a struggle, and his wit served him at any rate so far as to enable him to assume a straightforward, if not a dignified attitude. When Ernest returned with Modeste’s handkerchief, he took him by the arm and led him out on the lawn.

“My dear fellow,” said he, “I am, of all men, not the most happy, but the most ridiculous. So I have recourse to you to help me out of the wasps’ nest I have got into.—Modeste is a demon; she saw my embarrassment, she mocks at it; she has just spoken to me of two lines of a letter of Madame de Chaulieu’s that I was fool enough to trust her with. If she were to show them, I could never make it up again with Éléonore. So, pray, at once ask Modeste for that paper, and tell her from me that I have no views—no pretensions to her hand; I rely on her delicacy, on her honesty as a lady, to behave to me as though we had never met; I entreat her not to speak to me; beseech her to vouchsafe to be implacable, though I dare not hope that her spite will move her to a sort of jealous wrath that would serve my ends to a miracle. . . . Go, I will wait here.”

On re-entering the room, Ernest de la Brière saw there a young officer of Havré’s company of the Guards, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that MADAME was obliged to be present at the opening of the session. This constitutional solemnity was, as is well known, a very important function. Charles X. pronounced a speech in the presence of his whole family, the Dauphiness and MADAME being present in their seats. The choice of the envoy charged

with expressing the Princess's regrets was a compliment to Diane. She was supposed to be the immediate object of this fascinating youth's adoration; he was the son of a Minister of State, gentleman-in-waiting, and hopeful of high destinies, as being an only son and heir to an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufriqueuse, however, only accepted the Viscount's attentions in order to throw light on the age of Madame de Sérizy, who, according to the chronicle repeated behind fans, had won from her the heart of handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

"You, I hope, will do us the pleasure of remaining at Rosebray," said the severe Duchesse to the young man.

While keeping her ears open to evil-speaking, the pious lady shut her eyes to the peccadilloes of her guests, who were carefully paired by the Duke; for no one knows what such excellent women will tolerate on the plea of bringing a lost sheep back to the fold by treating it with indulgence.

"We reckoned without the Constitutional Government," said the Duc d'Hérouville, "and Rosebray loses a great honor, Madame la Duchesse——"

"We shall feel all the more at our ease," observed a tall, lean old man of about seventy-five, dressed in blue cloth, and keeping on his hunting cap by leave of the ladies.

This personage, who was very like the Duc de Bourbon, was no less a man than the Prince de Cadignan, the Master of the Hounds, and one of the last of the French *Grands Seigneurs*.

Just as La Brière was about to slip behind the sofa to beg a minute's speech with Modeste, a man of about eight-and-thirty came in, short, fat, and common-looking.

"My son, the Prince de Loudon," said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not control an expression of amazement on her youthful features as she saw the man who now bore the name which the General of the Vendée Cavalry had made so famous by his daring and by his execution.

The present Duc de Verneuil was the third son taken by his father into exile, and the only survivor of four children.

"Gaspard," said the Duchess, calling her son to her. The Prince obeyed his mother, who went on as she introduced Modeste——

“Mademoiselle de la Bastie, my dear.”

The heir presumptive, whose marriage to Desplein's only daughter was a settled thing, bowed to the girl without seeming struck by her beauty, as his father had been. Modeste thus had an opportunity of comparing the young men of to-day with the old men of the past; for the old Prince de Cadignan had already made her two or three very pretty speeches, proving that he was not less devoted to women than to Royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, Madame de Chaulieu's eldest son, noted for the style which combines impertinence with easy freedom, had, like the Prince de Loudon, greeted Modeste almost cavalierly.

The reason of this contrast between the sons of the fathers may, perhaps, lie in the fact that the heirs no longer feel themselves to be objects of importance, as their ancestors were, and excuse themselves from the duties of power, since they no longer have anything but its shadow. The fathers still have the fine manners inherent in their vanished grandeur, like mountains gilded by the sunshine, when all around them is in darkness.

At last Ernest succeeded in saying two words to Modeste, who rose.

“My little beauty!” said the Duchess, as she pulled a bell, thinking that Modeste was going to change her dress, “you shall be taken to your rooms.”

Ernest went with Modeste to the foot of the great staircase to make the unhappy Melchior's request, and he tried to touch her by describing the poet's miseries.

“He loves her, you see! He is a captive who thought he could break his chain.”

“Love! In a man who calculates everything so closely?” retorted Modeste.

“Mademoiselle, you are at the beginning of your life; you do not know its narrow places. Every sort of inconsistency must be forgiven to a man who places himself under the dominion of a woman older than himself, for he is not responsible. Consider how many sacrifices Canalis has offered to that divinity! how he has sown too much seed to scorn the harvest; the Duchess represents to him ten years of devotion

and of happiness. You had made the poet forget everything, for, unhappily, he has more vanity than pride; he knew not what he was losing till he saw Madame de Chaulieu again. If you knew Canalis, you would help him. He is a mere child, and is spoiling his life for ever.—You say he calculates everything, but he calculates very badly, like all poets indeed—creatures of impulse, full of childishness, dazzled, like children, by all that shines, and running after it! He has been fond of horses, of pictures; he has yearned for glory; he sells his pictures to get armor and furniture of the style of the Renaissance and of Louis XV.; he now has a grudge against the Government. Admit that his whims are on a grand scale?”

“That will do,” said Modeste. “Come,” she added, as she saw her father, and beckoned to him to ask him to accompany her, “I will give you that scrap of paper; and you can take it to the great man, and assure him of my entire consent to all he wishes, but on one condition. I beg you to give him my best thanks for the pleasure I have enjoyed in seeing him perform for my sole benefit one of the finest pieces of the German theater. I know now that Goethe’s *chef-d’œuvre* is neither *Faust* nor *Egmont*”—and, as Ernest looked at the sprightly girl with a puzzled expression—“it is *Torquato Tasso*,” she added. “Desire Monsieur Canalis to read it once more,” she went on, smiling. “I particularly desire that you will repeat this to your friend word for word, for it is not an epigram; it is the justification of his conduct—with this difference, that I hope he will become quite sane, thanks to his *Éléonore’s* folly.”

The Duchess’s head waiting-maid led Modeste and her father to their rooms, where Françoise Cochet had already arranged everything. Their choice elegance surprised the Colonel, and Françoise told him that there were thirty guest-chambers in the same style in the Château.

“That is my idea of a country-house,” said Modeste.

“The Comte de la Bastie will have such another built for you,” replied the Colonel.

“Here, Monsieur,” said Modeste, handing the scrap of paper to Ernest, “go and reassure our friend.”



The words "our friend" struck the young man. He looked at Modeste to see if there were seriously some community of sentiment such as she seemed to acknowledge; and the girl, understanding the implied question, added—

"Well, go; your friend is waiting."

La Brière colored violently, and went, in a state of doubt, anxiety, and disturbance more terrible than despair. The approach to happiness is to true lovers very like what the poetry of Catholicism has called the Straits of Paradise, to express a dark, difficult, and narrow way, echoing with the last cries of supreme anguish.

An hour later the distinguished party had all met again in the drawing-room, some playing at whist, others chatting, the women busy with fancy-work, while awaiting the dinner-hour. The Master of the Hounds led Monsieur Mignon to talk of China, of his campaigns, of the great Provençal families of Portenduère, l'Estorade, and Maucombe; and he remonstrated with him on not asking for employment, assuring him that nothing would be easier than to obtain a post in the Guards with his full rank as Colonel.

"A man of your birth and fortune can never class himself with the present Opposition," said the Prince with a smile.

This aristocratic society pleased Modeste; and not only that, during her visit she gained a perfection of manner which, but for this revelation, she would never in her life have acquired. If you show a clock to a natural mechanic, it is always enough to reveal to him what mechanism means; the germs within him are at once developed. In the same way, Modeste intuitively assimilated everything that gave distinction to the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu. To her each detail was a lesson, where a commonplace woman would have fallen into absurdity by imitating mere manners. A girl of good birth, well informed, with the instincts of Modeste, fell naturally into the right key, and discerned the differences which divide the aristocratic from the middle class, and provincial life from that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; she caught the almost imperceptible shades: in short, she recognized the grace of a really fine lady, and did not despair of acquiring it.

In the midst of this Olympus she saw that her father and La Brière were infinitely superior to Canalis. The great poet, abdicating his real and indisputable power, that of the intellect, was nothing but a Master of Appeals, eager to become a Minister, anxious for the collar of the Legion of Honor, and obliged to subserve every constellation. Ernest de la Brière, devoid of ambition, was simply himself; while Melchior, eating humble pie, to use a vulgar phrase, paid court to the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, as though he had no liberty of speech like Colonel Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, proud of his services and of the Emperor Napoleon's esteem. Modeste saw the continued pre-occupation of a wit seeking a point to raise a laugh, a brilliant remark to surprise, or a compliment to flatter the high and mighty personages, on whose level he aimed at keeping himself. In short, here the peacock shed his plumes.

In the course of the evening Modeste went to sit with the Master of the Horse in a recess of the drawing-room; she took him there to put an end to a struggle she could no longer encourage without lowering herself in her own eyes.

"Monsieur le Duc," she began, "if you knew me well, you would know how deeply I am touched by your attentions. It is precisely the high esteem I have for your character, the friendship inspired by such a nature as yours, which makes me anxious not to inflict the smallest wound on your self-respect. Before you came to le Havre I loved sincerely, deeply, and for ever a man who is worthy to be loved, and from whom my affection is still a secret: but I may tell you, and in this I am more sincere than most girls, that if I had not been bound by this voluntary engagement, you would have been my choice, so many and so great are the good qualities I have found in you. A few words dropped by your sister and aunt compel me to say this. If you think it necessary, by to-morrow, before the hunt, my mother shall recall me home under the excuse of serious indisposition. I will not be present without your consent at an entertainment arranged by your kind care, where, if my secret should escape me, I might aggrrieve you by an insult to your legitimate pretensions.

“ ‘Why did I come?’ you may ask. I might have declined. Be so generous as not to make a crime of an inevitable curiosity. This is not the most delicate part of what I have to communicate. You have firmer friends than you know of in my father and me; and as my fortune was the prime motor in your mind when you came to seek me, without wishing to treat it as a solace to the grief your gallantry requires of you, I may tell you that my father is giving his mind to the matter of the Hérouville lands. His friend Dumay thinks the scheme feasible, and has been feeling his way to the formation of a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father are each ready with fifteen hundred thousand francs, and undertake to collect the remainder by the confidence they will inspire in the minds of capitalists by taking substantial interest in the business.

“ Though I may not have the honor of being the Duchess d’Hérouville, I am almost certain of putting you in the position to choose her one day with perfect freedom in the exalted sphere to which she belongs.—Oh, let me finish,” said she, at a gesture of the Duke’s.

“ It is easy to see from my brother’s agitation,” said Mademoiselle d’Hérouville to her niece, “ that you have gained a sister.”

“ Monsieur le Duc, I decided on this on the day of our first ride together, when I heard you lamenting your position. This is what I wanted to tell you; on that day my fate was sealed. If you have not won a wife, you have, at any rate, found friends at Ingouville, if, indeed, you will accept us as friends.”

This little speech which Modeste had prepared was uttered with such soul-felt charm that tears rose to the Duke’s eyes. He seized Modeste’s hand and kissed it.

“ Remain here for the hunt,” said he. “ My small merit has accustomed me to such refusals. But while I accept your friendship and the Colonel’s, allow me to assure myself, by inquiring of the most competent experts, that the reclaiming of the marsh lands of Hérouville will involve the Company of which you speak in no risks, but may bring in some profits, before I accept the liberality of your friends.

“You are a noble girl, and though it breaks my heart to be no more than your friend, I shall glory in the title, and prove it to you whenever and wherever I find occasion.”

“At any rate, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep the secret to ourselves. My choice will not be announced, unless I am greatly mistaken, till my mother is completely cured; for it is my desire that my plighted husband and I should be blessed with her first glances.”

“Ladies,” said the Prince de Cadignan at the moment when all were going to bed, “I remember that several of you proposed to follow the hunt with us to-morrow; now I think it my duty to inform you, that if you are bent on being Dianas, you must rise with the dawn. The meet is fixed for half-past eight. I have often in the course of my life seen women display greater courage than men, but only for a few minutes, and you will all need a certain modicum of determination to remain on horseback for a whole day excepting during the halt called for luncheon—a mere snack, as befits sportsmen and sportswomen.—Are you still all resolved to prove yourselves gallant horsewomen?”

“I, Prince, cannot help myself,” said Modeste slyly.

“I can answer for myself,” said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

“I know my daughter Diane; she is worthy of her name,” replied the Prince. “Well, then, you are all primed for the sport. However, for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who remain at home, I shall do my best to turn the stag to the further end of the pool.”

“Do not be uneasy, ladies, the hunters’ snack will be served under a splendid marquee,” said the Prince de Loudon when the Master of the Hounds had left the room.

Next morning at daybreak everything promised fine weather. The sky, lightly veiled with gray mist, showed through it here and there in patches of pure blue, and it would be entirely cleared before noon by a northwest breeze, which was already sweeping up some little fleecy clouds. As they left the Château, the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Loudon, and the Duc de Rhétoré, who, having no ladies under their care, started first for the meet, saw the chimneys of the house piercing through the veil-mist in white masses against

the russet foliage, which the trees in Normandy never lose till quite the end of a fine autumn.

"The ladies are in luck," said the Prince to the Duc de Rhétoré.

"Oh, in spite of their bravado last night, I fancy they will leave us to hunt without them," replied the Duc de Verneuil.

"Yes, if they had not each a gentleman-in-waiting," retorted the Duke.

At this moment these determined sportsmen—for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré are of the race of Nimrod, and supposed to be the finest shots of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—heard the noise of an altercation, and rode forward at a gallop to the clearing appointed for the meet, at one of the openings into the Forest of Rosebray, and remarkable for a mossy knoll. This was the subject of the quarrel. The Prince de Loudon, bitten by Anglomania, had placed at the Duc de Verneuil's orders the whole of his stable and kennel, in the English style throughout. On one side of the clearing stood a young Englishman, short, fair, insolent-looking, and cool, speaking French after a fashion, and dressed with the neatness that characterises Englishmen even of the lowest class. John Barry had a tunic-coat of scarlet cloth belted round the waist, silver buttons with the arms of Verneuil, white doeskin breeches, top-boots, a striped waistcoat, and a black velvet collar and cap. In his right hand he held a hunting-crop, and in his left, hanging by a silk cord, was a brass horn. The chief huntsman had with him two large thoroughbred hounds, pure fox-hounds with white coats spotted with tan, high on their legs, with keen noses, small heads, and short ears, high up. This man, one of the most famous huntsmen of the country whence the Prince had sent for him at great expense, ruled over fifteen hunters and sixty English-bred dogs, which cost the Duc de Verneuil enormous sums; though he cared little for sport, he indulged his son in this truly royal taste. The subordinates, men and horses, stood some little way off, and kept perfect silence.

Now on arriving on the ground, John found there three huntsmen with three packs of the King's hounds that had arrived before him in carts; the Prince de Cadignan's three

best men, whose figures, both in character and costume, were a perfect contrast with the representative of insolent Albion. These, the Prince's favorites, all wearing three-cornered cocked hats, very low and flat, beneath which grinned tanned, wrinkled, weather-beaten faces, lighted up as it were by their twinkling eyes, were curiously dry, lean, and sinewy men, burnt up with the passion for sport. Each was provided with a large bugle hung about with green worsted cords that left nothing visible but the bell of the trumpet; they kept their dogs in order by the eye and voice. The noble brutes, all splashed with liver-color and black, each with his individual expression, as distinct as Napoleon's soldiers, formed a *posse* of subjects more faithful than those whom the King was at that moment addressing—their eyes lighting up at the slightest sound with a spark that glittered like a diamond—this one from Poitou, short in the loins, broad-shouldered, low on the ground, long-eared, that one an English dog, white, slim in the belly, with short ears, and made for coursing: all the young hounds eager to give tongue, while their elders, seamed with scars, lay quiet, at full length, their heads resting on their fore-paws, and listening on the ground like wild men of the woods.

On seeing the English contingent, the dogs and the King's men looked at each other, asking without saying a word—

“Are we not to hunt by ourselves? Is not this a slur on His Majesty's Royal Hunt?”

After beginning with some banter, the squabble had grown warm between Monsieur Jacquin la Roulie, the old Chief Huntsman of the French force, and John Barry the young Briton.

While still at some distance the princes guessed what had given rise to the quarrel, and the Master of the Hounds, putting spurs to his horse, ended the matter by asking in a commanding tone—

“Who beat the wood?”

“I, Monseigneur,” said the Englishman.

“Very good,” said the Prince de Cadignan, listening to John Barry's report.

Men and dogs, all alike, were respectful in the presence of

the Master of the Hounds, as though all alike recognized his supreme authority. The Prince planned the order of the day; for a hunt is like a battle, and Charles X.'s Master of the Hounds was a Napoleon of the forest. Thanks to the admirable discipline carried out by his orders in stable and kennel, he could give his whole mind to strategy and the science of the chase. He assigned a place in the proceedings of the day to the Prince de Loudon's hounds and men, reserving them, like a cavalry corps, to turn the stag back on the pool, in the event of the King's packs succeeding, as he hoped, in forcing the game into the Royal demesne lying in the distance in front of the Château. He gratified the self-respect of his own old retainers by giving them the hardest work, and that of the Englishman, whom he employed in his own special line, by giving him an opportunity of displaying the strength of limb of his dogs and horses. Thus the two methods would work against each other, and do wonders to excite reciprocal emulation.

"Are we to wait any longer, Monseigneur?" asked La Roulie respectfully.

"I understand you, old friend," replied the Prince. "It is late, but——"

"Here come the ladies, for Jupiter scents the fetish odors," said the second huntsman, observing the nose of his favorite hound.

"Fetish?" repeated the Prince de Loudon with a smile.

"He probably means fetid," said the Duc de Rhétoré.

"That is it, no doubt, for everything that does not smell of the kennel is poisonous, according to Monsieur Laravine," replied the Prince.

In point of fact, the three gentlemen could see in the distance a party of sixteen riders, and fluttering at their head the green veils of four ladies. Modeste, with her father, the Duc d'Hérouville, and little La Brière, was in front, with the Duchess de Maufrigneuse attended by the Vicomte de Sérizy. Then came the Duchesse de Chaulieu with Canalis at her side, she smiling at him with no sign of rancor. On reaching the clearing, where the huntsmen, dressed in red, holding their hunting horns, and surrounded by dogs and beaters, formed a

group worthy of the brush of Van der Meulen, the Duchesse de Chaulieu, an admirable figure on horseback, though somewhat too stout, drew up close to Modeste, feeling it beneath her dignity to sulk with the young person to whom, the day before, she had not spoken a word.

Just at the moment when the Master of the Hounds had ended his compliments on such fabulous punctuality, Éléonore condescended to remark the splendid whip handle that sparkled in Modeste's little hand, and graciously begged to examine it.

"It is the finest thing in its way that I have ever seen," said she, showing the gem to Diane de Maufrigneuse; "but, indeed, it is in harmony with the owner's whole person," she added, as she returned it to Modeste.

"You will confess, Madame," replied Mademoiselle de la Bastie, with a mischievous but tender glance at La Brière, in which he could read an avowal, "that it is a very strange gift as coming from a future husband——"

"Indeed," exclaimed Madame de Maufrigneuse, "I should regard it as a recognition of my rights, remembering Louis XIV."

There were tears in La Brière's eyes; he dropped his bridle, and was ready to fall; but another look from Modeste recalled him to himself, by warning him not to betray his happiness.

The cavalcade set out.

The Duc d'Hérouville said in a low voice to La Brière: "I hope, Monsieur, that you will make your wife happy, and if I can in any way serve you, command me; for I should be delighted to contribute to the happiness of two such charming people."

This great day, when such important interests of hearts and fortunes were definitely settled, to the Master of the Hounds offered no other problem but that as to whether the stag would cross the pool, and be killed on the grass slope within sight of the Château; for huntsmen of such experience are like chess players, who can foresee a checkmate many moves ahead. The fortunate old gentleman succeeded to the height of his wishes; the run was splendid, and the ladies relieved him of their presence on the next day but one, which proved to be rainy.



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The Duc de Verneuil's guests remained three days at Rosebray. On the last morning the *Gazette de France* contained the announcement that M. le Baron de Canalis was appointed to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor and the post of Minister at Carlsruhe.

When, early in the month of December, the Comtesse de la Bastie was operated on by Desplein, and could at last see Ernest de la Brière, she pressed Modeste's hand, and said in her ear—

“ I should have chosen him.”

Towards the end of February all the documents relating to the acquisition of the estates were signed by the worthy and excellent Latournelle, Monsieur Mignon's attorney in Provence. At this time the family of la Bastie obtained from His Majesty the distinguished honor of his signature to the marriage contract, and the transmission of the title and the arms of la Bastie to Ernest de la Brière, who was authorized to call himself the Vicomte de la Bastie-la Brière. The estate of la Bastie, reconstituted to yield more than a hundred thousand francs a year, was entailed by letters patent registered by the Court in the month of April.

La Brière's witnesses were Canalis and the Minister whose private secretary he had been for five years. Those who signed for the bride were the Duc d'Hérouville and Desplein, for whom the Mignons cherished enduring gratitude, after giving him magnificent proofs of it.

By and by, perhaps, in this long record of our manners, we may meet again with Monsieur and Madame de la Brière-la Bastie, and connoisseurs will then perceive how easy and sweet a tie is marriage when the wife is well informed and clever; for Modeste, who kept her promise of avoiding all the absurdities of pedantry, is still the pride and delight of her husband, of her family, and of her circle of friends.

PARIS, *March-July 1844.*

**BÉATRIX**



## PREFACE

*Béatrix* was built up in the odd fashion in which Balzac sometimes did build up his novels, and which may be thought to account for an occasional lack of unity and grasp in them. The original book, written in 1838, and published with the rather flowery dedication "to Sarah" at the end of that year, stopped at the marriage of Calyste and Sabine. The last part, separately entitled *Un Adultère Rétrospectif*, was not added till six years later. It cannot be said to be either very shocking or very unnatural that the young husband should exemplify the truth of that uncomfortable proverb, *Qui a bu boira*; and it is perhaps rather more surprising that Balzac should have allowed him to be "refished" (as the French say) in a finally satisfactory condition by his lawful spouse.

Still, I do not think the addition can be considered on the whole an improvement to the book, of which it is at the best rather an appendix than an integral part. The conception of Béatrix herself seems to have changed somewhat, and that not as the conception of her immortal namesake in *Esmond* and *The Virginians* changes, merely to suit the irreparable outrage of years. The end has unsavory details, which have not, as the repetition of them in more tragic form a little later in *La Cousine Bette* has, the justification of a really tragic retribution; and a man must have a great deal of disinterested good-nature about him to feel any satisfaction, or indeed to take much interest, in the restoration of the domestic happiness of two such persons as M. and Mme. de Rochefide. Calyste du Guénic, whose character was earlier rather exaggerated, is now almost a caricature, and to me at least the thing is not much excused by the fact that it gives Balzac an opportunity of introducing his pattern gentleman-scoundrel, Maxime de Trailles, and his pet Bohemian, la Palférine. The many-named Italian here indeed plays a comparatively benevolent part, as does

Trailles; but they are both as great "raffs" and "tigers" as ever.

The first and larger part of the book, on the other hand,—the book proper, as we may call it,—is a remarkable, a well-designed, and a very interesting study. It is not so much of an additional attraction to me, as it perhaps is to most people, that contemporaries, without much contradiction, or in all cases improbability, chose to regard the parts and personages of Félicité des Touches, Béatrix de Rochefide, Claude Vignon, and the musician Conti, as designed, and pretty closely designed, after George Sand, Mme. d'Agoult (known as "Daniel Stern"), Gustave Planche, the critic, and Liszt. As to the first pair, there can, of course, be no doubt; for Balzac, by representing "Camille Maupin" as George Sand's rival, and by introducing divers ingenious and legitimate adaptations of the famous she-novelist's career, both invites, and in a way authorizes, the attribution. There is nothing offensive in it; indeed, Félicité is one of the most effective and sympathetic of his female characters, and would always have been incapable of the rather heartless action by which the actual George Sand amused herself intellectually and sentimentally with lover after lover, and then threw them away. Unless the accounts of Planche that we have are very unfair—and they possibly are, for he was a critic, and was particularly obnoxious to the extreme Romantic school, which was perhaps why Balzac liked him—Claude Vignon is a still more flattered portrait, though Balzac's low, if not quite impartial, opinion of critics in general comes out in it. Conti may be fair enough for Liszt; and if Béatrix is certainly a libel on poor Mme. d'Agoult, it must be remembered that this later Mme. de Staël was generally misrepresented in her lifetime, though since her death she has had more justice.

The "key"-interest of books, however, is always a minor, and sometimes a purely illegitimate one. It ought to be sufficient for us that the interest of the quartet, even if there had been no such persons as George Sand, Daniel Stern, Planche, and Liszt in the world, would be very great, and that it is well composed with and maintained by the ac-

cessory and auxiliary facts and characters. The picture of the Guénic household (which, after Balzac's usual fashion, throws us back to *Les Chouans*, while Béatrix as a Castéran, and thus a connection of the luckless Mlle. de Verneuil, is also connected with that book) may seem to some to be a little too fully painted; it does not seem so to me. Whether, as hinted above, the character of Calyste has its childishness exaggerated or not, I must leave to readers to decide for themselves. His casting of Béatrix into the sea, besides being illegal, may seem to some extravagant; but it must be remembered that Balzac was originally writing when the heyday of the Romantic movement was by no means over, and when melodrama was still pretty fully in fashion. It is difficult, too, to see what better contrast and uniting scheme for the contrasted worldlinesses of the four chief characters could have been devised; while the childishness itself is not inconceivable or unnatural in a boy brought up in a sort of household of romance by a heroic father and a doting mother, both utterly unworldly, his head being further fired by participation in actual civil war on behalf of an injured princess, and his heart exposed without preparation to such different influences as those of Mlle. des Touches and of Béatrix.

The contrast of the two ladies is also fine; indeed, Béatrix seems to me, though by no means Balzac's most perfect work, to be an attempt in a higher style of novel writing than any other heroine of his. It is impossible not to suspect in Félicité, good, clever, and so forth as she is, a covert satire on the variety of womankind which had begun to be fashionable. The satire on the unamiable side of mere womanliness which the sketch of Béatrix contains is, of course, open and undeniable. I think that Thackeray has far excelled it, but I am not certain that he was not indebted to it as a pattern. The fault of the French Béatrix has been expressed by her creator on nearly the last page of the book. A woman *sans cœur ni tête* may do a great deal of mischief; but she cannot quite play the part attributed to Mme. de Rochefide.

The two first parts of *Béatrix* (in which Mme. de Roche-



fide was at first called *Roche-gude*) appeared in the *Siècle* during April and May 1839, with the alternative title *ou les Amours Forcés*, and they were published in book form by Souverain in the same year. They were then divided briefly: the first part, which was called *Mœurs d'Autrefois* in the *Siècle*, and *Une Famille Patriarcale* in the book, had eight headed chapters; the second (*Mœurs d'Aujourd'hui* in the first, *Une Femme Célèbre* in the second) eleven; and a third division, *Les Rivalités*, eight. As a *Scène de la Vie Privée*, which it became in 1842, it had no chapters; it was little altered otherwise; and the present completion was anticipated, though not given, in a final paragraph. It also had the simple title of *Béatrix*. The completion itself did not appear till the midwinter (December-January) of 1844-45. It was first called *Les Petits Manèges d'une Femme Vertueuse* in the *Messenger*, and when, shortly afterwards, it was published by Chlendorowski as a book, *La Lune de Miel*. In these forms it had fifty-nine headed chapters. In the same year, however, it became, with its forerunners, part of the *Comédie*, and the chapters were swept away throughout.

G. S.

# BÉATRIX

To Sarah.

*In clear weather, on the Mediterranean shore, where formerly your name held elegant sway, the waves sometimes allow us to perceive beneath the mist of waters a sea-flower, one of Nature's master-pieces; the lacework of its tissue, tinged with purple, russet, rose, violet, or gold, the crispness of that living filigree, the velvet texture, all vanish as soon as curiosity draws it forth and spreads it on the strand.*

*Thus would the glare of publicity offend your tender modesty; so, in dedicating this work to you, I must reserve a name which would indeed be its pride. But under the shelter of this half-concealment, your superb hands may bless it, your noble brow may bend and dream over it, your eyes, full of motherly love, may smile upon it, since you are here at once present and veiled. Like that gem of the ocean-garden, you will dwell on the fine white level sand where your beautiful life expands, hidden by a wave that is transparent only to certain friendly and reticent eyes.*

*I would gladly have laid at your feet a work in harmony with your perfections; but as that was impossible, I knew, for my consolation, that I was gratifying one of your instincts by offering you something to protect.* De Balzac.

## PART I

### DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

**F**RANCE, and more especially Brittany, still has some few towns that stand entirely outside the social movement which gives a character to the nineteenth century. For lack of rapid and constant communications with

Paris, connected only by an ill-made road with the prefecture or chief town to which they belong, these places hear and see modern civilization pass by like a spectacle; they are amazed, but they do not applaud; and whether they fear it or make light of it, they remain faithful to the antiquated manners of which they preserve the stamp. Anyone who should travel as a moral archæologist, and study men instead of stones, might find a picture of the age of Louis XV. in some village of Provence, that of the time of Louis XIV. in the depths of Poitou, that of yet remoter ages in the heart of Brittany.

Most of these places have fallen from some splendor of which history has kept no record, busied as it is with facts and dates rather than manners, but of which the memory still survives in tradition; as in Brittany, where the character of the people allows no forgetfulness of anything that concerns the home country. Many of these towns have been the capital of some little feudal territory—a county or a duchy conquered by the Crown, or broken up by inheritors in default of a direct male line. Then, deprived of their activity, these heads became arms; the arms, bereft of nutrition, have dried up and merely vegetate; and within these thirty years these images of remote times are beginning to die out and grow very rare.

Modern industry, toiling for the masses, goes on destroying the creations of ancient art, for its outcome was as personal to the purchaser as to the maker. We have *products* nowadays; we no longer have works. Buildings play a large part in the phenomena of retrospection; but to industry, buildings are stone-quarries or saltpeter mines, or storehouses for cotton. A few years more and these primitive towns will be transformed, known no more excepting in this literary iconography.

One of the towns where the physiognomy of the feudal ages is still most plainly visible is Guérande. The name alone will revive a thousand memories in the mind of painters, artists, and thinkers, who may have been to the coast, and have seen this noble gem of feudality proudly perched where it commands the sandhills and the strand at low tide, the top

corner, as it were, of a triangle at whose other points stand two not less curious relics—Le Croisic and Le Bourg de Batz. Besides Guérande there are but two places—Vitré, in the very center of Brittany, and Avignon in the south—which preserve their mediæval aspect and features intact in the midst of our century.

Guérande is to this day inclosed by mighty walls, its wide moats are full of water, its battlements are unbroken, its loopholes are not filled up with shrubs, the ivy has thrown no mantle over its round and square towers. It has three gates, where the rings may still be seen for suspending the portcullis; it is entered over drawbridges of timber shod with iron, which could be raised, though they are raised no longer. The municipality was blamed in 1820 for planting poplars by the side of the moat to shade the walk; it replied that on the land side, by the sandhills, for above a hundred years, the fine long esplanade by the walls, which look as if they had been built yesterday, had been made into a mall overshadowed by elms, where the inhabitants took their pleasure.

The houses have known no changes; they are neither more nor less in number. Not one of them has felt on its face the hammer of the builder, or the brush of the whitewasher, nor trembled under the weight of an added story. They all retain their primitive character. Some are raised on wooden columns forming "rows," under which there is a footway, floored with planks that yield but do not break. The shop-dwellings are small and low, and faced with slate shingles. Woodwork, now decayed, has been largely used for carved window-frames; and the beams, prolonged beyond the pillars, project in grotesque heads, or at the angles, in the form of fantastic creatures, vivified by the great idea of Art, which at that time lent life to dead matter. These ancient things, defying the touch of time, offer to painters the brown tones and obliterated lines that they delight in.

The streets are what they were a hundred years ago. Only, as the population is thinner now, as the social stir is less active, a traveler curious to wander through this

town, as fine as a perfect suit of antique armor, may find his way, not untouched by melancholy, down an almost deserted street, where the stone window-frames are choked with concrete to avoid the tax. This street ends at a postern-gate built up with a stone wall, and crowned by a clump of saplings planted there by the hand of Breton Nature—France can hardly show a more luxuriant and all-pervading vegetation. If he is a poet or a painter, our wanderer will sit down, absorbed in the enjoyment of the perfect silence that reigns under the still sharp-cut vaulting of this side gate, whither no sound comes from the peaceful town, whence the rich country may be seen in all its beauty through loopholes, once held by archers and cross-bowmen, which seem placed like the little windows arranged to frame a view from a summer-house.

It is impossible to go through the town without being reminded at every step of the manners and customs of long past times; every stone speaks of them; traditions of the Middle Ages survive there as superstitions. If by chance a gendarme passes in his laced hat, his presence is an anachronism against which the mind protests; but nothing is rarer than to meet a being or a thing of the present. There is little to be seen even of the dress of the day; so much of it as the natives have accepted has become to some extent appropriate to their unchanging habits and hereditary physiognomy. The market-place is filled with Breton costumes, which artists come here to study, and which are amazingly varied. The whiteness of the linen clothes worn by the *paludiers*, the salt-workers who collect salt from the pans in the marshes, contrasts effectively with the blues and browns worn by the inland peasants, and the primitive jewelry piously preserved by the women. These two classes and the jacketed seamen, with their round varnished leather hats, are as distinct as the castes in India, and they still recognize the distinctions that separate the townsfolk, the clergy, and the nobility. Here every landmark still exists; the revolutionary plane found the divisions too rugged and too hard to work over; it would have been notched if not broken. Here the immutability which Nature has given to zoological species

is to be seen in men. In short, even since the revolution of 1830, Guérande is still a place unique, essentially Breton, fervently Catholic, silent, meditative, where new ideas can scarcely penetrate.

Its geographical position accounts for this singularity. This pretty town overlooks the salt marshes; its salt is indeed known throughout Brittany as *Sel de Guérande*, and to its merits many of the natives ascribe the excellence of their butter and sardines. It has no communication with the rest of France but by two roads, one leading to Savenay, the chief town of the immediate district, and thence to Saint-Nazaire; and the other by Vannes on to Morbihan. The district road connects it with Nantes by land; that by Saint-Nazaire and then by boat also leads to Nantes. The inland road is used only by the Government, the shorter and more frequented way is by Saint-Nazaire. Between that town and Guérande lies a distance of at least six leagues, which the mails do not serve, and for a very good reason—there are not three travelers by coach a year. Saint-Nazaire is divided from Paimbœuf by the estuary of the Loire, there four leagues in width. The bar of the river makes the navigation by steamboat somewhat uncertain; and to add to the difficulties, there was, in 1829, no landing quay at the cape of Saint-Nazaire; the point ended in slimy shoals and granite reefs, the natural fortifications of its picturesque church, compelling arriving voyagers to fling themselves and their baggage into boats when the sea was high, or, in fine weather, to walk across the rocks as far as the jetty then in course of construction. These obstacles, ill suited to invite the amateur, may perhaps still exist there. In the first place, the authorities move but slowly; and then the natives of this corner of land, which you may see projecting like a tooth on the map of France between Saint-Nazaire, Le Bourg de Batz, and Le Croisic, are very well content with the hindrances that protect their territory from the incursions of strangers.

Thus flung down on the edge of a continent, Guérande leads no whither, and no one ever comes there. Happy in being unknown, the town cares only for itself. The center

of the immense produce of the salt marshes, paying not less than a million francs in taxes, is at Le Croisic, a peninsular town communicating with Guérande across a tract of shifting sands, where the road traced each day is washed out each night, and by boats indispensable for crossing the inlet which forms the port of Le Croisic, and which encroaches on the sand. Thus this charming little town is a Herculaneum of feudalism, *minus* the winding sheet of lava. It stands, but is not alive; its only reason for surviving is that it has not been pulled down.

If you arrive at Guérande from Le Croisic, after crossing the tract of salt marshes, you are startled and excited at the sight of this immense fortification, apparently quite new. Coming on it from Saint-Nazaire, its picturesque position and the rural charm of the neighborhood are no less fascinating. The country round it is charming, the hedges full of flowers—honeysuckles, roses, and beautiful shrubs; you might fancy it was an English wild garden planned by a great artist. This rich landscape, so homelike, so little visited, with all the charm of a clump of violets or lily-of-the-valley found in the midst of a forest, is set in an African desert shut in by the ocean—a desert without a tree, without a blade of grass, without a bird, where, on a sunny day, the marshmen, dressed all in white, and scattered at wide intervals over the dismal flats where the salt is collected, look just like Arabs wrapped in their burnoose. Indeed, Guérande, with its pretty scenery inland, and its desert bounded on the right by Le Croisic and on the left by Batz, is quite unlike anything else to be seen by the traveler in France. The two types of nature so strongly contrasted and linked by this last monument of feudal life, are quite indescribably striking. The town itself has the effect on the mind that a soporific has on the body; it is as soundless as Venice.

There is no public conveyance but that of a carrier who transports travelers, parcels, and possibly letters, in a wretched vehicle, from Saint-Nazaire to Guérande or back again. Bernus, the driver of this conveyance, was, in 1829, the factotum of the whole community. He goes as he likes,

the whole country knows him, he does everybody's commissions. The arrival of a carriage is an immense event—some lady who is passing through Guérande by the land road to Le Croisic, or a few old invalids on their way to take sea-baths, which among the rocks of this peninsula have virtues superior to those of Boulogne, Dieppe, or Les Sables. The peasants come on horseback, and for the most part bring in their produce in sacks. They come hither chiefly, as do the salt-makers, for the business of purchasing the jewelry peculiar to their caste, which must always be given to Breton maidens on betrothal, and the white linen or the cloth for their clothes. For ten leagues round, Guérande is still that illustrious Guérande where a treaty was signed famous in French history; the key of the coast, displaying no less than Le Bourg de Batz a magnificence now lost in the darkness of ages. The jewelry, the cloth, the linen, the ribbons, and hats are manufactured elsewhere, but to the purchasers they are the specialty of Guérande.

Every artist, nay, and everyone who is not an artist, who passes through Guérande, feels a desire—soon forgotten—to end his days in its peace and stillness, walking out in fine weather on the mall that runs round the town from one gate to the other on the seaward side. Now and again a vision of this town comes to knock at the gates of memory; it comes in crowned with towers, belted with walls; it displays its robe strewn with lovely flowers, shakes its mantle of sandhills, wafts the intoxicating perfumes of its pretty thorn-hedged lanes, decked with posies lightly flung together; it fills your mind, and invites you like some divine woman whom you have once seen in a foreign land, and who has made herself a home in your heart.

Close to the church of Guérande a house may be seen which is to the town what the town is to the country, an exact image of the past, the symbol of a great thing now gone, a poem. This house belongs to the noblest family in the land—that of du Guaisnic, who, in the time of the du Guesclin, were as superior to them in fortune and antiquity as the Trojans were to the Romans. The Guaisqlain (also



formerly spelt du Glaicquin)—which has become Guesclin—are descended from the Guaisnics. The Guaisnics, as old as the granite of Brittany, are neither Franks nor Gauls; they are Bretons, or, to be exact, Celts. Of old they must have been Druids, have cut the mistletoe in sacred groves, and have sacrificed men on dolmens. To-day this race, the equals of the Rohans, but never choosing to be made Princes, powerful in the land before Hugues Capet's ancestors had been heard of, this family, pure from every alloy, is possessed of about two thousand francs a year, this house at Guérande, and the little Castle of Le Guaisnic. All the estates belonging to the Barony of Le Guaisnic, the oldest in Brittany, are in the hands of farmers, and bring in about sixty thousand francs a year in spite of defective culture. The du Guaisnics are indeed still the owners of the land; but as they cannot pay up the capital deposited with them two hundred years ago by those who then held them, they cannot take the income. They are in the position of the French Crown towards its tenants in 1789. When and where could the Barons find the million francs handed over to them by their farmers? Until 1789 the tenure of the fiefs held of the Castle of Le Guaisnic, which stands on a hill, was still worth fifty thousand francs; but by a single vote the National Assembly suppressed the fines on leases and sales paid to the feudal lords. In such circumstances, this family, no longer of any consequence in France, would be a subject of ridicule in Paris; at Guérande it is an epitome of Brittany. At Guérande the Baron du Guaisnic is one of the great barons of France, one of the men above whom there is but one—the King of France, chosen of old to be their chief. In these days the name of du Guaisnic—full of local meanings, of which the etymology has been explained in *Les Chouans, or Brittany in 1799*—has undergone the same change as disfigures that of du Guaisqlain. The tax-collector, like everyone else, writes it Guénic.

At the end of a silent, damp, and gloomy alley, formed by the gabled fronts of the neighboring houses, the arch of a door in the wall may be seen, high and wide enough to admit a horseman, which is in itself sufficient evidence

of the house having been finished at a time when carriages as yet were not. This arch, raised on jambs, is all of granite. The door, made of oak, has cracked like the bark of the trees that furnished the timber, and is set with enormous nails in a geometrical pattern. The arch is coved, and displays the coat-of-arms of the du Guaisnics, as sharp and clean-cut as though the carver had but just finished it. This shield would delight an amateur of heraldry by its simplicity, testifying to the pride and the antiquity of the family. It is still the same as on the day when the crusaders of the Christian world invented these symbols to know each other by; the Guaisnics have never quartered their bearings with any others. It is always true to itself, like the arms of France, which heralds may recognize borne in chief or quarterly in the coats of the oldest families. This is the blazon, as you still may see it at Guérande: Gules, a hand proper manched ermine holding a sword argent in pale, with this tremendous motto, *Fac*. Is not that a fine and great thing? The wreath of the baronial coronet surmounts this simple shield, on which the vertical lines, used, instead of color, to represent *gules*, are still clear and sharp.

The sculptor has given an indescribable look of pride and chivalry to the hand. With what vigor does it hold the sword which has done the family service only yesterday! Indeed, if you should go to Guérande after reading this story, you will not look at that coat-of-arms without a thrill. The most determined Republican cannot fail to be touched by the fidelity, the nobleness, and the dignity buried at the bottom of that narrow street. The du Guaisnics did well yesterday; they are ready to do well to-morrow. *To do* is the great word of chivalry. "You did well in the fight," was always the praise bestowed by the High Constable *par excellence*, the great du Guesclin, who for a while drove the English out of France. The depth of the carving, protected from the weather by the projecting curved margin of the arch, seems in harmony with the deeply graven moral of the motto in the spirit of this family. To those who know the Guaisnics this peculiarity is very pathetic.

The open door reveals a fairly large courtyard with stables to the right and kitchen offices to the left. The house is built of squared stone from cellar to garret. The front to the courtyard has a double flight of outside steps; the decorated landing at the top is covered with vestiges of sculpture much injured by time; but the eyes of the antiquarian can still distinguish in the center-piece of the principal ornament the hand holding the sword. Below this elegant balcony, graced with moldings now broken in many places, and polished here and there by long use, is a little lodge, once occupied by a watch-dog. The stone balustrade is disjointed, and weeds, tiny flowers, and mosses sprout in the seams and on the steps, which ages have dislodged without destroying their solidity. The door into the house must have been pretty in its day. So far as the remains allow us to judge, it must have been wrought by an artist trained in the great Venetian school of the thirteenth century; it shows a singular combination of the Mauresque and Byzantine styles, and is crowned by a semicircular bracket, which is overgrown with plants, a posy of rose, yellow, brown, or blue, according to the season. The door, of nail-studded oak, opens into a vast hall, beyond which is a similar door leading to such another balcony, and steps down into the garden.

This hall is in wonderful preservation. The wainscot, up to the height of a man's elbow, is in chestnut wood; the walls above are covered with splendid Spanish leather stamped in relief, its gilding rubbed and rusty. The ceiling is coffered, artistically molded, painted, and gilt, but the gold is scarcely visible; it is in the same condition as that on the Cordova leather; a few red flowers and green leaves can still be seen. It seems probable that cleaning would revive the paintings, and show them to be like those which decorate the woodwork of the house at Tours called *La Maison de Tristan*, which would prove that they had been restored or repaired in the time of Louis XI. The fireplace is enormous, of carved stone, with huge wrought-iron dogs of the finest workmanship. They would carry a cartload of logs. All the seats in this hall are of oak, and have the

family shield carved on their backs. Hanging to nails on the walls are three English muskets fit alike for war or for sport, three cavalry swords, two game-bags, and various tackle for hunting and fishing.

On one side is the dining-room, communicating with the kitchen by a door in a corner turret. This turret corresponds with another in the general design of the front, containing a winding-stair up to the two stories above. The dining-room is hung with tapestries dating from the fourteenth century; the style and spelling of the legends on ribbons below each figure prove their antiquity; but as they are couched in the frank language of the *Fabliaux*, they cannot be transcribed here. These pieces, which are well preserved in the corners where the light has not faded them, are set in frames of carved oak now as black as ebony. The ceiling is supported on beams carved with foliage, and all different; the flats between are of painted wood, wreaths of flowers on a blue ground. Two old dressers with cupboards face each other; and on the shelves, rubbed with Breton perseverance by Mariotte the cook, may be seen now—as at the time when kings were quite as poor in 1200 as the du Guaisnics in 1830—four old goblets, an ancient soup-tureen, and two salt-cellars in silver, a quantity of metal plates, a number of blue and gray stoneware jugs with arabesque designs and the du Guaisnic arms, and crowned with hinged metal lids.

The fireplace has been modernized; its state shows that since the last century this has been the family sitting-room. It is of carved stone in the Louis XV. style, surmounted by a mirror framed in a beaded and gilt molding. This anachronism, to which the family is indifferent, would grieve a poet. On the shelf, covered with red velvet, there stands in the middle a clock of tortoiseshell, inlaid with brass, flanked by a pair of silver candelabra of strange design. A large table on heavy twisted legs stands in the middle of the room; the chairs are of turned wood, covered with tapestry. A round table with a center leg and claw carved to represent a vine-stock stands in front of the window to the garden, and on it stands a quaint lamp. This lamp is formed of a

globe of common glass, rather smaller than an ostrich's egg, held in a candlestick by a glass knob at the bottom. From an opening at the top comes a flat wick in a sort of brass nozzle; the plait of cotton, curled up like a worm in a phial, is fed with nut oil from the glass vessel. The window looking out on the garden, like that on the courtyard—for they are alike—has stone mullions and hexagon panes set in lead; they are hung with curtains and valances, decorated with heavy tassels of an old-fashioned stuff—red silk shot with yellow, formerly known as brocatelle or damask.

Each floor of the house—there are but two below the attic—consists of only two rooms. The first floor was of old inhabited by the head of the family; the second was given up to the children; guests were lodged in the attic rooms. The servants were housed over the kitchens and stables. The sloping roof, leaded at every angle, has to the front and back alike a noble dormer window with a pointed arch, almost as high as the ridge of the roof, supported on graceful brackets; but the carving of the stone is worn and eaten by the salt vapor of the atmosphere. Above the windows, divided into four by mullions of carved stone, the aristocratic weathercock still creaks as it veers.

A detail, precious by its originality, and not devoid of merit in the eyes of the archæologist, must not be overlooked. The turret containing the winding stairs finishes the angle of a broad gabled wall in which there is no window. The stairs go down to a small arched door, opening on a sandy plot dividing the house from the outer wall which forms the back of the stables. The turret is repeated at the corner of the garden front; but instead of being circular, this turret has five angles and a hemispherical dome; also, it is crowned by a little belfry instead of carrying a conical cap like its sister. This is how those elegant architects lent variety to symmetry. On the level of the first floor these turrets are connected by a stone balcony, supported by brackets like prows with human heads. This outside gallery has a balustrade wrought with marvelous elegance and finish. Then from the top of the gable, below which

there is a single small loophole, falls an ornamental stone canopy, like those which are seen over the heads of saints in a cathedral porch. Each turret has a pretty little doorway under a pointed arch, opening on to this balcony. Thus did the architects of the thirteenth century turn to account the bare, cold wall which is presented to us in modern times by the end section of a house.

Cannot you see a lady walking on this balcony in the morning, and looking out over Guérande to where the sun sheds a golden light on the sands, and is mirrored in the face of the ocean? Do you not admire this wall with its finial and gable, furnished at its corners with these reed-like turrets—one suddenly rounded off like a swallow's nest, the other displaying its little door and gothic arch decorated with the hand and sword?

The other end of the Hôtel du Guaisnic joins on to the next house.

The harmony of effect so carefully aimed at by the builders of that period is preserved in the front to the courtyard by the turret corresponding to that containing the winding stair or *vyse*, an old word derived from the French *vis*. It serves as a passage from the dining-room to the kitchen, but it ends at the first floor, and is capped by a little cupola on pillars covering a blackened statue of Saint Calixtus.

The garden is sumptuous within its ancient inclosure; it is more than half an acre in extent, and the walls are covered with fruit-trees; the square beds for vegetables are marked out by standards, and kept by a man-servant named Gasselin, who also takes charge of the horses. At the bottom of the garden is an arbor with a bench under it. In the midst stands a sundial. The paths are graveled.

The garden front has no second turret to correspond with that at the corner of the gable; to make up for this there is a column with a spiral twist from bottom to top, which of old must have borne the standard of the family, for it ends in a large rusty iron socket in which lank weeds are growing. This ornament, harmonizing with the remains

of stonework, shows that the building was designed by a Venetian architect; this elegant standard is like a sign manual left by Venice, and revealing the chivalry and refinement of the thirteenth century. If there could still be any doubt, the character of the details would remove them. The trefoils of the Guaisnic house have four leaves. This variant betrays the Venetian school debased by its trade with the East, since the semi-Mauresque architects, indifferent to Catholic symbolism, gave the trefoil a fourth leaf, while Christian architects remained faithful to the emblem of the Trinity. From this point of view Venetian inventiveness was heretical.

If this house moves you to admiration, you will wonder, perhaps, why the present age never repeats these miracles of art. In our day such fine houses are sold and pulled down, and make way for streets. Nobody knows whether the next generation will keep up the ancestral home, where each one abides as in an inn; whereas formerly men labored, or at least believed that they labored, for an eternal posterity. Hence the beauty of their houses. Faith in themselves worked wonders, as much as faith in God.

With regard to the arrangement and furniture of the upper stories, they can only be imagined from this description of the ground floor, and from the appearance and habits of the family. For the last fifty years the du Guaisnics have never admitted a visitor into any room but these two, which, like the courtyard and the external features of the house, are redolent of the grace, the spirit, and originality of the noble province of old Brittany.

Without this topography and description of the town, without this detailed picture of their home, the singular figures of the family dwelling there might have been less well understood. The frame was necessarily placed before the portraits. Everyone must feel that mere things have an effect on people. There are buildings whose influence is visible on the persons who live near them. It is difficult to be irreligious under the shadow of a cathedral like that of Bourges. The soul that is constantly reminded of its destiny by imagery finds it less easy to fall short of it. So

thought our ancestors, but the opinion is no longer held by a generation which has neither symbols nor distinctions, while its manners change every ten years. Do you not expect to find the Baron du Guaisnic, sword in hand—or all this picture will be false?

In 1836, when this drama opens, in the early days of August, the family consisted still of M. and Mme. du Guénic, of Mlle. du Guénic, the Baron's elder sister, and of a son aged one-and-twenty, named Gaudebert-Calyste-Louis, in obedience to an old custom in the family. His father's name was Gaudebert-Calyste-Charles. Only the last name was ever changed; Saint-Gaudebert and Saint-Calixtus were always the patrons of the Guénics.

The Baron du Guénic had gone forth from Guérande as soon as La Vendée and Brittany had taken up arms, and he had fought with Charette, with Catelineau, la Rochejaquelein, d'Elbée, Bonchamps, and the Prince de Loudon. Before going, he had sold all his possessions to his elder sister, Mlle. Zéphirine du Guénic, a stroke of prudence unique in Revolutionary annals. After the death of all the heroes of the West, the Baron, preserved by some miracle from ending as they did, would not yield to Napoleon. He fought on till 1802, when, having narrowly escaped capture, he came back to Guérande, and from Guérande went to Le Croisic, whence he sailed to Ireland—faithful to the traditional hatred of the Bretons for England.

The good people of Guérande pretended not to know that the Baron was alive; during twenty years not a word betrayed him. Mlle. du Guérande collected the rents, and sent the money to her brother through the hands of fishermen.

In 1813, M. du Guénic came back to Guérande with as little fuss as if he had been spending the summer at Nantes. During his sojourn in Dublin, in spite of his fifty years, the Breton noble had fallen in love with a charming Irish girl, the daughter of one of the oldest and poorest houses of that unhappy country. Miss Fanny O'Brien was at that time one-and-twenty. The Baron du Guénic came to fetch



the papers needed for his marriage, went back to be married, and returned ten months later, at the beginning of 1814, with his wife, who gave birth to a son on the very day when Louis XVIII. landed at Calais—which accounts for the name of Louis.

The loyal old man was now seventy-three years old, but the guerrilla warfare against the Republic, his sufferings during five sea voyages in open boats, and his life at Dublin, had all told on him; he looked more than a hundred. Hence, never had there been a Guénic whose appearance was in more perfect harmony with the antiquity of the house built at a time when a Court was held at Guérande.

M. du Guénic was a tall old man, upright, shriveled, strongly knit, and lean. His oval face was puckered by a thousand wrinkles, forming arched fringes above the cheekbones and eyebrows, giving his face some resemblance to those of the old men painted with such a loving brush by Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Mieris, and Gerard Dow—heads that need a magnifying glass to show their finish. His countenance was buried, as it were, under these numerous furrows produced by an open-air life, by the habit of scanning the horizon in the sunshine, at sunrise, and at the fall of day. But the sympathetic observer could still discern the imperishable forms of the human face, which always speak to the soul even when the eye sees no more than a death's head. The firm modeling of the features, the high brow, the sternness of outline, the severe nose, the form of the bones which wounds alone can alter, expressed disinterested courage, boundless faith, implicit obedience, incorruptible fidelity, unchanging affection. In him the granite of Brittany was made man.

The Baron had no teeth. His lips, once red, but now blue, were supported only by the hardened gums with which he ate the bread his wife took care first to soften by wrapping it in a damp cloth, and they were sunk in his face while preserving a proud and threatening smile. His chin aimed at touching his nose; but the character of that nose—high in the middle—showed his Breton vigor and power of resistance. His complexion, marbled with red that showed

through the wrinkles, was that of a full-blooded, high-tempered man, able to endure the fatigues which had often, no doubt, saved him from apoplexy. The head was crowned with hair as white as silver, falling in curls on his shoulders. This face, that seemed partly extinct, still lived by the brightness of a pair of black eyes, sparkling in their dark, sunken sockets, and flashing with the last fires of a generous and loyal soul. The eyebrows and eyelashes were gone. The skin had set, and would not yield; the difficulty of shaving compelled the old man to grow a fan-shaped beard.

What a painter would most have admired in this old lion of Brittany, with his broad shoulders and sinewy breast, was the hands, splendid soldier's hands—hands such as du Guesclin's must have been, broad, firm, and hairy; the hands that had seized the sword never to relinquish it—any more than Joan of Arc's—till the day when the royal standard floated in the Cathedral at Reims; hands that had often streamed with blood from the thorns of the *Bocage*—the thickets of La Vendée—that had pulled the oar in the Marais to steal upon the “blues,” or on the open sea to help Georges to land; the hands of a partisan and of a gunner, of a private and of a captain; hands that were now white, though the Bourbons of the elder branch were in exile; but if you looked at them, you could see certain recent marks revealing that the Baron, not so long ago, had joined MADAME in La Vendée, since the truth may now be told. These hands were a living commentary on the noble motto to which no Guénic had ever been false, “*Fac!*”

The forehead attracted attention by the golden tone on the temples, in contrast with the tan of that narrow, hard, set brow to which baldness had given height enough to add majesty to the noble ruin. The whole countenance, somewhat unintellectual, it must be owned—and how should it be otherwise?—had, like the other Breton faces grouped about it, a touch of savagery, a stolid calm, like the impassibility of Huron Indians, an indescribable stupidity, due perhaps to the complete reaction that follows on excessive fatigue when the animal alone is left evident. Thought was rare

there; it was visibly an effort; its seat was in the heart rather than the head; and its outcome was action rather than an idea. But on studying this fine old man with sustained attention, the mystery could be detected of this practical antagonism to the spirit of the age. His feelings and beliefs were, so to speak, intuitive, and saved him all thought. He had learned his duties by dint of living. Religion and Institutions thought for him. Hence he and his kindred reserved their powers of mind for action, without frittering them on any of the things they thought useless, though others considered them important. He brought his thought out of his mind as he drew his sword from the scabbard, dazzling with rectitude like the hand in its ermine sleeve on his coat-of-arms. As soon as this secret was understood everything was clear. It explained the depth of the resolutions due to clear, definite, loyal ideas, as immaculate as ermine. It accounted for the sale to his sister before the war, though to him it had meant everything—death, confiscation, exile. The beauty of these two old persons' characters—for the sister lived only in and for her brother—cannot be fully appreciated by the selfish habits which lie at the root of the uncertainty and changefulness of our day. An archangel sent down to read their hearts would not have found in them a single thought bearing the stamp of self. In 1814, when the priest of Guérande hinted to Baron du Guénic that he should go to Paris to claim his reward, the old sister, though avaricious for the family, exclaimed—

“Shame! Need my brother go begging like a vagrant?”

“It would be supposed that I had served the King from interested motives,” said the old man. “Besides, it is his business to remember. And, after all, the poor King has enough to do with all who are harassing him. If he were to give France away piecemeal, he would still be asked for more.”

This devoted servant, who cared so loyally for Louis XVIII., received a colonelcy, the Cross of Saint-Louis, and a pension of two thousand francs.

“The King has remembered!” he exclaimed, on receiving his letters patent.

No one undeceived him. The business had been carried through by the Duc de Feltre from the lists of the Army of La Vendée, in which he found the name of du Guénic with a few other Breton names ending in *ic*.

And so, in gratitude to the King, the Baron stood a siege at Guérande in 1815 against the forces of General Travot; he would not surrender the stronghold; and when he was compelled to evacuate, he made his escape into the woods with a party of Chouans, who remained under arms till the second return of the Bourbons. Guérande still preserves the memory of this last siege. If the old Breton trainbands had but joined, the war begun by this heroic resistance would have fired the whole of La Vendée.

It must be confessed that the Baron du Guénic was wholly illiterate—as illiterate as a peasant; he could read, write, and knew a little of arithmetic; he understood the arts of war and heraldry; but he had not read three books in his life besides his prayer-book.

His dress, a not unimportant detail, was always the same; it consisted of heavy shoes, thick woolen stockings, velvet breeches of a greenish hue, a cloth waistcoat, and a coat with a high collar, on which hung the Cross of Saint-Louis.

Beautiful peace rested on this countenance, which, for a year past, frequent slumber, the precursor of death, seemed to be preparing for eternal rest. This constant sleepiness, increasing day by day, did not distress his wife, nor his now blind sister, nor his friends, whose medical knowledge was not great. To them these solemn pauses of a blameless but weary soul were naturally accounted for—the Baron had done his duty. This told all.

In this house the predominant interest centered in the fate of the deposed elder branch. The future of the exiled Bourbons and the Catholic religion, and the influence of the new politics on Brittany, exclusively absorbed the Baron's family. No other interest mingled with these but the affection they all felt for the son of the house, Calyste, the heir and only hope of the great name of du Guénic. The old Vendéen, the old Chouan, had known a sort of renewal of his

youth a few years since, to give his son the habit of those athletic exercises that befit a gentleman who may be called upon to fight at any moment. As soon as Calyste reached the age of sixteen, his father had gone out with him in the woods and marshes, teaching him by the pleasures of sport the rudiments of war, preaching by example, resisting fatigue, steadfast in the saddle, sure of his aim, whatever the game might be, ground game or birds, reckless in overcoming obstacles, inciting his son to face danger as though he had ten children to spare.

Then, when the Duchesse de Berry came to France to conquer the kingdom, the father carried off his son to make him act on the family motto. The Baron set out in the night without warning his wife, who might perhaps have displayed her emotion, leading his only child under fire as if it were to a festival, and followed by Gasselin, his only vassal, who rode forth gleefully. The three men of the house were away for six months, without sending any news to the Baroness—who never read the *Quotidienne* without quaking over every line—nor to her old sister-in-law, heroically upright, whose brow never flinched as she listened to the paper. So the three muskets hanging in the hall had seen service recently. The Baron, in whose opinion this call to arms was unavailing, had left the field before the fight at La Penissière, otherwise the race of Guénic might have become extinct.

When, one night of dreadful weather, the father, son, and serving-man had reached home after taking leave of MADAME, surprising their friends, the Baroness, and old Mlle. du Guénic—though she, by a gift bestowed on all blind people, had recognized the steps of three men in the little street—the Baron looked round on the circle of his anxious friends gathered round the little table lighted up by the antique lamp, and merely said, in a quavering voice, while Gasselin hung up the muskets and swords in their place, these words of feudal simplicity—

“Not all the Barons did their duty.”

Then he kissed his wife and sister, sat down in his old armchair, and ordered supper for his son, himself, and

Gasselin. Gasselin, having screened Calyste with his body, had received a saber cut on his shoulder; such a small matter, that he was scarcely thanked for it.

Neither the Baron nor his guests uttered a curse or a word of abuse of the conquerors. This taciturnity is a characteristically Breton trait. In forty years no one had ever heard a contemptuous speech from the Baron as to his adversaries. They could but do their business, as he did his duty. Such stern silence is an indication of immutable determination.

This last struggle, the flicker of exhausted powers, had resulted in the weakness under which the Baron was now failing. The second exile of the Bourbons, as miraculously ousted as they had been miraculously restored, plunged him in bitter melancholy.

At about six in the evening, on the day when the scene opens, the Baron, who, according to old custom, had done his dinner by four o'clock, had gone to sleep while listening to the reading of the *Quotidienne*. His head rested against the back of his armchair by the fireside, at the garden end.

The Baroness, sitting on one of the old chairs in front of the fire, by the side of this gnarled trunk of an ancient tree, was of the type of those adorable women who exist nowhere but in England, Scotland, or Ireland. There only do we find girls kneaded with milk, golden-haired, with curls twined by angels' fingers, for the light of heaven seems to ripple over their tendrils with every air that fans them. Fanny O'Brien was one of those sylphs, strong in tenderness, invincible in misfortune, as sweet as the music of her voice, as pure as the blue of her eyes, elegantly lovely and refined, with the prettiness and the exquisite flash—satin to the touch and a joy to the eye—that neither pencil nor pen can do justice to. Beautiful still at forty-two, many a man would have been happy to marry her as he looked at the charms of this glorious, richly-toned autumn, full of flower and fruit, and renewed by dews from heaven. The Baroness held the newspaper in a hand soft with dimples,

and turned-up finger-tips with squarely cut nails like those of an antique statue. She leaned back in her chair, without awkwardness or affectation, her feet thrust forward to get warm; and she wore a black velvet dress, for the wind had turned cold these last few days. The bodice, fitting tight to the throat, covered shoulders of noble outline and a bosom which had suffered no disfigurement from having nursed an only child. Her hair fell in ringlets on each side of her face, close to her cheeks, in the English fashion; a simple twist on the top of her head was held by a tortoise-shell comb; and the mass, instead of being of a doubtful hue, glittered in the light like threads of brownish gold. She had made a plait of the loose short hairs that grow low down and are a mark of fine breeding. This tiny tress, lost in the rest of her hair that was combed high on her head, allowed the eye to note with pleasure the flowing line from her neck to her beautiful shoulders. This little detail shows the care she always gave to her toilet. She persisted in charming the old man's eye. What a delightful and touching attention!

When you see a woman lavishing in her home life the care for appearance which other women find for one feeling only, you may be sure that she is a noble mother, as she is a noble wife, the joy and flower of the household; she understands her duties as a woman, the elegance of her appearance dwells in her soul and her affections, she does good in secret, she knows how to love truly without ulterior motives, she loves her neighbor as she loves God, for himself. And it really seemed as though the Virgin in Paradise, under whose protection she lived, had rewarded her chaste girlhood and saintly womanhood by the side of the noble old man by throwing over her a sort of glory that preserved her from the ravages of time.

Plato would perhaps have honored the fading of her beauty as so much added grace. Her skin, once so white, had acquired those warm and pearly tones that painters delight in. Her forehead, broad and finely molded, seemed to love the light that played on it with sheeny touches. Her eyes of turquoise blue gleamed with wonderful soft-

ness under light velvety lashes. The drooping lids and pathetic temples suggested some unspeakable, silent melancholy; below the eyes her cheeks were dead white, faintly veined with blue to the bridge of the nose. The nose, aquiline and thin, had a touch of royal dignity, a reminder of her noble birth. Her lips, pure and delicately cut, were graced by a smile, the natural outcome of inexhaustible good humor. Her teeth were small and white. She had grown a little stout, but her shapely hips and slender waist were not disfigured by it; the autumn of her beauty displayed still some bright flowers forgotten by spring and the warmer glories of summer. Her finely molded arms, her smooth lustrous skin had gained a finer texture; the forms had filled out. And her open, serene countenance, with its faint color, the purity of her blue eyes, to which too rude a gaze would have been an offense, expressed unchanging gentleness, the infinite tenderness of the angels.

At the other side of the fireplace, in another armchair, sat the old sister of eighty, in every particular but dress the exact image of her brother; she listened to the paper while knitting stockings, for which sight is not needed. Her eyes were darkened by cataract, and she obstinately refused to be operated on, in spite of her sister-in-law's entreaties. She alone knew the secret motive of her determination; she ascribed it to lack of courage, but in fact she did not choose that twenty-five louis should be spent on her; there would have been so much less in the house. Nevertheless, she would have liked to see her brother again. These two old people were an admirable foil to the Baroness's beauty. What woman would not have seemed young and handsome between M. du Guénic and his sister?

Mlle. Zéphirine, deprived of sight, knew nothing of the changes that her eighty years had wrought in her looks. Her pallid, hollow face, to which the fixity of her white and sightless eyes gave a look of death, while three or four projecting teeth added an almost threatening expression; in which the deep eye-sockets were circled with red lines, and a few manly hairs, long since white, were visible on the chin and lips—this cold, calm face was framed in a



little brown cotton hood quilted like a counterpane, edged with a cambric frill, and tied under her chin with ribbons that were never fresh. She wore a short upper skirt of stout cloth over a quilted petticoat, a perfect mattress, within which lurked double louis d'or; and she had pockets sewn to a waistband, which she took off at night and put on in the morning as a garment. Her figure was wrapped in the usual jacket bodice of Breton women, made of cloth like the skirt, and finished with a close pleated frill, of which the washing formed the only subject of difference between her and the Baroness; she insisted on changing it but once a week. Out of the wadded sleeves of this jacket came a pair of withered but sinewy arms, and two ever-busy hands, somewhat red, which made her arms look as white as poplar wood. These fingers, claw-like from the contraction induced by the habit of knitting, were like a stocking-machine in constant motion; the wonder would have been to see them at rest. Now and then Mlle. du Guénic would take one of the long knitting needles darned into the bosom of her dress, and push it in under her hood among her white hairs. A stranger would have laughed to see how calmly she stuck it in again, without any fear of pricking herself. She was as upright as a steeple; her columnar rigidity might be regarded as one of those old women's vanities which prove that pride is a passion indispensable to vitality. She had a bright smile; she too had done her duty.

As soon as Fanny saw that the Baron was asleep, she ceased reading. A sunbeam shot across from window to window, cutting the atmosphere of the old room in two by a band of gold, and casting a glory on the almost blackened furniture. The light caught the carvings of the cornice, fluttered over the cabinets, spread a shining face over the oak table, and gave cheerfulness to this softly somber room, just as Fanny's voice brought to the old woman's spirit a harmony as luminous and gay as the sunbeam. Ere long the rays of the sun assumed a reddish glow, which by insensible degrees sank to the melancholy hues of dusk. The Baroness fell into serious thought, one of those spells of perfect silence which her old sister-in-law had noticed during

a fortnight past, trying to account for them without questioning the Baroness in any way; but she was studying the causes of this absence of mind as only blind people can, who read as it were a black book with white letters, while every sound rings through their soul as though it were an oracular echo. The old blind woman, to whom the falling darkness now meant nothing, went on knitting, and the silence was so complete that the tick of her steel knitting needles could be heard.

“You have dropped the paper—but you are not asleep, sister,” said the old woman sagaciously.

It was now dark; Mariotte came in to light the lamp, and placed it on a square table in front of the fire; then she fetched her distaff, her hank of flax, and a little stool, and sat down to spin in the window recess on the side towards the courtyard, as she did every evening. Gasselin was still busy in the outbuildings, attending to the Baron’s horse and that of Calyste, seeing that all was right in the stables, and giving the two fine hounds their evening meal. The glad barking of these two creatures was the last sound that roused the echoes lurking in the dark walls of the house.

These two horses and two dogs were the last remains of the splendor of chivalry. An imaginative man, sitting on the outer steps, and abandoning himself to the poetry of the images still living in this dwelling, might have been startled at hearing the dogs and the tramping hoofs of the neighing steeds.

Gasselin was one of the short, sturdy, square-built Breton race, with black hair and tanned faces, silent, slow, as stubborn as mules, but always going on the road marked out for them. He was now two-and-forty, and had lived in the house twenty-five years. Mademoiselle had engaged Gasselin as servant when he was fifteen, on hearing of the Baron’s marriage and probable return. This henchman considered himself a member of the family. He had played with Calyste, he loved the horses and dogs, and talked to them and petted them as though they were his own. He wore a short jacket of blue linen with little pockets that flapped over his hips, and a waistcoat and trousers of the same

material, in all seasons alike, blue stockings and hobnailed shoes. When the weather was very cold or wet he added the goatskin with the hair on worn in his province.

Mariotte, who was also past forty, was as a woman exactly what Gasselin was as a man. Never did a better pair run in harness; the same color, the same figure, the same small sharp black eyes. It was hard to imagine why Mariotte and Gasselin had never married; but it might have been criminal; they almost seemed like brother and sister. Mariotte had thirty crowns a year in wages, and Gasselin a hundred livres; but not for a thousand francs a year would they have quitted the house of the Guénics. They were both under the jurisdiction of old mademoiselle, who had been in the habit of managing the house from the time of the war in La Vendée till her brother's return. Hence she had been greatly upset on hearing that her brother was bringing home a mistress of the house, supposing that she would have to lay down the domestic scepter in favor of the Baronne du Guénic, whose first subject she would then be.

Mlle. Zéphirine had been very agreeably surprised on finding that Miss Fanny O'Brien was born to a lofty position, a girl who detested the minute cares of housekeeping, and who, like all noble souls, would have preferred dry bread from the baker's to any food she had to prepare herself; capable of fulfilling all the duties of motherhood, strong to endure every necessary privation, but without energy for commonplace industry. When the Baron, in the name of his shrinking wife, begged his sister to rule the house, the old maid embraced the Baroness as her sister; she made a daughter of her, she adored her, happy in being allowed to continue her care of governing the house, and keeping it with incredible rigor and most economical habits, which she relaxed only on great occasions, such as her sister-in-law's confinement and feeding, and everything that could affect Calyste, the worshiped son of the house.

Though the two servants were accustomed to this strict rule, and needed no telling; though they took more care of their master's interests than of their own, still Mlle. Zéphi-

rine had an eye on everything. Her attention having nothing to divert it, she was the woman to know without going to look how large the pile of walnuts should be in the loft, and how much corn was left in the stable-bin without plunging her sinewy arm into its depths. She wore a boatswain's whistle attached by a string to her waistband, and called Mariotte by whistling once, and Gasselin by whistling twice. Gasselin's chief happiness consisted in cultivating the garden and raising fine fruit and good vegetables. He had so little to do that but for his gardening he would have been bored to death. When he had groomed the horses in the morning he polished the floors, and cleaned the two ground-floor rooms; he had little to do for his masters. So in the garden you could not have found a weed or a noxious insect. Sometimes Gasselin might be seen standing motionless and bareheaded in the sunshine, watching for a field-rat or the dreadful larvæ of the cockchafer; then he would rush in with a child's glee to show the master the creature he had spent a week in catching. On fast days it was his delight to go to Le Croisic to buy fish, cheaper there than at Guérande.

Never was there a family more united, on better terms, or more inseparable, than this pious and noble household. Masters and servants seemed to have been made for each other. In five-and-twenty years there had never been a trouble or a discord. The only sorrows they had known were the child's little ailments, and the only anxieties had come of the events of 1814, and again of 1830. If the same things were invariably done at the same hours, if the food varied only with the changes of the seasons, this monotony, like that of nature, with its alternation of cloud, rain, and sunshine, was made endurable by the affection that filled every heart, and was all the more helpful and beneficent because it was the outcome of natural laws.

When twilight was ended, Gasselin came into the room and respectfully inquired whether he were wanted.

"After prayers you can go out, or go to bed," said the Baron, rousing himself, "unless madame or my sister——"

The two ladies nodded agreement. Gasselin, seeing them

all rise to kneel on their chairs, fell on his knees. Mariotte knelt on her stool. Old Mlle. du Guénic said prayers aloud.

As she finished, a knock was heard at the outer gate. Gasselin went to open it.

“It is M. le Curé, no doubt; he is almost always the first,” remarked Mariotte.

And, in fact, they all recognized the footstep of the parish priest on the resonant steps to the balcony entrance. The Curé bowed respectfully to the three, addressing the Baron and the two ladies with the unctuous civility that a priest has at his command. In reply to an absent-minded “Good-evening” from the mistress of the house, he gave her a look of priestly scrutiny.

“Are you uneasy, madame, or unwell?” he asked.

“Thank you, no!” said she.

M. Grimont, a man of about fifty, of middle height, wrapped in his gown, beneath which a pair of thick shoes with silver buckles were visible, showed above his bands a fat face, on the whole fair, but sallow. His hands were plump. His Abbot-like countenance had something of the Dutch Burgomaster in its calm complexion and the tones of the flesh, and something, too, of the Breton peasant in its straight black hair and sparkling black eyes, which nevertheless were under the control of priestly decorum. His cheerfulness, like that of all people whose conscience is calm and pure, consented to jest. There was nothing anxious or forbidding in his look, as in that of those unhappy priests whose maintenance or power is disputed by their parishioners, and who instead of being, as Napoleon so grandly said, the moral leaders of the people and natural justices of the peace, are regarded as enemies. The most unbelieving of strangers who should see M. Grimont walking through Guérande would have recognized him as the sovereign of the Catholic town; but this sovereign abdicated his spiritual rule before the feudal supremacy of the du Guénic family. In this drawing-room he was as a chaplain in the hall of his liege. In church, as he gave the blessing, his hand always turned first towards the chapel of the House, where their

hand and sword and their motto were carved on the keystone of the vaulting.

"I thought that Mlle. de Pen-Hoël was here," said the Curé, seating himself, as he kissed the Baroness's hand. "She is losing her good habits. Is the fashion for dissipation spreading? For I observe that M. le Chevalier is at Les Touches again this evening."

"Say nothing of his visits there before Mlle. de Pen-Hoël," exclaimed the old lady in an undertone.

"Ah! mademoiselle," Mariotte put in, "how can you keep the whole town from talking?"

"And what do they say?" asked the Baroness.

"All the girls and the old gossips—everybody, in short—are saying that he is in love with Mlle. des Touches."

"A young fellow so handsome as Calyste is only following his calling by making himself loved," said the Baron.

"Here is Mlle de Pen-Hoël," said Mariotte.

The gravel in the courtyard was, in fact, heard to crunch under this lady's deliberate steps, heralded by a lad bearing a lantern. On seeing this retainer, Mariotte transferred her stool and distaff to the large hall, where she could chat with him by the light of the rosin candle that burned at the cost of the rich and stingy old maid, thus saving her master's.

Mlle. de Pen-Hoël was a slight, thin woman, as yellow as the parchment of an archive, and wrinkled like a lake swept by the wind, with gray eyes, large prominent teeth, and hands like a man's; she was short, certainly crooked, and perhaps even humpbacked; but no one had ever been curious to study her perfections or imperfections. Dressed in the same style as Mlle. du Guénic, she made quite a commotion in a huge mass of petticoats and frills when she tried to find one of the two openings in her gown by which she got at her pockets; the strangest clinking of keys and money was then heard from beneath these skirts. All the iron paraphernalia of a good housewife was to be found on one side, and on the other her silver snuff-box, her thimble, her knitting, and other jangling objects.

Instead of the quilted hood worn by Mlle. du Guénic,

she had a green bonnet, which she no doubt wore when she went to look at her melons; like them, it had faded from green to yellow, and as for its shape, fashion has lately revived it in Paris under the name of *Bibi*. This bonnet was made under her own eye by her nieces, of green sarsnet purchased at Guérande, on a shape she bought new every five years at Nantes—for she allowed it the life of an administration. Her nieces also made her gowns, but by an immemorial pattern. The old maid still used the crutch-handled cane which ladies carried at the beginning of the reign of Marie-Antoinette. She was of the first nobility of Brittany. On her shield figured the ermines of the ancient duchy; the illustrious Breton house of Pen-Hoël ended in her and her sister.

This younger sister had married a Kergarouët, who, in spite of the disapprobation of the neighbors, had added the name of Pen-Hoël to his own, and called himself the Vicomte de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël.

“Heaven has punished him,” the old maid would say. “He has only daughters, and the name of Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël will become extinct.”

Mlle. de Pen-Hoël enjoyed an income of about seven thousand francs from land. For thirty-six years, since she had come of age, she herself had managed her estates; she rode out to inspect them, and on every point displayed the firmness of will characteristic of deformed persons. Her avarice was the amazement of all for ten leagues round, but viewed with no disapprobation. She kept one woman servant and this lad; all her expenditure, not inclusive of taxes, did not come to more than a thousand francs a year. Hence she was the object of the most flattering attentions from the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, who spent the winter at Nantes, and the summer at their country-house on the banks of the Loire just below Indret. It was known that she intended to leave her fortune and her savings to that one of her nieces whom she might prefer. Every three months one of the four Demoiselles de Kergarouët came to spend a few days with her.

Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, a great friend of Zéphirine du

Guénic's, and brought up in the faith and fear of the Breton dignity of the Guénics, had conceived a plan, since Calyste's birth, of securing her wealth to this youth by getting him to marry one of these nieces, to be bestowed on him by the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël. She proposed to repurchase some of the best land for the Guénics by paying off the farmers' loans. When avarice has an end in view, it ceases to be a vice; it is the instrument of virtue; its stern privations become a constant sacrifice; in short, it has greatness of purpose concealed beneath its meanness. Zéphirine was perhaps in Jacqueline's secret. Perhaps, too, the Baroness, whose whole intelligence was absorbed in love for her son and tender care for his father, may have guessed something when she saw with what pertinacious perseverance Mlle. de Pen-Hoël would bring with her, day after day, Charlotte de Kergarouët, her favorite niece, now fifteen. The priest, M. Grimont, was undoubtedly in her confidence; he helped the old lady to invest her money well. But if Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had had three hundred thousand francs in gold—the sum at which her savings were commonly estimated; if she had had ten times more land than she owned, the du Guénics would never have allowed themselves to pay her such attention as might lead the old maid to fancy that they were thinking of her fortune. With an admirable instinct of truly Breton pride, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, gladly accepting the supremacy assumed by her old friends Zéphirine and the du Guénics, always expressed herself honored by a visit when the descendant of Irish Kings and Zéphirine condescended to call on her. She went so far as to conceal with care the little extravagance which she winked at every evening by permitting her boy to burn an *oribus* at the du Guénics—the gingerbread colored candle which is commonly used in various districts in the West. This rich old maid was indeed aristocracy, pride, and dignity personified.

At the moment when the reader is studying her portrait, an indiscretion on the part of the Curé had betrayed the fact that, on the evening when the old Baron, the young Chevalier, and Gasselin stole away armed with swords and



fowling-pieces to join MADAME in La Vendée—to Fanny's extreme terror, and to the great joy of the Bretons—Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had placed in the Baron's hands a sum of ten thousand francs in gold, an immense sacrifice, supplemented by ten thousand francs more, the fruits of a tithe collected by the Curé, which the old partisan was requested to lay at the feet of Henri V.'s mother, in the name of the Pen-Hoëls and of the parish of Guérande.

Meanwhile she treated Calyste with the airs of a woman who believes she is in her rights; her schemes justified her in keeping an eye on him; not that she was strait-laced in her ideas as to questions of gallantry—she had all the indulgence of a woman of the old régime; but she had a horror of Revolutionary manners. Calyste, who might have risen in her esteem by intrigues with Breton women, would have fallen immensely if he had taken up what she called the new-fangled ways. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, who would have unearthed a sum of money to pay off a girl he had seduced, would have regarded Calyste as a reckless spendthrift if she had seen him driving a tilbury, or heard him talk of setting out for Paris. And if she had found him reading some impious review or newspaper, it is impossible to imagine what she might have done. To her, new notions meant the rotation of crops, sheer ruin under the guise of improvements and method, lands ultimately mortgaged as a result of experiments. To her, thrift was the real way to make a fortune; good management consisted in filling her outhouses with buckwheat, rye, and hemp, in waiting for prices to rise at the risk of being known to force the market, and in resolutely hoarding her corn-sacks. As it happened, strangely enough, she had often met with good bargains that confirmed her in her principles. She was thought cunning, but she was not really clever; she had only the methodical habits of a Dutchwoman, the caution of a cat, the pertinacity of a priest; and this, in a land of routine, was as good as the deepest perspicacity.

“Shall we see M. du Halga this evening?” asked Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, taking off her knitted worsted mittens after exchanging the usual civilities.

“Yes, mademoiselle, I saw him airing his dog in the Mall,” replied the Curé.

“Then our *mouche* will be lively this evening,” said she. “We were but four last night.”

On hearing the word *mouche*, the priest rose, and brought out of a drawer of one of the cabinets a small round basket of fine willow, some ivory counters as yellow as Turkish tobacco, from twenty years’ service, and a pack of cards as greasy as those of the custom-house officers of Saint-Nazaire, who only have a new pack once a fortnight. The Abbé himself sorted out the proper number of counters for each player, and put the basket by the lamp in the middle of the table, with childish eagerness and the manner of a man accustomed to fulfill this little task. A loud rap in military style presently echoed through the silent depths of the old house. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël’s little servant went solemnly to open the gate. Before long the tall, lean figure of the Chevalier du Halga, formerly flag-captain under Admiral de Kergarouët, was seen, carefully dressed to suit the season, a black object in the dusk that still prevailed outside.

“Come in, Chevalier,” cried Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

“The altar is prepared!” said the priest.

Du Halga, whose health was poor, wore flannel for the rheumatism, a black silk cap to protect his head against the fog, and a spencer to guard his precious chest from the sudden blasts of wind that refresh the atmosphere of Guérande. He always went about armed with a rattan to drive off dogs when they tried to make inopportune love to his own, which was a lady. This man, as minutely particular as any fine lady, put out by the smallest obstacles, speaking low to spare the voice remaining to him, had been in his day one of the bravest and most capable officers of the King’s navy. He had been honored with the confidence of the Bailli de Suffren, and the Comte de Portenduère’s friendship. His valor, as captain of Admiral de Kergarouët’s flagship, was scored in legible characters on his face, seamed with scars. No one, on looking at him, could have recognized the voice that had roared down the storm, the eye that had swept the horizon, the indomitable courage of a Breton

seaman. He did not smoke, he never swore; he was as gentle and quiet as a girl, and devoted himself to his dog Thisbe and her various little whims with the absorption of an old woman. He gave everyone a high idea of his departed gallantry. He never spoke of the startling acts which had amazed the Comte d'Estaing.

Though he stooped like a pensioner, and walked as though he feared to tread on eggs at every step, though he complained of a cool breeze, of a scorching sun, of a damp fog, he displayed fine white teeth set in red gums, which were reassuring as to his health; and, indeed, his complaint must have been an expensive one, for it consisted in eating four meals a day of monastic abundance. His frame, like the Baron's, was large-boned and indestructibly strong, covered with parchment stretched tightly over the bones, like the coat of an Arab horse that shines in the sun over its sinews. His complexion had preserved the tanned hue it had acquired in his voyages to India, but he had brought back no ideas and no reminiscences. He had emigrated; he had lost all his fortune; then he had recovered the Cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of two thousand francs, legitimately earned by his services, and paid out of the fund for naval pensions. The harmless hypochondria that led him to invent a thousand imaginary ailments was easily accounted for by his sufferings during the Emigration. He had served in the Russian navy till the day when the Emperor Alexander wanted him to serve against France; he then retired and went to live at Odessa, near the Duc de Richelieu, with whom he came home, and who procured the payment of the pension due to this noble wreck of the old Breton navy.

At the death of Louis XVIII. he came home to Guérande, and was chosen mayor of the town. The Curé, the Chevalier, and Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had been for fifteen years in the habit of spending their evenings at the Hôtel du Guénic, whither also came a few persons of good family from the town and immediate neighborhood. It is easy to see that the Guénic family were the leaders of this little Faubourg Saint-Germain of the district, into which no official was admitted who had been appointed to his post by the new

Government. For six years past the Curé invariably coughed at the critical words of *Domine, salvum fac regem*. Politics always stuck at that point in Guérande.

*Mouche* (a sort of loo) is a game played with five cards in each hand and a turn-up. The turned-up card decides the trumps. At every fresh deal each player is at liberty to play or to retire. If he throws away his hand, he loses only his deposit; for as long as no fines have been paid into the pool, each player must contribute to it. Those who play must make a trick, paid for in proportion to the contents of the pool; if there are five sous in the trick, he pays one sou. The player who fails to pay is *looad*; he then owes as much as the pool contains, which increases it for the following deal. The fines due are written down; they are added to the pools one after another in diminishing order, the heaviest before the lesser sums. Those who decline to play show their cards during the play, but they count for nothing. The players may discard and draw from the pack, as at *écarté*, in order of seniority. Each player may change as many cards as he likes, so the eldest and the second hands may use up the pack between them. The turned-up card belongs to the dealer, who is the youngest hand; he has a right to exchange it for any card in his own hand. One terrible card takes all others, and is known as *mistigris*; *mistigris* is the knave of clubs. This game, though so excessively simple, is not devoid of interest. The covetousness natural to man finds scope in it, as well as some diplomatic finessing and play of expression.

At the Hôtel du Guénic each player purchased twenty counters for five sous, by which the stake amounted to five liards each deal, an important sum in the eyes of these gamblers. With very great luck a player might win fifty sous, more than anyone in Guérande spent in a day. And Mlle. de Pen-Hoël came to this game—of which the simplicity is unsurpassed in the nomenclature of the Academy, unless by that of Beggar my Neighbor—with an eagerness as great as that of a sportsman at a great hunting party. Mlle. Zéphirine, who was the Baroness's partner, attached

no less importance to the game of *mouche*. To risk a liard for the chance of winning five, deal after deal, constituted a serious financial speculation to the thrifty old woman, and she threw herself into it with as much moral energy as the greediest speculator puts into gambling on the Bourse for the rise and fall of shares.

By a diplomatic convention, dating from September 1825, after a certain evening when Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had lost thirty-seven sous, the game was ended as soon as anyone expressed a wish to that effect after losing ten sous. Politeness would not allow of a player being put to the little discomfort of looking on at the game without taking part in it. But every passion has its jesuitical side. The Chevalier du Halga and the Baron, two old politicians, had found a way of evading the act. When all the players were equally eager to prolong an exciting game, the brave Chevalier, one of those bachelors who are prodigal and rich by the expenses they save, always offered to lend Mlle. de Pen-Hoël or Mlle. Zéphirine ten counters when either of them had lost her five sous, on the understanding that she should repay them if she should win. An old bachelor might allow himself such an act of gallantry to the unmarried ladies. The Baron also would offer the old maids ten counters, under pretense of not stopping the game. The avaricious old women always accepted, not without some pressing, after the usage and custom of old maids. But to allow themselves such a piece of extravagance the Baron and the Chevalier must first have won, otherwise the offer bore the character of an affront.

This game was in its glory when a young Mlle. de Kergarouët was on a visit to her aunt—Kergarouët only, for the family had never succeeded in getting itself called Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël by anybody here, not even by the servants, who had indeed peremptory orders on this point. The aunt spoke of the *mouche* parties at the du Guénics' as a great treat. The girl was enjoined to make herself agreeable—an easy matter enough when she saw the handsome Calyste, on whom the four young ladies all doted. These damsels, brought up in the midst of modern civilization,

thought little of five sous, and paid fine after fine. Then fines would be scored up to a total sometimes of five francs, on a scale ranging from two sous and a half up to ten sous. These were evenings of intense excitement to the old blind woman. The tricks were called *mains* (or hands) at Guérande. The Baroness would press her foot on her sister-in-law's as many times as she had, as she believed, tricks in her hand. The question of play or no play on occasions when the pool was full led to secret struggles in which covetousness contended with alarms. The players would ask each other, "Are you coming in?" with feelings of envy of those who had good enough cards to tempt fate, and spasms of despair when they were forced to retire.

If Charlotte de Kergarouët, who was commonly thought foolhardy, was lucky in her daring when her aunt had won nothing, she was treated with coldness when they got home, and had a little lecture: "She was too decided and forward; a young girl ought not to challenge persons older than herself; she had an overbold manner of seizing the pool, or declaring to play; a young person should show more reserve and modesty in her manners; it was not seemly to laugh at the misfortunes of others," and so forth.

Then perennial jests, repeated a thousand times a year, but always fresh, turned on the carriage of the basket when the pool overflowed it. They must get oxen to draw it, elephants, horses, asses, dogs. And at the end of twenty years no one noticed the staleness of the joke; it always provoked the same smile. It was the same thing with the remarks caused by the annoyance of seeing a pool taken from those who had helped to fill it and got nothing out. The cards were dealt with automatic slowness. They talked in chest-tones. And these respectable and high-born personages were so delightfully mean as to suspect each other's play. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël almost always accused the Curé of cheating when he won a pool.

"But what is so odd," the Curé would say, "is that I never cheat when I am fined."

No one laid down a card without profound meditation, without keen scrutiny, and more or less astute hints, ingeni-

ous and searching remarks. The deals were interrupted, you may be sure, by gossip as to what was going on in the town, or discussions on politics. Frequently the players would pause for a quarter of an hour, their cards held in a fan against their chest, absorbed in talk. Then, if after such an interruption a counter was short in the pool, everybody was certain that his or her counter was not missing; and generally it was the Chevalier who made up the loss, under general accusations of thinking of nothing but the singing in his ears, his headache, or his fads, and of forgetting to put in. As soon as he had paid up a counter, old Zéphirine or the cunning hunchback was seized with remorse; they then fancied that perhaps the fault was theirs; they thought, they doubted; but, after all, the Chevalier could afford the little loss! The Baron often quite forgot what he was about when the misfortunes of the royal family came under discussion.

Sometimes the game resulted in a way that was invariably a surprise to the players, who each counted on being the winner. After a certain number of rounds each had won back his counters, and went away, the hour being late, without loss or profit, but not without excitement. On these depressing evenings the *mouche* was abused; it had not been interesting; the players accused the game, as negroes beat the reflection of the moon in water when the weather is bad. The evening had been dull; they had toiled so hard for so little.

When, on their first visit, the Vicomte de Kergarouët and his wife spoke of whist and boston as games more interesting than *mouche*, and were encouraged to teach them by the Baroness, who was bored to death by *mouche*, the company lent themselves to the innovation, not without strong protest; but it was impossible to make these games understood; and as soon as the Kergarouëts had left, they were spoken of as overwhelmingly abstruse, as algebraical puzzles, and incredibly difficult. They all preferred their beloved *mouche*, their unpretentious little *mouche*. And *mouche* triumphed over the modern games, as old things constantly triumph over new in Brittany.

While the Curé dealt the cards, the Baroness was asking the Chevalier du Halga the same questions as she had asked the day before as to his health. The Chevalier made it a point of honor to have some new complaint. Though the questions were always the same, the Captain had a great advantage in his replies. To-day his false ribs had been troubling him. The remarkable thing was that the worthy man never complained of his wounds. Everything serious he was prepared for, he understood it; but fantastic ailments—pains in his head, dogs devouring his inside, bells ringing in his ears, and a thousand other crotchets worried him greatly; he set up as an incurable, with all the more reason that physicians know no remedy for maladies that are non-existent.

“Yesterday, I fancy you had pains in your legs?” said the Curé very seriously.

“They move about,” replied du Halga.

“Legs in your false ribs?” asked Mlle. Zéphirine.

“And made no halt on the way?” said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël with a smile.

The Chevalier bowed gravely, with a negative shake of the head, not without fun in it, which would have proved to an observer that in his youth the seaman must have been witty, loved, and loving. His fossilized life at Guérande covered perhaps many memories. As he stood planted on his heron’s legs in the sun, stupidly watching the sea, or his dog sporting on the Mall, perhaps he was alive again in the earthly paradise of a past rich in remembrance.

“So the old Duc de Lenoncourt is dead!” said the Baron, recalling the passage in the *Quotidienne* at which his wife had stopped. “Well, well, the first gentleman-in-waiting had not long to wait before following his master. I shall soon go too.”

“My dear! my dear!” said his wife, gently patting his lean and bony hand.

“Let him talk, sister,” said Zéphirine. “So long as I am above ground, he will not go under ground. He is younger than I am.”

A cheerful smile brightened the old woman’s face when



the Baron dropped a reflection of this kind, the players and callers would look at each other anxiously, grieved to find the King of Guérande out of spirits. Those who had come to see him would say as they went away, "M. du Guénic is much depressed; have you noticed how much he sleeps?" And next day all Guérande would be talking of it: "The Baron du Guénic is failing."—The words began the conversation in every house in the place.

"And is Thisbe well?" asked Mlle. de Pen-Hoël as soon as the deal was over.

"The poor little beast is like me," said the Chevalier. "Her nerves are out of order; she is always holding up one of her legs as she runs.—Like this."

And in showing how Thisbe ran, by bending his arm as he raised it, the Chevalier allowed his neighbor, Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, to see his cards; she wanted to know whether he had trumps or *mistigris*. This was a first finesse to which he fell a prey.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Baroness, "the tip of M. le Curé's nose has turned pale, he must have *mistigris*!"

The joy of having *mistigris* was so great to the Curé, as to all the players, that the poor priest could not disguise it. There is in each human face some spot where every secret motion of the heart betrays itself; and these good people, accustomed to watch each other, had, after the lapse of years, discovered the weak place in the Curé—when he had *mistigris* the tip of his nose turned white. Then they all took care not to play.

"You have had visitors to-day?" said the Chevalier to Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

"Yes; one of my brother-in-law's cousins. He surprised me by telling me of the intended marriage of Mme. la Comtesse de Kergarouët, a Demoiselle de Fontaine——"

"A daughter of Grand-Jacques!" exclaimed du Halga, who during his stay in Paris had never left his Admiral's side.

"The Countess inherits everything; she has married a man who was ambassador.—He told me the most extraordinary things about our neighbor, Mlle. des Touches; so

extraordinary, that I will not believe them. Calyste could never be so attentive to her; he has surely enough good sense to perceive such monstrosities."

"Monstrosities!" said the Baron, roused by the word.

The Baroness and the priest looked meaningly at each other. The cards were dealt. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had *mistigris*; she did not want to continue the conversation, but was glad to cover her delight under the general amazement caused by this word.

"It is your turn to lead, M. le Baron," said she, bridling.

"My nephew is not one of those young men who like monstrosities," said Zéphirine, poking her knitting-pin through her hair.

"*Mistigris!*" cried Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, without answering her friend.

The Curé, who appeared fully informed as to all that concerned Calyste and Mlle. des Touches, did not enter the lists.

"What does she do that is so extraordinary, this Mlle. des Touches?" asked the Baron.

"She smokes," said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

"It is very wholesome," said the Chevalier.

"Her bacon?" asked the Baron.

"Her bacon! She does not save it," retorted the old maid.

"Everyone played, and everyone is loosed; I have the king, queen, and knave of trumps, *mistigris*, and a king," said the Baroness. "The pool is ours, sister."

This stroke, won without play, overwhelmed Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, who thought no more of Calyste and Mlle. des Touches. At nine o'clock no one remained in the room but the Baroness and the Curé. The four old people had gone away and to bed.

The Chevalier, as usual, escorted Mlle. de Pen-Hoël to her own house in the Market Place, making remarks on the skill of the last player, on their good or ill luck, or on the ever-new glee with which Mlle. Zéphirine's pocket engulfed her winnings, for the old blind woman made no attempt now to disguise the expression of her sentiments in her face. Mme. du Guénic's absence of mind was their subject to-night.

The Chevalier had observed the charming Irishwoman's inattention to the game. On the doorstep, when her boy had gone upstairs, the old lady replied in confidence to the Chevalier's guesses as to the Baroness's strange manner by these words, big with importance—

“I know the reason; Calyste is done for if he is not soon married. He is in love with Mlle. des Touches—an actress!”

“In that case, send for Charlotte.”

“My sister shall hear from me to-morrow,” said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, bidding him good-night.

From this study of a normal evening, the commotion may be imagined that was produced in the home circles of Guérande by the arrival, the stay, the departure, or even the passing through of a stranger.

When not a sound was audible in the Baron's room or in his sister's, Mme. du Guénic turned to the priest, who was pensively playing with the counters.

“I see that you at last share my uneasiness about Calyste,” she said.

“Did you notice Mlle. de Pen-Hoël's prim air this evening?” asked he.

“Yes,” replied the Baroness.

“She has, I know, the very best intentions towards our dear Calyste; she loves him as if he were her son; and his conduct in La Vendée at his father's side, with MADAME'S praise of his devoted behavior, has added to the affection Mlle. de Pen-Hoël feels for him. She will endow either of her nieces whom Calyste may marry with all her fortune by deed of gift.

“You have, I know, in Ireland, a far richer match for your beloved boy; but it is well to have two strings to one's bow. In the event of your family not choosing to undertake to settle anything on Calyste, Mlle. de Pen-Hoël's fortune is not to be despised. You could, no doubt, find your son a wife with seven thousand francs a year, but not the savings of forty years, nor lands managed, tilled, and kept up as Mlle. de Pen-Hoël's are. That wicked woman, Mlle. des Touches, has come to spoil everything. We have at last found out something about her.”

“ Well? ” asked the mother.

“ Oh, she is a slut, a baggage,” exclaimed the Curé. “ A woman of doubtful habits, always hanging about the theaters in the company of actors and actresses, squandering her fortune with journalists, painters, musicians—the devil’s own, in short! When she writes, she uses a different name in her books, and is better known by that, it is said, than by that of des Touches. A perfect imp, who has never been inside a church since her first communion, excepting to stare at statues or pictures. She has spent her fortune in decorating Les Touches in the most improper manner to make it a sort of Mahomet’s Paradise, where the houris are not women. There is more good wine drunk there while she is in the place than in all Guérande besides in a year. Last year the Demoiselles Bougniol had for lodgers some men with goats’ beards, suspected of being ‘ blues,’ who used to go to her house, and who sang songs that made those virtuous girls blush and weep. That is the woman your son at present adores.

“ If that creature were to ask this evening for one of the atrocious books in which atheists nowadays laugh everything to scorn, the young Chevalier would come and saddle his horse with his own hands to ride off at a gallop to fetch it for her from Nantes. I do not know that Calyste would do so much for the Church. And then, Bretonne as she is, she is not a Royalist. If it were necessary to march out, gun in hand, for the good cause, should Mlle. des Touches—or Camille Maupin, for that, I remember, is her name—want to keep Calyste with her, your son would let his old father set out alone.”

“ No,” said the Baroness.

“ I should not like to put him to the test, you might feel it too painfully,” replied the Curé. “ All Guérande is in a commotion over the Chevalier’s passion for this amphibious creature that is neither man nor woman, who smokes like a trooper, writes like a journalist, and, at this moment, has under her roof the most malignant writer of them all, according to the postmaster—a trimmer who reads all the papers. It is talked of at Nantes. This morning the

Kergarouët cousin, who wants to see Charlotte married to a man who has sixty thousand francs a year, came to call on Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, and turned her head with roundabout tales about Mlle. des Touches which lasted seven hours.—There is a quarter to ten striking by the church clock, and Calyste is not come in; he is at Les Touches—perhaps he will not come back till morning.”

The Baroness listened to the Curé, who had unconsciously substituted monologue for dialogue; he was looking at this lamb of his flock, reading her uneasy thoughts in her face. The Baroness was blushing and trembling. When the Abbé Grimont saw tears in the distressed mother’s beautiful eyes, he was deeply touched.

“I will see Mlle. de Pen-Hoël to-morrow, be comforted,” said he, in an encouraging tone. “The mischief is, perhaps, not so great as rumor says; I will find out the truth. Besides, Mlle. Jacqueline has confidence in me. Again, we have brought up Calyste, and he will not allow himself to be bewitched by the demon; he will do nothing to disturb the peace of his family, or the plans we are making for his future life. Do not weep; all is not lost, madame; one fault is not vice.”

“You only tell me the details,” said the Baroness. “Was not I the first to perceive the change in Calyste? A mother feels keenly the pain of being second in her son’s affections, the grief of not being alone in his heart. That phase of a man’s life is one of the woes of motherhood; but though I knew it must come, I did not expect it so soon. And, then, I could have wished that he should have taken into his heart some beautiful and noble creature, not a mere actress, a posture-maker, a woman who frequents theaters, an authoress accustomed to feign feeling, a bad woman who will deceive him and make him wretched. She has had ‘affairs’?”

“With many men,” said the Abbé Grimont. “And yet this miscreant was born in Brittany. She is a disgrace to her native soil. On Sunday I will preach a sermon about her.”

“By no means!” exclaimed the Baroness. “The marshmen and peasants are capable of attacking Les Touches.

Calyste is worthy of his name; he is a true Breton; and some evil might come of it if he were there, for he would fight for her as if she were the Blessed Virgin."

"It is striking ten; I will bid you good-night," said the Abbé, lighting the *oribus* of his lantern, of which the clear glass panes and glittering metal-work showed his house-keeper's minute care for all the concerns of the house. "Who could have told me, madame," he went on, "that a young man nursed at your breast, brought up by me in Christian ideas, a fervent Catholic, a boy who lived like a lamb without spot, would plunge into such a foul bog?"

"But is that quite certain?" said the mother. "And, after all, how could any woman help loving Calyste?"

"No proof is needed beyond that witch's prolonged stay at Les Touches. During twenty-four years, since she came of age, this is the longest visit she has paid here. Happily for us, her apparitions have hitherto been brief."

"A woman past forty!" said the Baroness. "I have heard it said in Ireland that such a woman is the most dangerous mistress a young man can have."

"On that point I am ignorant," replied the Curé. "Nay, and I shall die in my ignorance."

"Alas! and so shall I," said the Baroness. "I wish now that I had ever been in love, to be able to study, advise, and comfort Calyste."

The priest did not cross the clean little courtyard alone; Mme. du Guénic went with him as far as the gate, in the hope of hearing Calyste's step in Guérande; but she heard only the heavy sound of the Abbe's deliberate tread, which grew fainter in the distance, and ceased when the shutting of the priest's door echoed through the silent town.

The poor mother went indoors in despair at learning that the whole town was informed of what she had believed herself alone in knowing. She sat down, revived the lamp by cutting the wick with a pair of old scissors, and took up the worsted work she was accustomed to do while waiting for Calyste. She flattered herself that she thus induced her son to come home earlier, to spend less time with Mlle. des Touches. But this stratagem of maternal jealousy was

in vain. Calyste's visits to Les Touches became more and more frequent, and every evening he came in a little later; at last, the previous night, he had not returned till midnight.

The Baroness, sunk in meditation, set her stitches with the energy of women who can think while following some manual occupation. Anyone who should have seen her bent to catch the light of the lamp, in the midst of the paneling of this room, four centuries old, must have admired the noble picture. Fanny's flesh had a transparency that seemed to show her thoughts legible on her brow. Stung, now, by the curiosity that comes to pure-minded women, she wondered by what diabolical secrets these daughters of Baal so bewitched a man as to make him forget his mother and family, his country, his self-interest. Then she went so far as to wish she could see the woman, so as to judge her sanely. She calculated the extent of the mischief that the innovating spirit of the age—which the Curé described as so dangerous to youthful souls—might do to her only child, till now as guileless and pure as an innocent girl, whose beauty could not be fresher than his.

Calyste, a noble offshoot of the oldest Breton and the noblest Irish blood, had been carefully brought up by his mother. Till the moment when the Baroness handed him over to the Curé of Guérande, she was sure that not an indecent word, nor an evil idea, had ever soiled her son's ear or his understanding. The mother, after rearing him on her own milk, and thus giving him a double infusion of her blood, could present him in virginal innocence to the priest who, out of reverence for the family, undertook to give him a complete and Christian education. Calyste was educated on the plan of the Seminary where the Abbé Grimont had been brought up. His mother taught him English. A mathematical master was discovered, not without difficulty, among the clerks at Saint-Nazaire. Calyste, of course, knew nothing of modern literature, or of the latest advance and progress of science. His education was limited to the geography and emasculated history taught in girls' schools, to the Latin and Greek of the Seminary, to the literature

of dead languages, and a limited selection of French writers. When, at sixteen, he began what the Abbé called his course of philosophy, he was still as innocent as at the moment when Fanny had handed him over to the Curé. The Church was no less maternal than the mother; without being bigoted or ridiculous, this well-beloved youth was a fervent Catholic.

The Baroness longed to plan a happy and obscure life for her handsome and immaculate son. She expected some little fortune from an old aunt, about two or three thousand pounds sterling; this sum, added to the present fortune of the Guénics, might enable her to find a wife for Calyste who would bring him twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year. Charlotte de Kergarouët, with her aunt's money, some rich Irish girl, or any other heiress—it was a matter of indifference to the Baroness. She knew nothing of love; like all the people among whom she lived, she regarded marriage as a stepping-stone to fortune. Passion was a thing unknown to these Catholics, old people wholly occupied in saving their souls, in thinking of God, the King, and their own wealth.

No one, therefore, can be surprised at the gravity of the reflections that mingled with the wounded feelings in this mother's heart, living, as she did, as much for her boy's interests as by his affection. If the young couple would but listen to reason, by living parsimoniously and economizing, as country folk know how, by the second generation the du Guénics might repurchase their estates and reconquer the splendor of wealth. The Baroness hoped to live to be old that she might see the dawn of that life of ease. Mlle. du Guénic had understood and adopted this scheme, and now it was threatened by Mlle. des Touches.

Mme. du Guénic heard midnight strike with horror, and she endured an hour more of fearful alarms, for the stroke of one rang out, and still Calyste had not come home.

“Will he stay there?” she wondered. “It would be the first time—poor child!”

At this moment Calyste's step was heard in the street. The poor mother, in whose heart joy took the place of



anxiety, flew from the room to the gate and opened it for her son.

“My dearest mother,” cried Calyste, with a look of vexation, “why sit up for me? I have the latch-key and a tinder-box.”

“You know, my child, that I can never sleep while you are out,” said she, kissing him.

When the Baroness had returned to the room, she looked into her son’s face to read in its expression what had happened during the evening; but this look produced in her, as it always did, a certain emotion which custom does not weaken—which all loving mothers feel as they gaze at their human masterpiece, and which for a moment dims their sight.

Calyste had black eyes, full of vigor and sunshine, inherited from his father, with the fine fair hair, the aquiline nose and lovely mouth, the turned-up finger-tips, the soft complexion, finish, and fairness of his mother. Though he looked not unlike a girl dressed as a man, he was wonderfully strong. His sinews had the elasticity and tension of steel springs, and the singular effect of his black eyes had a charm of its own. As yet he had no hair on his face; this late development, it is said, is a promise of long life. The young Chevalier, who wore a short jacket of black velvet, like his mother’s gown, with silver buttons, had a blue neckerchief, neat gaiters, and trousers of gray drill. His snowy-white forehead bore the traces as it seemed of great fatigue, but, in fact, they were those of a burden of sad thoughts. His mother, having no suspicion of the sorrows that were eating the lad’s heart out, ascribed this transient change to happiness. Calyste was, nevertheless, as beautiful as a Greek god, handsome without conceit; for, in the first place, he was accustomed to see his mother, and he also cared but little for beauty, which he knew to be useless.

“And those lovely smooth cheeks,” thought she, “where the rich young blood flows in a thousand tiny veins, belong to another woman, who is mistress, too, of that girl-like brow? Passion will stamp them with its agitations, and dim those fine eyes, as liquid now as a child’s!”

The bitter thought fell heavy on Mme. du Guénic's heart, and spoilt her pleasure.

It must seem strange that, in a family where six persons were obliged to live on three thousand francs a year, the son should have a velvet coat, and the mother a velvet dress; but Fanny O'Brien had rich relations and aunts in London who reminded the Breton Baroness of their existence by sending her presents. Some of her sisters, having married well, took an interest in Calyste so far as to think of finding him a rich wife, knowing that he was as handsome and as well born as their exiled favorite Fanny.

"You stayed later at Les Touches than you did yesterday, my darling?" she said to him at last, in a broken voice.

"Yes, mother dear," replied he, without adding any explanation.

The brevity of the answer brought a cloud to his mother's brow; she postponed any explanation till the morrow. When mothers are disturbed by such alarms as the Baroness felt at this moment, they almost tremble before their sons; they instinctively feel the effects of the great emancipation of love; they understand all that this new feeling will rob them of; but, at the same time, they are, in a sense, glad of their son's happiness; there is a fierce struggle in their heart. Though the result is that the son is grown up, and on a higher level, true mothers do not like their tacit abdication; they would rather keep their child little and wanting care. That, perhaps, is the secret of mothers' favoritism for weakly, deformed, and helpless children.

"You are very tired, dear child," said she, swallowing down her tears. "Go to bed."

A mother who does not know everything her son is doing thinks of him as lost when she loves and is as well loved as Fanny. And perhaps any other mother would have quaked in her place as much as Mme. du Guénic. The patience of twenty years might be made useless. Calyste—a human masterpiece of noble, prudent, and religious training—might be ruined; the happiness so carefully prepared for him might be destroyed forever by a woman.

Next day Calyste slept till noon, for his mother would not allow him to be roused; Mariotte gave the spoilt boy his breakfast in bed. The immutable and almost conventional rule that governed the hours of meals yielded to the young gentleman's caprices. Indeed, when at any time it was necessary to obtain Mlle. du Guénic's bunch of keys to get out something between meals which would necessitate interminable explanations, the only way of doing it was to plead some whim of Calyste's.

At about one o'clock, the Baron, his wife, and mademoiselle were sitting in the dining-room; they dined at three. The Baroness had taken up the *Quotidienne*, and was finishing it to her husband, who was always rather more wakeful before his meals. Just as she had done, Mme. du Guénic heard her son's step on the floor above, and laid down the paper, saying—

“Calyste, I suppose, is dining at Les Touches again to-day; he has just finished dressing.”

“He takes his pleasure—that boy!” said the old lady, pulling a silver whistle out of her pocket, and whistling once.

Mariotte came through the turret, making her appearance at the door which was hidden by a silk damask curtain, like those at the windows.

“Yes,” said she, “did you please to want anything?”

“The Chevalier is dining at Les Touches; we shall not want the fish.”

“Well, we do not know yet,” said the Baroness.

“You seem vexed about it, sister; I know by the tone of your voice,” said the blind woman.

“M. Grimont has learnt some serious facts about Mlle. des Touches, who, during the last year, has done so much to change our dear Calyste.”

“In what way?” asked the Baron.

“Well, he reads all sorts of books.”

“Ah, ha!” said the Baron; “then that is why he neglects hunting and riding.”

“She leads a very reprehensible life, and calls herself by a man's name,” Mme. du Guénic went on.

“A nickname among comrades,” said the old man. “I

used to be called *l'Intimé*, the Comte de Fontaine was *Grand-Jacques*, the Marquis de Montauran was *le Gars*. I was a great friend of *Ferdinand's*; he did not submit, any more than I did. Those were good times! There was plenty of fighting, and we had some fun here and there, all the same."

These reminiscences of the war, thus taking the place of paternal anxiety, distressed Fanny for a moment. The Curé's revelations, and her son's want of confidence, had hindered her sleeping.

"And if M. le Chevalier should be in love with Mlle. des Touches, where is the harm?" exclaimed Mariotte. "She is a fine woman, and has thirty thousand crowns a year."

"What are you talking about, Mariotte," cried the old man. "A du Guénic to marry a des Touches! The des Touches were not even our squires at a time when the du Guesclins regarded an alliance with us as a distinguished honor."

"A woman who calls herself by a man's name—Camille Maupin!" added the Baroness.

"The Maupins are an old family," said the old man. "They are Norman, and bear *gules, three*——" he stopped short. "But she cannot be a man and a woman at the same time."

"She calls herself Maupin at the theater."

"A des Touches cannot be an actress," said the old man. "If I did not know you, Fanny, I should think you were mad."

"She writes pieces and books," the Baroness went on.

"Writes books!" said the Baron, looking at his wife with as much astonishment as if he had heard of a miracle. "I have heard that Mlle. de Scudéri and Mme. de Sévigné wrote books, and that was not the best of what they did. But only Louis XIV. and his Court could produce such prodigies."

"You will be dining at Les Touches, won't you, monsieur?" said Mariotte to Calyste, who came in.

"Probably," said the young man.

Mariotte was not inquisitive, and she was one of the

family; she left the room without waiting to hear the question Mme. du Guénic was about to put to Calyste.

"You are going to Les Touches again, my Calyste?" said she, with an emphasis on *my* Calyste. "And Les Touches is not a decent and reputable house. The mistress of it leads a wild life; she will corrupt our boy. Camille Maupin makes him read a great many books—she has had a great many adventures! And you knew it, bad child, and never said anything about it to your old folks."

"The Chevalier is discreet," said his father, "an old world virtue!"

"Too discreet!" said the jealous mother, as she saw the color mount to her son's brow.

"My dear mother," said Calyste, kneeling down before her, "I did not think it necessary to proclaim my defeat. Mlle. des Touches, or, if you prefer it, Camille Maupin, rejected my love eighteen months since, when she was here last. She gently made fun of me; she might be my mother, she said; a woman of forty who loved a minor committed a sort of incest, and she was incapable of such depravity. In short, she laughed at me in a hundred ways, and quite overpowered me, for she has the wit of an angel. Then, when she saw me crying bitter tears, she comforted me by offering me her friendship in the noblest way. She has even more heart than brains; she is as generous as you are. I am like a child to her now.—Then, when she came here again, I heard that she loved another man, and I resigned myself.—Do not repeat all the calumnies you hear about her; Camille is an artist; she has genius, and leads one of those exceptional lives which cannot be judged by ordinary standards."

"My child!" said the pious Fanny, "nothing can excuse a woman for not living according to the ordinances of the Church. She fails in her duties towards God and towards society by failing in the gentle religion of her sex. A woman commits a sin even by going to a theater; but when she writes impieties to be repeated by actors, and flies about the world, sometimes with an enemy of the Pope's, sometimes with a musician—Oh! Calyste! you will find it hard to convince me that such things are acts of faith, hope, or charity.

Her fortune was given her by God to do good. What use does she make of it?"

Calyste suddenly stood up; he looked at his mother and said—

"Mother, Camille is my friend. I cannot hear her spoken of in this way, for I would give my life for her."

"Your life?" said the Baroness, gazing at her son in terror. "Your life is our life—the life of us all!"

"My handsome nephew has made use of many words that I do not understand," said the old blind woman, turning to Calyste.

"Where has he learnt them?" added his mother. "At Les Touches."

"Why, my dear mother, she found me as ignorant as a carp."

"You knew all that was essential in knowing the duties enjoined on us by religion," replied the Baroness. "Ah! that woman will undermine your noble and holy beliefs."

The old aunt rose and solemnly extended her hand towards her brother, who was sleeping.

"Calyste," said she, in a voice that came from her heart, "your father never opened a book, he speaks Breton, he fought in the midst of perils for the King and for God. Educated men had done the mischief, and gentlemen of learning had deserted their country.—Learn if you will."

She sat down again, and began knitting with the vehemence that came of her mental agitation. Calyste was struck by this Phocion-like utterance.

"In short, my dearest, I have a presentiment of some evil hanging over you in that house," said his mother, in a broken voice, as her tears fell.

"Who is making Fanny cry?" exclaimed the old man, suddenly wakened by the sound of his wife's voice. He looked round at her, his son, and his sister.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear," replied the Baroness.

"Mamma," said Calyste, in his mother's ear, "it is impossible that I should explain matters now; but we will

talk it over this evening. When you know all, you will bless Mlle. des Touches."

"Mothers have no love of cursing," replied the Baroness, "and I should never curse any woman who truly loved my Calyste."

The young man said good-by to his father, and left the house. The Baron and his wife rose to watch him as he crossed the courtyard, opened the gate, and disappeared. The Baroness did not take up the paper again; she was agitated. In a life so peaceful, so monotonous, this little discussion was as serious as a quarrel in any other family; and the mother's anxiety, though soothed, was not dispelled. Whither would this friendship, which might demand and imperil her boy's life, ultimately lead him? How could she, the Baroness, have reason to bless Mlle. des Touches? These two questions were as all-important to her simple soul as the maddest revolution can be to a diplomatist. Camille Maupin was a revolution in the quiet and simple home.

"I am very much afraid that this woman will spoil him for us," said she, taking up the newspaper again.

"My dear Fanny," said the old Baron, with knowing sprightliness, "you are too completely an angel to understand such things. Mlle. des Touches is, they say, as black as a crow, as strong as a Turk, and she is forty—our dear boy was sure to be attracted by her. He will tell a few very honorable fibs to conceal his happiness. Let him enjoy the illusions of his first love."

"If it were any other woman——"

"But, dearest Fanny, if the woman were a saint, she would not make your son welcome."

The Baroness went back to the paper.

"I will go to see her," said the old man, "and tell you what I think of her."

The speech has no point but in retrospect. After hearing the history of Camille Maupin, you may imagine the Baron face to face with this famous woman.

The town of Guérande, which for two months past had seen Calyste—its flower and its pride—going every day, morning or evening—sometimes both morning and evening—

to Les Touches, supposed that Mlle. des Touches was passionately in love with the handsome lad, and did her utmost to bewitch him. More than one girl and one young woman wondered what was the witchcraft of an old woman that she had such absolute empire over the angelic youth. And so, as Calyste crossed the High Street to go out by the gate to Le Croisic, more than one eye looked anxiously after him.

It now becomes necessary to account for the reports that were current concerning the personage whom Calyste was going to see. These rumors, swelled by Breton gossip, and envenomed by the ignorance of the public, had reached even the Curé. The tax-receiver, the justice of the peace, the head clerk of the customs at Saint-Nazaire, and other literate persons in the district, had not reassured the Abbé by telling him of the eccentric life led by the woman and artist hidden under the name of Camille Maupin.

She had not yet come to eating little children, to killing her slaves, like Cleopatra, to throwing men into the river, as the heroine of the *Tour de Nesle* is falsely accused of doing; still, to the Abbé Grimont, this monstrous creature, at once a siren and an atheist, was a most immoral combination of woman and philosopher, and fell short of every social law laid down to control or utilize the weaknesses of the fair sex. Just as Clara Gazul is the feminine pseudonym of a clever man, and George Sand that of a woman of genius, so Camille Maupin was the mask behind which a charming girl long hid herself—a Bretonne named Félicité des Touches, she who was now giving the Baronne du Guénic and the worthy Curé of Guérande so much cause for anxiety. This family has no connection with that of the des Touches of Touraine, to which the Regent's ambassador belongs, a man more famous now for his literary talents than for his diplomacy.

Camille Maupin, one of the few famous women of the nineteenth century, was long supposed to be really a man, so manly was her first appearance as an author. Everybody is now familiar with the two volumes of dramas, impossible to put on the stage, written in the manner of Shakespeare



or of Lopez de Vega, and brought out in 1822, which caused a sort of literary revolution when the great question of Romanticism *versus* Classicism was a burning one in the papers, at clubs, and at the Académie. Since then Camille Maupin has written several plays and a novel which have not belied the success of her first efforts, now rather too completely forgotten.

An explanation of the chain of circumstances by which a girl assumed a masculine incarnation—by which Félicité des Touches made herself a man and a writer—of how, more fortunate than Mme. de Staël, she remained free, and so was more readily excused for her celebrity—will, no doubt, satisfy much curiosity, and justify the existence of one of those monstrosities which stand up among mankind like monuments, their fame being favored by their rarity—for in twenty centuries scarcely twenty great women are to be counted. Hence, though she here plays but a secondary part, as she had great influence over Calyste, and is a figure in the literary history of the time, no one will be sorry if we pause to study her for a rather longer time than modern fiction usually allows.

In 1793 Mlle. Félicité des Touches found herself an orphan. Thus her estates escaped the confiscation which no doubt would have fallen on her father or brother. Her father died on the 10th of August, killed on the palace steps among the defenders of the King, on whom he was in waiting as major of the bodyguard. Her brother, a young member of the corps, was massacred at Les Carmes. Mlle. des Touches was but two years old when her mother died of grief a few days after this second blow. On her deathbed Mme. des Touches placed her little girl in the care of her sister, a nun at Chelles. This nun, Mme. de Faucombe, very prudently took the child to Faucombe, an estate of some extent near Nantes, belonging to Mme. des Touches, where she settled with three Sisters from the convent. During the last days of the Terror, the mob of Nantes demolished the château and seized the Sisters and Mlle. des Touches, who were thrown into prison under a false charge of having harbored emissaries from Pitt and from Coburg. The ninth

Thermidor saved them. Félicité's aunt died of the fright; two of the Sisters fled from France; the third handed the little girl over to her nearest relation, M. de Faucombe, her mother's uncle, who lived at Nantes, and then joined her companions in exile.

M. de Faucombe, a man of sixty, had married a young wife, to whom he left the management of his affairs. He busied himself only with archæology, a passion, or, to be accurate, a mania, which helps old men to think themselves alive. His ward's education was left entirely to chance. Félicité, little cared for by a young woman who threw herself into all the pleasures of the Emperor's reign, brought herself up like a boy. She sat with M. de Faucombe in his library, and read whatever he might happen to be reading. Thus she knew life well in theory, and preserved no innocence of mind though virginal at heart. Her intelligence wandered through all the impurities of science while her heart remained pure. Her knowledge was something amazing, fed by her passion for reading, and well served by an excellent memory. Thus, at eighteen, she was as learned as the authors of to-day ought to be before trying to write. This prodigious amount of study controlled her passions far better than a convent life, which only inflames a young girl's imagination; this brain, crammed with undigested and unclassified information, governed the heart of a child. Such a depravity of mind, absolutely devoid of any influence on her chastity of person, would have amazed a philosopher or an observer, if anyone at Nantes could have suspected the fine qualities of Mlle. des Touches.

The result was in inverse proportion to the cause: Félicité had no predisposition towards evil; she conceived of everything by her intelligence, but held aloof from the facts. She delighted old Faucombe, and helped him in his works, writing three books for the worthy gentleman, who believed them to be his own, for his spiritual paternity also was blind. Such severe work, out of harmony with the development of her girlhood, had its natural effect; Félicité fell ill, there was a fever in her blood, her lungs were threatened with inflammation. The doctors ordered her horse-exercise and social

amusements. Mlle. des Touches became a splendid horse-woman, and had recovered in a few months.

At eighteen she made her appearance in the world, where she produced such a sensation, that at Nantes she was never called anything but the beautiful Mlle. des Touches. But the adoration of which she was the object left her insensible, and she had come to this by the influence of one of the sentiments which are imperishable in a woman, however superior she may be. Snubbed by her aunt and cousins, who laughed at her studies and made fun of her distant manners, assuming that she was incapable of being attractive, Félicité aimed at being light and coquettish, in short, a woman. She had expected to find some interchange of ideas, some fascination on a level with her own lofty intelligence; she was disgusted by the commonplaces of ordinary conversation and the nonsense of flirtation; above all, she was provoked by the aristocratic airs of the military, to whom at that time everything gave way.

She had, as a matter of course, neglected the drawing-room arts. When she found herself less considered than the dolls who could play the piano, and make themselves agreeable by singing ballads, she aspired to become a musician. She retired into deep solitude, and set to work to study unremittingly under the guidance of the best master in the town. She was rich, she sent for Steibelt to give her finishing lessons, to the great astonishment of her neighbors. This princely outlay is still remembered at Nantes. The master's stay there cost her twelve thousand francs. She became at last a consummate musician. Later, in Paris, she took lessons in harmony and counterpoint, and composed two operas, which were immensely successful, though the public never knew her secret. These operas were ostensibly the work of Conti, one of the most eminent artists of our day; but this circumstance was connected with the history of her heart, and will be explained presently. The mediocrity of provincial society wearied her so excessively, her imagination was full of such grand ideas, that she withdrew from all the drawing-rooms after reappearing for a time to eclipse all other women by the splendor of her beauty, to

enjoy her triumph over the musical performers, and win the devotion of all clever people; still, after proving her power to her two cousins, and driving two lovers to desperation, she came back to her books, to her piano, to the works of Beethoven, and to old Faucombe.

In 1812 she was one-and-twenty; the archæologist accounted to her for his management of her property; and from that time forth she herself controlled her fortune, consisting of fifteen thousand francs a year from Les Touches, her father's estate; twelve thousand francs, the income at that time from the lands of Faucombe, which increased by a third when the leases were renewed; besides a capital sum of three hundred thousand francs saved by her guardian. Félicité derived nothing from her country training but an apprehension of money matters, and that instinct for wise administration which perhaps restores, in the provinces, the balance against the constant tendency of capital to center in Paris. She withdrew her three hundred thousand francs from the bank where the archæologist had deposited them, and invested in consols just at the time of the disastrous retreat from Moscow. Thus she had thirty thousand francs a year more. When all her expenses were paid, she had a surplus of fifty thousand francs a year to be invested.

A girl of one-and-twenty, with such a power of will, was a match for a man of thirty. Her intellect had gained immense breadth and habits of criticism, which enabled her to judge sanely of men and things, art and politics. Thenceforward she purposed leaving Nantes; but old M. Faucombe fell ill of the malady that carried him off. She was like a wife to the old man; she nursed him for eighteen months with the devotion of a guardian angel, and closed his eyes at the very time when Napoleon was fighting with Europe over the dead body of France. She therefore postponed her departure for Paris till the end of the war.

As a Royalist she flew to hail the return of the Bourbons to Paris. She was welcomed there by the Grandlieus, with whom she was distantly connected; but then befell the catastrophe of the 20th of March, and everything remained in suspense. She had the opportunity of seeing on the spot

this last resurrection of the Empire, of admiring the *Grand Armée* which came out on the Champ de Mars, as in an arena, to salute its Cæsar before dying at Waterloo. Félicité's great and lofty soul was captivated by the magical spectacle. Political agitations and the fairy transformations of the theatrical drama, lasting for three months, and known as the Hundred Days, absorbed her wholly, and preserved her from any passion, in the midst of an upheaval that broke up the Royalist circle in which she had first come out. The Grandlieux followed the Bourbons to Ghent, leaving their house at Mlle. des Touches' service.

Félicité, who could not accept a dependent position, bought for the sum of a hundred and thirty thousand francs one of the handsomest mansions in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, where she settled on the return of the Bourbons in 1815; the garden alone is worth two million francs now. Being accustomed to act on her own responsibility, Félicité soon took the habit of independent action, which seems the privilege of men only. In 1816 she was five-and-twenty. She knew nothing of marriage; she conceived of it only in her brain, judged of it by its causes instead of observing its effect, and saw only its disadvantages. Her superior mind rebelled against the abdication which begins the life of a married woman; she keenly felt the preciousness of independence, and had nothing but disgust for the cares of motherhood. These details are necessary to justify the anomalies that characterize Camille Maupin. She never knew father or mother, she was her own mistress from her childhood, her guardian was an old antiquary, chance placed her in the domain of science and imagination, in the literary world, instead of keeping her within the circle drawn by the futile education given to women—a mother's lectures on dress, on the hypocritical proprieties and man-hunting graces of her sex. And so, long before she became famous, it could be seen at a glance that she had never played the doll.

Towards the end of the year 1817 Félicité des Touches perceived that her face showed symptoms not indeed of fading, but of the beginning of fatigue. She understood that her beauty would suffer from the fact of her persistent

celibacy; she was bent on remaining beautiful, for at that time she prized her beauty. Knowledge warned her of the doom set by Nature on her creations, which deteriorate as much by misapplication as by ignorance of her laws. The vision of her aunt's emaciated face rose before her and made her shudder. Thus placed between marriage and passion, she determined to remain free; but she no longer scorned the homage that she met with on all hands.

At the date when this story begins she was almost the same as she had been in 1817. Eighteen years had passed over her and left her untouched; at the age of forty she might have called herself twenty-five. Thus a picture of her in 1836 will represent her as she was in 1817. Women who know under what conditions of temperament and beauty a woman must live to resist the attacks of time, will understand how and why Félicité des Touches enjoyed such high privileges, as they study a portrait for which the most glowing colors of the palette and the richest setting must be brought into play.

Brittany offers a singular problem in the predominance of brown hair, brown eyes, and a dark complexion, in a country so close to England, where the atmospheric conditions are so nearly similar. Does the question turn on the wider one of race, or on unobserved physical influences? Scientific men will some day perhaps inquire into the cause of this peculiarity, which does not exist in the neighboring province of Normandy. Pending its solution, the strange fact lies before us that fair women are rare among the women of Brittany, who almost always have the brilliant eyes of Southerners; but instead of showing the tall figures and serpentine grace of Italy or Spain, they are usually small, short, with neat, set figures, excepting some women of the upper classes which have been crossed by aristocratic alliances.

Mlle. des Touches, a thoroughbred Bretonne, is of medium height, about five feet, though she looks taller. This illusion is produced by the character of her countenance, which gives her dignity. She has the complexion which is characteristic of Italian beauty, pale olive by day, and white under artifi-

cial light; you might think it was animated ivory. Light glides over such a skin as over a polished surface, it glistens on it; only strong emotion can bring a faint flush to the middle of each cheek, and it disappears at once. This peculiarity gives her face the placidity of a savage. The face, long rather than oval, resembles that of some beautiful Isis in the bas-reliefs of Egina; it has the purity of a Sphinx's head, polished by desert fires, lovingly touched by the flame of the Egyptian sun. Her hair, black and thick, falls in plaited loops over her neck, like the head-dress with ridged double locks of the statues at Memphis, accentuating very finely the general severity of her features. She has a full, broad forehead, bossy at the temples, bright with its smooth surface on which the light lingers, and molded like that of a hunting Diana; a powerful, willful brow, calm and still. The eyebrows, strongly arched, bend over eyes in which the fire sparkles now and again like that of fixed stars. The white of the eye is not bluish, nor veined with red, nor is it pure white; its texture looks horny, still it is warm in tone; the black center has an orange ring round the edge; it is bronze set in gold—but living gold, animated bronze. The pupil is deep. It is not, as in some eyes, lined, as it were, like a mirror, reflecting the light, and making them look like the eyes of tigers and cats; it has not that terrible fixity of gaze that makes sensitive persons shiver; but this depth has infinitude, just as the brightness of mirror-eyes has finality. The gaze of the observer can sink and lose itself in that soul, which can shrink and retire as rapidly as it can flash forth from those velvet eyes. In a moment of passion Camille Maupin's eye is superb; the gold of her glance lights up the yellowish white, and the whole flashes fire; but when at rest it is dull, the torpor of deep thought often gives it a look of stupidity; and when the light of the soul is absent, the lines of the face also look sad. The lashes are short, but as black and thickset as the hair of an ermine's tail. The lids are tawny, and netted with fine red veins, giving them at once strength and elegance, two qualities hard to combine in women. All round the eyes there is not the faintest wrinkle or stain. Here again you will think of

Egyptian granite mellowed by time. Only the cheek-bones, though softly rounded, are more prominent than in most women, and confirm the impression of strength stamped on the face.

Her nose, narrow and straight, has high-cut nostrils, with enough of passionate dilation to show the rosy gleam of their delicate lining; this nose is well set on to the brow, to which it is joined by an exquisite curve, and it is perfectly white to the very tip—a tip endowed with a sort of proper motion that works wonders whenever Camille is angry, indignant, or rebellious. There especially—as Talma noted—the rage or irony of lofty souls finds expression. Rigid nostrils betray a certain shallowness. The nose of a miser never quivers, it is tightly set like his lips; everything in his face is as close shut as himself.

Camille's mouth, arched at the corners, is brightly red; the lips, full of blood, supply that living, impulsive carmine that gives them such infinite charm, and may reassure the lover who might be alarmed by the grave majesty of the face. The upper lip is thin, the furrow beneath the nose dents it low down, like a bow, which gives peculiar emphasis to her scorn. Camille has no difficulty in expressing anger. This pretty lip meets the broader red edge of a lower lip that is exquisitely kind, full of love, and carved, it might be, by Phidias, as the edge of an opened pomegranate, which it resembles in color. The chin is round and firm, a little heavy, but expressing determination, and finishing well this royal, if not goddess-like, profile. It is necessary to add that below the nose the lip is faintly shaded by a down that is wholly charming; nature would have blundered if she had not there placed that tender smoky tinge.

The ear is most delicately formed, a sign of other concealed daintinesses. The bust broad, the bosom small but not flat, the hips slender but graceful. The slope of the back is magnificent, more suggestive of the Bacchus than of the Venus Callipyge. Herein we see a detail that distinguishes almost all famous women from the rest of their sex; they have in this a vague resemblance to men; they have neither the pliancy nor the freedom of line that we see in women



destined by nature to be mothers; their gait is unbroken by a gentle sway. This observation is, indeed, two-edged; it has its counterpart in men whose hips have a resemblance to those of women,—men who are cunning, sly, false, and cowardly.

Camille's head, instead of having a hollow at the nape of the neck, is set on her shoulders with a swelling outline without an inward curve, an unmistakable sign of power; and this neck, in some attitudes, has folds of athletic firmness. The muscles attaching the upper arm, splendidly molded, are those of a colossal woman. The arm is powerfully modeled, ending in wrists of English slenderness and pretty delicate hands, plump and full of dimples, finished off with pink nails cut to an almond shape, and well set in the flesh. Her hands are of a whiteness which proclaims that all the body, full, firm, and solid, is of a quite different tone from her face. The cold, steadfast carriage of her head is contradicted by the ready mobility of the lips, their varying expression, and the sensitive nostrils of an artist.

Still, in spite of this exciting promise, not wholly visible to the profane, there is something provoking in the calmness of this countenance. The face is melancholy and serious rather than gracious, stamped with the sadness of constant meditation. Mlle. des Touches listens more than she speaks. She is alarming by her silence and that look of deep scrutiny. Nobody among really well-informed persons can ever have seen her without thinking of the real Cleopatra, the little brown woman who so nearly changed the face of the earth; but in Camille the animal is so perfect, so homogeneous, so truly leonine, that a man with anything of the Turk in him regrets the embodiment of so great a mind in such a frame, and wishes it were altogether woman. Everyone fears lest he may find there the strange corruption of a diabolical soul. Do not cold analysis and positive ideas throw their light upon the passions in this unwedded soul? In her does not judgment take the place of feeling? Or, a still more terrible phenomenon, does she not feel and judge both together? Her brain being omnipotent, can she stop where other women stop? Has the intellectual power left the affections weak?

Can she be gracious? Can she condescend to the pathetic trifles by which a woman busies, amuses, and interests the man she loves? Does she not crush a sentiment at once if it does not answer to the infinite that she apprehends and contemplates? Who can fill up the gulfs in her eyes?

We fear lest we should find in her some mysterious element of unsubdued virginity. The strength of a woman ought to be merely symbolical; we are frightened at finding it real. Camille Maupin is in some degree the living image of Schiller's Isis, hidden in the depths of the temple, at whose feet the priests found the dying gladiators who had dared to consult her. Her various "affairs," believed in by the world, and not denied by Camille herself, confirm the doubts suggested by her appearance. But perhaps she enjoys this calumny? The character of her beauty has not been without effect on her reputation; it has helped her, just as her fortune and position have upheld her in the midst of society. If a sculptor should wish to make an admirable statue of Brittany, he might copy Mlle. des Touches. Such a sanguine, bilious temperament alone can withstand the action of time. The perennially nourished texture of such a skin, as it were varnished, is the only weapon given to women by nature to ward off wrinkles, which in Camille are hindered also by the passivity of her features.

In 1817 this enchanting woman threw open her house to artists, famous authors, learned men, and journalists, the men to whom she was instinctively attracted. She had a drawing-room like that of Baron Gérard, where the aristocracy mingled with distinguished talents and the cream of Parisian womanhood. Mlle. des Touches' family connections and her fine fortune, now augmented by that of her aunt the nun, protected her in her undertaking—a difficult one in Paris—of forming a circle. Her independence was one cause of her success. Many ambitious mothers dreamed of getting her to marry a son whose wealth was disproportioned to the splendor of his armorial bearings. Certain peers of France, attracted by her eighty thousand francs a year, and tempted by her splendid house and establishment, brought the strictest and most fastidious ladies

of their family. The diplomatic world, on the lookout for wit and amusement, came and found pleasure there.

Thus Mlle. des Touches, the center of so many interests, could study the different comedies which all men, even the most distinguished, are led to play by passion, avarice, or ambition. She soon saw the world as it really is, and was so fortunate as not to fall at once into such an absorbing love as engrosses a woman's intellect and faculties, and prevents her wholesome judgment. Generally a woman feels, enjoys, and judges, each in turn; hence three ages, the last coinciding with the sad period of old age. To Félicité the order was reversed. Her youth was shrouded in the snows of science, the chill of thoughtfulness. This transposition also explains the oddity of her life and the character of her talents. She was studying men at the age when most women see but one; she despised what they admire; she detected falsehood in the flatteries they accept as truth; she laughed at what makes them serious.

This contradictory state lasted a long time; it had a disastrous termination; it was her fate to find her first love, newborn and tender in her heart, at an age when women are required by nature to renounce love. Her first *liaison* was kept so secret that no one ever knew of it. Félicité, like all women who believe in the common sense of their feelings, was led to count on finding a beautiful soul in a beautiful body; she fell in love with a face, and discovered all the foolishness of a lady's man, who thought of her merely as a woman. It took her some time to get over her disgust and this mad connection. Another man guessed her trouble, and consoled her without looking for any return, or at any rate he concealed his purpose. Félicité thought she had found the magnanimity of heart and mind that the dandy had lacked. This man had one of the most original intellects of the day. He himself wrote under a pseudonym, and his first works revealed him as an admirer of Italy. Félicité must needs travel or perpetuate the only form of ignorance in which she remained. This man, a skeptic and a scoffer, took Félicité to study the land of Art. This famous "Anonymous" may be regarded as

Camille Maupin's teacher and creator. He reduced her vast information to order, he added to it a knowledge of the masterpieces of which Italy is full, and gave her that subtle and ingenious tone, epigrammatic and yet deep, which is characteristic of his talent—always a little eccentric in its expression—but modified in Camille Maupin by the delicate feeling and the ingenious turn natural to women; he inoculated her with a taste for the works of English and German literature, and made her learn the two languages while traveling.

At Rome, in 1820, Mlle. des Touches found herself deserted for an Italian. But for this disaster she might never have become famous. Napoleon said that Misfortune was midwife to Genius. This event gave Mlle. des Touches at once and forever the scorn of mankind which is her great strength. Félicité was dead and Camille was born.

She returned to Paris in the company of Conti, the great musician, for whom she wrote the libretti of two operas; but she had no illusions left, and became, though the world did not know it, a sort of female Don Juan—without either debts or conquests. Encouraged by success, she published the two volumes of dramas which immediately placed Camille Maupin among the anonymous celebrities. She told the story of her betrayed love in an admirable little romance, one of the masterpieces of the time. This book, a dangerous example, was compared, and on a level, with *Adolphe*, a horrible lament, of which the counterpart was found in Camille's tale. The delicate nature of her literary disguise is not yet fully understood; some refined intelligences still see nothing in it but the magnanimity that subjects a man to criticism and screens a woman from fame by allowing her to remain unknown.

In spite of herself, her reputation grew every day, as much by the influence of her salon as for her repartees, the soundness of her judgment, and the solidity of her acquisitions. She was regarded as an authority, her witticisms were repeated, she could not abdicate the functions with which Parisian society invested her. She became a recognized exception. The fashionable world bowed to the talent

and the wealth of this strange girl; it acknowledged and sanctioned her independence; women admired her gifts, and men her beauty. Indeed, her conduct was always ruled by social proprieties. Her friendships seemed to be entirely platonic. There was nothing of the authoress—the female author—about her; as a woman of the world Mlle. des Touches is delightful—weak at appropriate moments, indolent, coquettish, devoted to dress, charmed with the trivialities that appeal to women and poets.

She perfectly understood that after Mme. de Staël there was no place in this century for a Sappho, and that no Ninon could exist in Paris when there were no grand seigneurs, no voluptuous Court. She is the Ninon of intellect; she adores art and artists, she goes from the poet to the musician, from the sculptor to the prose-writer. She is full of a noble generosity that verges on credulity, so ready is she to pity misfortune and to disdain the fortunate. Since 1830. she has lived in a chosen circle of proved friends, who truly love and esteem each other. She dwells far removed from such turmoil as Mme. de Staël's, and not less far from political conflict; and she makes great fun of Camille Maupin as the younger brother of George Sand, of whom she speaks as "Brother Cain," for this new glory has killed her own. Mlle. des Touches admires her happier rival with angelic readiness, without any feeling of jealousy or covert envy.

Until the time when this story opens she had led the happiest life conceivable for a woman who is strong enough to take care of herself. She had come to Les Touches five or six times between 1817 and 1834. Her first visit had been made just after her first disenchantment, in 1818. Her house at Les Touches was uninhabitable; she sent her steward to Guérande, and took his little house at Les Touches. As yet she had no suspicion of her coming fame; she was sad, she would see no one; she wanted to contemplate herself, as it were, after this great catastrophe. She wrote to a lady in Paris, a friend, explaining her intentions, and giving instructions for furniture to be sent for Les Touches. The things came by ship to Nantes, were transhipped to a smaller boat for Le Croisic, and thence were carried, not without

difficulty, across the sands to Les Touches. She sent for workmen from Paris, and settled herself at Les Touches, which she particularly liked. She meant to meditate there on the events of life, as in a little private Chartreuse.

At the beginning of winter she returned to Paris. Then the little town of Guérande was torn by diabolical curiosity; nothing was talked of but the Asiatic luxury of Mlle. des Touches. The notary, her agent, gave tickets to admit visitors to Les Touches, and people came from Batz, from Le Croisic, and from Savenay. This curiosity produced in two years the enormous sum for the gatekeeper and gardener of seventeen francs.

Mademoiselle did not come there again till two years later, on her return from Italy, and arrived by Le Croisic. For some time no one knew that she was at Guérande, and with her Conti the composer. Her appearance at intervals did not greatly excite the curiosity of the little town of Guérande. Her steward and the notary at most had been in the secret of Camille Maupin's fame. By this time, however, new ideas had made some little progress at Guérande, and several persons knew of Mlle. des Touches' double existence. The postmaster got letters addressed to "Camille Maupin, aux Touches."

At last the veil was rent. In a district so essentially Catholic, old-world, and full of prejudices, the strange life led by this illustrious and unmarried woman could not fail to start the rumors which had frightened the Abbé Grimont; it could never be understood; she seemed an anomaly.

Félicité was not alone at Les Touches; she had a guest. This visitor was Claude Vignon, the haughty and contemptuous writer who, though he has never published anything but criticism, has impressed the public and literary circles with an idea of his superiority. Félicité, who for the last seven years had made this writer welcome, as she had a hundred others—authors, journalists, artists, and people of fashion—who knew his inelastic temperament, his idleness, his utter poverty, his carelessness, and his disgust at things in general, seemed by her behavior to him to wish to marry him. She explained her conduct, incomprehensible to her

friends, by her ambition and the horror she felt of growing old; she wanted to place the rest of her life in the hands of a superior man for whom her fortune might be a stepping-stone, and who would uphold her importance in the literary world. So she had carried off Claude Vignon from Paris to Les Touches, as an eagle takes a kid in his talons, to study him and take some vehement step; but she was deceiving both Calyste and Claude—she was not thinking of marriage. She was in the most violent throes that can convulse a soul so firm as hers, for she found herself the dupe of her own intellect, and saw her life illuminated too late by the sunshine of love, glowing as it glows in the heart of a girl of twenty.

Now for a picture of Camille's "Chartreuse."

At a few hundred paces from Guérande the *terra firma* of Brittany ends, and the salt marshes and sandhills begin. A rugged road, to which vehicles are unknown, leads down a ravine to the desert of sands left by the sea as neutral ground between the waters and the land. This desert consists of barren hills, of "pans" of various sizes edged with a ridge of clay, in which the salt is collected, of the creek which divides the mainland from the island of Le Croisic. Though in geography Le Croisic is a peninsula, as it is attached to Brittany only by the strand between it and the Bourg de Batz, a shifting bottom which it is very difficult to cross, it may be regarded as an island. At an angle where the road from Le Croisic to Guérande joins the road on the mainland, stands a country house, inclosed in a large garden remarkable for its wrung and distorted pine-trees—some spreading parasol-like at the top, others stripped of their boughs, and all showing red scarred trunks where the bark has been torn away. These trees, martyrs to the storm, growing literally in spite of wind and tide, prepare the mind for the melancholy and strange spectacle of the salt marshes, and the sandhills looking like solidified waves.

The house, well built of schistose stone and cement held together by courses of granite, has no pretensions to architecture; the eye sees only a bare wall, regularly pierced by the windows; those on the first floor have large panes, on

the ground floor small quarries. Above the first floor there are lofts, under an enormously high-pointed roof, with a gable at each end, and two large dormers on each side. Under the angle of each gable a window looks out, like a Cyclops' eye, to the west over the sea, to the east at Guérande. One side of the house faces the Guérande road; the other the waste over which Le Croisic is seen, and beyond that the open sea. A little stream escapes through an opening in the garden wall on the side by the road to Le Croisic, which it crosses, and is soon lost in the sand, or in the little pool of salt water inclosed by the sandhills and marshland, being left there by the arm of the sea.

A few fathoms of roadway, constructed in this break in the soil, leads to the house. It is entered through a gate; the courtyard is surrounded by unpretentious rural out-houses—a stable, a coach-house, a gardener's cottage with a poultry yard and sheds adjoining, of more use to the gatekeeper than to his mistress. The gray tones of this building harmonize delightfully with the scenery it stands in. The grounds are an oasis in this desert, on the edge of which the traveler has passed a mud-hovel, where custom-house officers keep guard. The house, with no lands, or rather of which the lands lie in the district of Guérande, derives an income of ten thousand francs from the marshes, and from farms scattered about the mainland. This was the fief of Les Touches, deprived of its feudal revenues by the Revolution. Les Touches is still a property; the marshmen still speak of the *Château*, and they would talk of the *Lord* if the owner were not a woman. When Félicité restored Les Touches, she was too much of an artist to think of altering the desolate-looking exterior which gives this lonely building the appearance of a prison. Only the gate was improved by the addition of two brick piers with an architrave, under which a carriage can drive in. The courtyard was planted.

The arrangement of the ground floor is common to most country houses built a hundred years ago. The dwelling was evidently constructed on the ruins of a little *castel* perched there as a link connecting Le Croisic and Batz



with Guérande, and lording it over the marshes. A hall had been contrived at the foot of the stairs. The first room is a large wainscoted anteroom where Félicité has a billiard-table; next comes an immense drawing-room with six windows, two of which, at the gable-end, form doors leading to the garden, down ten steps, corresponding in the arrangement of the room with the door into the billiard-room, and that into the dining-room. The kitchen, at the other end, communicates with the dining-room through the pantry. The staircase is between the billiard-room and the kitchen, which formerly had a door into the hall; this Mlle. des Touches closed, and opened one to the courtyard.

The loftiness and spaciousness of the rooms enabled Camille to treat this ground floor with noble simplicity. She was careful not to introduce any elaboration of detail. The drawing-room, painted gray, has old mahogany furniture with green silk cushions, white cotton window curtains bordered with green, two consoles, and a round table; in the middle is a carpet with a large pattern in squares; over the huge chimney-place are an immense mirror and a clock representing Apollo's car, between candelabra of the style of the Empire. The billiard-room has gray cotton curtains, bordered with green, and two divans. The dining-room furniture consists of four large mahogany sideboards, a table, twelve mahogany chairs with horse-hair seats, and some magnificent engravings by Audran in mahogany frames. From the middle of the ceiling hangs an elegant lamp such as were usual on the staircases of fine houses, with two lights. All the ceilings and the beams supporting them are painted to imitate wood. The old staircase, of wood with a heavy balustrade, is carpeted with green from top to bottom.

On the first floor were two sets of rooms divided by the staircase. Camille chose for her own those which look over the marshes, the sandhills, and the sea, arranging them as a little sitting-room, a bedroom, a dressing-room, and a study. On the other side of the house she contrived two bedrooms, each with a dressing-closet and anteroom. The servants' rooms were above. The two spare rooms had at first only the most necessary furniture. The artistic luxuries

for which she had sent to Paris she reserved for her own rooms. In this gloomy and melancholy dwelling, looking out on that gloomy and melancholy landscape, she wanted to have the most fantastic creations of art. Her sitting-room is hung with fine Gobelin tapestry, set in wonderfully carved frames. The windows are draped with heavy antique stuffs, a splendid brocade with a doubly shot ground, gold and red, yellow and green, falling in many bold folds, edged with royal fringes and tassels worthy of the most splendid baldachins of the Church. The room contains a cabinet which her agent found for her, worth seven or eight thousand francs new, a table of carved ebony, a writing bureau, brought from Venice, with a hundred drawers, inlaid with arabesques of ivory, and some beautiful Gothic furniture. There are pictures and statuettes, the best that an artist friend could select in the old curiosity shops, where the dealers never suspected in 1818 the price their treasures would afterwards fetch. On her tables stand fine Chinese vases of grotesque designs. The carpet is Persian, smuggled in across the sandhills.

Her bedroom is in the Louis XV. style, and a perfectly exact imitation. Here we have the carved wooden bedstead, painted white, with the arched head and side, and figures of Loves throwing flowers, the lower part stuffed and upholstered in brocaded silk, the crown above decorated with four bunches of feathers; the wall are hung with Indian chintz draped with silk cords and knots. The fireplace is finished with rustic work, the clock of ormolu, between two large vases of the choicest blue Sèvres mounted in gilt copper; the mirror is framed to match. The Pompadour toilet-table has its lace hangings and its glass; and then there is all the fanciful small furniture, the *duchesses*, the couch, the little formal settee, the easy-chair with a quilted back, the lacquer screen, the curtains of silk to match the chairs, lined with pink satin and draped with thick ropes; the carpet woven at La Savonnerie—in short, all the elegant, rich, sumptuous, and fragile things among which the ladies of the eighteenth century made love.

The study, absolutely modern, in contrast with the gallant

suggestiveness of the days of Louis XV., has pretty mahogany furniture. The bookshelves are full; it looks like a boudoir; there is a divan in it. It is crowded with the dainty trifles that women love; books that lock up, boxes for handkerchiefs and gloves; pictured lamp-shades, statuettes, Chinese grotesques, writing-cases, two or three albums, paper-weights, in short, every fashionable toy. The curious visitor notes with uneasy surprise a pair of pistols, a narghilé, a riding whip, a hammock, a pipe, a fowling-piece, a blouse, some tobacco, and a soldier's knapsack—a motley collection characteristic of Félicité.

Every lofty soul on looking round must be struck by the peculiar beauty of the landscape that spreads its breadth beyond the grounds, the last vegetation of the Continent. Those dismal squares of brackish water, divided by little white dykes on which the marshman walks, all in white, to rake out and collect the salt and heap it up; that tract over which salt vapors rise, forbidding birds to fly across, while they at the same time choke every attempt at plant-life; those sands where the eye can find no comfort but in the stiff evergreen leaves of a small plant with rose-colored flowers and in the Carthusian pink; that pool of sea-water, the sand of the dunes, and the view of Le Croisic—a miniature town dropped like Venice into the sea; and beyond, the immensity of ocean, tossing a fringe of foam over the granite reefs to emphasize their wild forms,—this scene elevates while it saddens the spirit, the effect always produced in the end by anything sublime which makes us yearn regretfully for unknown things that the soul apprehends at unattainable heights. Indeed, these wild harmonies have no charm for any but lofty natures and great sorrows. This desert, not unbroken, where the sunbeams are sometimes reflected from the water and the sand, whiten the houses of Batz, and ripple over the roofs of Le Croisic with a pitiless dazzling glare, would absorb Camille for days at a time. She rarely turned to the delightful green views, the thickets, and flowery hedges that garland Guérande like a bride, with flowers and posies and veils and festoons. She was suffering dreadful and unknown misery.

As Calyste saw the weather-cocks of the two gables peeping above the furze-bushes of the highroad and the gnarled heads of the fir-trees, the air seemed to him lighter; to him Guérande was a prison, his life was at Les Touches. Who cannot understand the attractions it held for a simple-minded lad? His love, like that of Cherubino, which had brought him to the feet of a personage who had been a great idea to him before being a woman, naturally survived her inexplicable rejections. This feeling, which is rather the desire for love than love itself, had no doubt failed to elude the inexorable analysis of Camille Maupin, and hence perhaps her repulses, a nobleness of mind misunderstood by Calyste. And, then, the marvels of modern civilization seemed all the more dazzling here by contrast with Guérande, where the poverty of the Guénics was considered splendor. Here, spread before the ravished eyes of this ignorant youth, who had never seen anything but the yellow broom of Brittany and the heaths of La Vendée, lay the Parisian glories of a new world; just as here he heard an unknown and sonorous language. Calyste here listened to the poetical tones of the finest music, the amazing music of the nineteenth century, in which melody and harmony vie with each other as equal powers, and singing and orchestration have achieved incredible perfection. He here saw the works of the most prodigal painting—that of the French school of to-day, the inheritor of Italy, Spain, and Flanders, in which talent has become so common that our eyes and hearts, weary of so much talent, cry out loudly for a genius. He here read those works of imagination, those astounding creations of modern literature, which produce their fullest effect on a fresh young heart. In short, our grand nineteenth century rose before him in all its magnificence as a whole—its criticism, its struggles for every kind of renovation, its vast experiments, almost all measured by the standard of the giant who nursed its infancy in his flag, and sang it hymns to an accompaniment of the terrible bass of cannon.

Initiated by Félicité into all this grandeur, which perhaps escapes the ken of those who put it on the stage and are

its makers, Calyste satisfied at Les Touches the love of the marvelous that is so strong at his age, and that guileless admiration, the first love of a growing man, which is so wroth with criticism. It is so natural that flame should fly upwards! He heard the light Parisian banter, the graceful irony which revealed to him what French wit should be, and awoke in him a thousand ideas that had been kept asleep by the mild torpor of home life. To him Mlle. des Touches was the mother of his intelligence, a mother with whom he might be in love without committing a crime. She was so kind to him: a woman is always adorably kind to a man in whom she has inspired a passion, even though she should not seem to share it. At this moment Félicité was giving him music lessons. To him the spacious rooms on the ground floor, looking all the larger by reason of the skillful arrangement of the lawns and shrubs in the little park; the staircase, lined with masterpieces of Italian patience—carved wood, Venetian and Florentine mosaics, bas-reliefs in ivory and marble, curious toys made to the order of the fairies of the Middle Ages; the upper rooms, so cozy, so dainty, so voluptuously artistic, were all informed and living with a light, a spirit, an atmosphere, that were supernatural, indefinable, and strange. The modern world with its poetry was in strong contrast to the solemn patriarchal world of Guérande, and the two systems here were face to face. On one hand the myriad effects of art; on the other the simplicity of wild Brittany. No one, then, need ask why the poor boy, as weary as his mother was of the subtleties of *mouche*, always felt a qualm as he entered this house, as he rang the bell, as he crossed the yard. It is to be observed that these presentiments cease to agitate men of riper growth, inured to the mishaps of life, whom nothing can surprise, and who are prepared for everything.

As he went in, Calyste heard the sound of the piano; he thought that Camille Maupin was in the drawing-room; but on entering the billiard-room he could no longer hear it. Camille was playing, no doubt, on the little upright piano, brought for her from England by Conti, which stood in the little drawing-room above. As he mounted the stairs,

where the thick carpet completely deadened the sound of footsteps, Calyste went more and more slowly. He perceived that this music was something extraordinary. Félicité was playing to herself alone; she was talking to herself. Instead of going in, the young man sat down on a Gothic settle with a green velvet cushion on the landing, beneath the window, which was artistically framed in carved wood stained with walnut juice and varnished.

Nothing could be more mysteriously melancholy than Camille's improvisation; it might have been the cry of a soul wailing a *De profundis* to God from the depths of the grave. The young lover knew it for the prayer of love in despair, the tenderness of resigned grief, the sighing of controlled anguish. Camille was amplifying, varying, and changing the introduction to the *cavatina*, "*Grâce pour toi, grâce pour moi*," from the fourth act of *Robert le Diable*. Suddenly she began to sing the *scena* in heart-rending tones, and broke off. Calyste went in and saw the reason of this abrupt ending. Poor Camille Maupin, beautiful Félicité, turned to him without affectation, her face bathed in tears, took out her handkerchief to wipe them away, and said simply—

"Good-morning."

She was charming in her morning dress; on her head was one of the red chenille nets at that time in fashion, from which the shining curls of her black hair fell on her neck. A very short pelisse formed a modern Greek tunic, showing below it cambric trousers with embroidered frills, and the prettiest scarlet and gold Turkish slippers.

"What is the matter?" asked Calyste.

"He has not come back," she replied, standing up at the window, and looking out over the sands, the creek, and the marshes.

This reply accounted for her costume. Camille, it would seem, was expecting Claude Vignon, and she was fretted as a woman who had wasted her pains. A man of thirty would have seen this. Calyste only saw that she was unhappy.

"You are anxious?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, with a melancholy that this boy could not fathom. Calyste was hastily leaving the room.

"Well, where are you going?"

"To find him."

"Dear child!" said she, taking his hand, and drawing him to her with one of those tearful looks which to a young soul are the highest reward. "Are you mad? Where do you think you can find him on this shore?"

"I will find him."

"Your mother will suffer mortal anguish. Besides—stay. Come, I insist upon it," and she made him sit down on the divan. "Do not break your heart about me. These tears that you see are the tears we take pleasure in. There is a faculty in women which men have not: that of abandoning ourselves to our nerves by indulging our feelings to excess. By imagining certain situations, and giving way to the idea, we work ourselves up to tears, sometimes into a serious condition and real illness. A woman's fancies are not the sport of the mind merely, but of the heart.—You have come at the right moment; solitude is bad for me. I am not deluded by the wish he felt to go without me to study Le Croisic and its rocks, the Bourg de Batz, and its sands and salt marshes. I knew he would spend several days over it instead of one. He wished to leave us two alone; he is jealous, or rather he is acting jealousy. You are young; you are handsome."

"Why did you not tell me sooner? Must I come no more?" asked Calyste, failing to restrain a tear that rolled down his cheek, and touched Félicité deeply.

"You are an angel!" she exclaimed.

Then she lightly sang Mathilde's strain *Restez* out of *William Tell*, to efface all gravity from this grand reply of a princess to her subject.

"He thus hopes," she added, "to make me believe in a greater love for me than he feels. He knows all the regard I feel for him," she went on, looking narrowly at Calyste, "but he is perhaps humiliated to find himself my inferior in this. Possibly, too, he has formed some suspicions of you, and thinks he will take us by surprise.—But, even if

he is guilty of nothing worse than of wishing to enjoy the delights of this expedition in the wilds without me, of refusing to let me share his excursions, and the ideas the scenes may arouse in him, of leaving me in mortal alarms,—is not that enough? His great brain has no more love for me than the musician had, the wit, the soldier. Sterne is right; names have a meaning, and mine is the bitterest mockery. I shall die without ever finding in a man such love as I have in my heart, such poetry as I have in my soul.”

She sat with her arms hanging limp, her head thrown back on the cushion, her eyes dull with concentrated thought, and fixed on a flower in the carpet. The sufferings of superior minds are mysteriously grand and imposing; they reveal immense expanses of the soul, to which the spectator’s fancy adds yet greater breadth. Such souls share in the privilege of royalty, whose affections cling to a nation, and then strike a whole world.

“Why did you——?” began Calyste, who could not finish the sentence. Camille Maupin’s beautiful burning hand was laid on his, and eloquently stopped him.

“Nature has forsworn her laws by granting me five or six years of added youth. I have repelled you out of selfishness. Sooner or later age would have divided us.—I am thirteen years older than he is, and that is quite enough!”

“You will still be beautiful when you are sixty!” cried Calyste heroically.

“God grant it!” she replied with a smile. “But, my dear child, I intend to love him. In spite of his insensibility, his lack of imagination, his cowardly indifference, and the envy that consumes him, I believe that there is greatness under those husks; I hope to galvanize his heart, to save him from himself, to attach him to me. . . . Alas! I have the brain to see clearly while my heart is blind.”

She was appallingly clear as to herself. She could suffer and analyze her suffering, as Cuvier and Dupuytren could explain to their friends the fatal progress of their diseases and the steady advance of death. Camille Maupin knew passion as these two learned men knew anatomy.

“I came here on purpose to form an opinion about him;



he is already bored. He misses Paris, as I told him; he is homesick for something to criticise. Here there is no author to be plucked, no system to be undermined, no poet to be driven to despair; he dares not here rush into some excess in which he could unburden himself of the weight of thought. Alas! my love perhaps is not true enough to refresh his brain. In short, I cannot intoxicate him!—Tonight you and he must get drunk together; I shall say I am ailing, and stay in my room; I shall know if I am mistaken.”

Calyste turned as red as a cherry, red from his chin to his hair, and his ears tingled with the glow.

“Good God!” she exclaimed, “and here am I depraving your maiden innocence without thinking of what I was doing! Forgive me, Calyste. When you love you will know that you would try to set the Seine on fire to give the least pleasure to ‘the object of your affections,’ as the fortune-tellers say.”

She paused.

“There are some proud and logical spirits,” she went on, “who at a certain age can exclaim, ‘If I could live my life again, I would do everything the same.’ Now I—and I do not think myself weak—I say, ‘I would be such a woman as your mother.’”

“To have a Calyste of my own! What happiness! If I had had the greatest fool on earth for a husband, I should have been a humble and submissive wife. And yet I have not sinned against society, I have only hurt myself. Alas! Dear child, a woman can no longer go into society unprotected excepting in what is called a primitive state. The affections that are not in harmony with social or natural laws, the affections which are not binding, in short, evade us. If I am to suffer for suffering’s sake, I might as well be useful. What do I care for the children of my Faucombe cousins, who are no longer Faucombes, whom I have not seen for twenty years, and who married merchants only! You are a son who has cost me none of the cares of motherhood; I shall leave you my fortune, and you will be happy, at any rate so far as that is concerned, by my act, dear jewel

of beauty and sweetness, which nothing should ever change or fade!"

As she spoke these words in a deep voice, her eyelids fell that he should not read her eyes.

"You have never chosen to accept anything from me," said Calyste. "I shall restore your fortune to your heirs."

"Child!" said Camille in her rich tones, while the tears fell down her cheeks, "can nothing save me from myself?"

"You have a story to tell me, and a letter to——" the generous boy began, to divert her from her distress. But she interrupted him before he could finish his sentence.

"You are right. I must, above all things, keep my word. It was too late yesterday; but we shall have time enough to-day, it would seem," she said in a half-playful, half-bitter tone. "To fulfill my promise, I will sit where I can look down the road to the cliffs."

Calyste placed a deep Gothic armchair where she could look out in that direction, and opened the window. Camille Maupin, who shared the Oriental tastes of the more illustrious writer of her own sex, took out a magnificent Persian narghileh that an ambassador had given her; she filled it with patchouli leaves, cleaned the mouthpiece, scented the quill before she inserted it—it would serve her but once—put a match to the dried leaves, placed the handsome instrument of pleasure, with its long-necked bowl of blue-and-gold enamel, at no great distance, and then rang for tea.

"If you would like a cigarette?—Ah! I always forget that you do not smoke. Such immaculateness as yours is rare! I feel as though only the fingers of an Eve fresh from the hand of God ought to caress the downy satin of your cheeks."

Calyste reddened and sat down on a stool; he did not observe the deep emotion that made Camille blush.

"The person from whom I yesterday received this letter, and who will perhaps be here to-morrow, is the Marquise de Rochefide," said Félicité. "After getting his eldest daughter married to a Portuguese grandee who has settled in France, old Rochefide, whose family is not so old as yours, wanted to connect his son with the highest nobility, so as

to procure for him a peerage he had failed to obtain for himself. The Comtesse de Montcornet told him that in the department of the Orne there was a certain Mlle. Béatrix Maximilienne Rose de Castéran, the youngest daughter of the Marquis de Castéran, who wanted to get his two daughters off his hands without any money, so as to leave his whole fortune to his son, the Comte de Castéran. The Castérans, it would seem, are descended direct from Adam.

“Béatrix, born and brought up in the château of Castéran, at the time of her marriage in 1828 was twenty years of age. She was remarkable for what you provincials call eccentricity, which is simply a superior mind, enthusiasm, a sense of the beautiful, and fervid feeling for works of art. Take the word of a poor woman who has trusted herself on these slopes, there is nothing more perilous for a woman; if she tries them, she arrives where you see me, and where the Marquise is—in an abyss. Men only have the staff that can be a support on the edge of those precipices, a strength which we lack, or which makes us monsters, if we have it.

“Her old grandmother, the dowager Marquise de Castéran, was delighted to see her marry a man whose superior she would certainly be in birth and mind. The Rochefides did everything extremely well, Béatrix could but be satisfied; and in the same way Rochefide had every reason to be pleased with the Castérans, who, as connected with the Verneuls, the d’Esgrignons, and the Troisvilles, obtained the peerage for their son-in-law as one of the last batch made by Charles X., though it was annulled by a decree of the Revolution of July.

“Rochefide is a fool; however, he began by having a son; and as he gave his wife no respite, and almost killed her with his company, she soon had enough of him. The early days of married life are a rock of danger for small minds as for great passions. Rochefide, being a fool, mistook his wife’s ignorance for coldness; he regarded Béatrix as a lymphatic creature—she is very fair—and thereupon lulled himself in perfect security, and led a bachelor life, trusting to the Marquise’s supposed coldness, her pride, her haughtiness, and the splendor of a style of living which

surrounds a woman in Paris with a thousand barriers. When you go there you will understand what I mean. Those who hoped to take advantage of his easy indifference would say to him, 'You are a lucky fellow. You have a heartless wife, whose passions will all be in her brain; she is content with shining; her fancies are purely artistic; her jealousy and wishes will be amply satisfied if she can form a salon where all the wits and talents meet; she will have debauches of music, orgies of literature.'—And the husband took in all this nonsense with which simpletons are stuffed in Paris.

“At the same time, Rochefide is not a common idiot; he has as much vanity and pride as a clever man, with this difference, that clever men assume some modesty and become cats; they coax to be coaxed in return; whereas Rochefide has a fine flourishing conceit, rosy and plump, that admires itself in public, and is always smiling. His vanity rolls in the stable, and feeds noisily from the manger, tugging out the hay. He has faults such as are known only to those who are in a position to judge him intimately, which are noticeable only in the shade and mystery of private life, while in society and to society the man seems charming. Rochefide must have been intolerable the moment he fancied that his hearth and home were threatened; for his is that cunning and squalid jealousy that is brutal when it is roused, cowardly for six months, and murderous the seventh. He thought he deceived his wife, and he feared her—two reasons for tyranny if the day should come when he discerned that his wife was so merciful as to affect indifference to his infidelities.

“I have analyzed his character to explain Béatrix's conduct. The Marquise used to admire me greatly; but there is but one step from admiration to jealousy. I have one of the most remarkable salons of Paris; she wished to have one, and tried to win away my circle. I have not the art of keeping those who wish to leave me. She has won such superficial persons as are everybody's friends from vacuity, and whose object is always to go out of a room as soon as they have come in; but she has not had time to make a

circle. At that time I supposed that she was consumed with the desire of any kind of celebrity. Nevertheless, she had some greatness of soul, a royal pride, ideas, and a wonderful gift of apprehending and understanding everything. She will talk of metaphysics and of music, of theology and of painting. You will see her as a woman what we saw her as a bride; but she is not without a little conceit; she gives herself too much the air of knowing difficult things—Chinese or Hebrew, or having ideas about hieroglyphics, and of being able to explain the papyrus that wraps a mummy.

“Béatrix is one of those fair women by whom fair Eve would look like a negress. She is as tall and straight as a taper, and as white as the holy wafer; she has a long pointed face, and a very variable complexion, to-day as colorless as cambric, to-morrow dull and mottled under the skin with a myriad tiny specks, as though the blood had left dust there in the course of the night. Her forehead is grand, but a little too bold; her eyes, pale aquamarine-tinted, floating in the white cornea under colorless eyebrows and indolent lids. There is often a dark circle round her eyes. Her nose, curved to a quarter of a circle, is pinched at the nostrils and full of refinement, but it is impertinent. She has the Austrian mouth, the upper lip thicker than the lower, which has a scornful droop. Her pale cheeks only flush under some very strong emotion. Her chin is rather fat; mine is not thin; and perhaps I ought not to tell you that women with a fat chin are exacting in love affairs. She has one of the most beautiful figures I ever saw; a back of dazzling whiteness, which used to be very flat, but which now, I am told, has filled out and grown dimpled; but the bust is not so fine as the shoulders, her arms are still thin. However, she has a mien and a freedom of manner which redeem all her defects and throw her beauties into relief. Nature has bestowed on her that air, as of a princess, which can never be acquired, which becomes her, and at once reveals the woman of birth; it is in harmony with the slender hips of exquisite form, with the prettiest foot in the world, and the abundant angel-like hair, re-

sembling waves of light, such as Girodet's brush has so often painted.

"Without being faultlessly beautiful or pretty, when she chooses she can make an indelible impression. She has only to dress in cherry-colored velvet, with lace frillings, and red roses in her hair, to be divine. If on any pretext Béatrix could dress in the costume of a time when women wore pointed stomachers laced with ribbon, rising, slender and fragile-looking, from the padded fullness of brocade skirts set in thick deep plaits; when their heads were framed in starched ruffs, and their arms hidden under slashed sleeves with lace ruffles, out of which the hand appeared like the pistil from the cup of a flower; when their hair was tossed back in a thousand little curls over a knot held up by a network of jewels, Béatrix would appear as a successful rival to any of the ideal beauties you may see in that array."

Félicité showed Calyste a good copy of Mieris' picture in which a lady in white satin stands singing with a gentleman of Brabant, while a negro pours old Spanish wine into a glass with a foot, and a housekeeper is arranging some biscuits.

"Fair women," she went on, "have the advantage over us dark women of the most delightful variety; you may be fair in a hundred ways, but there is only one way of being dark. Fair women are more womanly than we are; we dark Frenchwomen are too like men. Well," she added, "do not be falling in love with Béatrix on the strength of the portrait I have given you, exactly like some prince in the *Arabian Nights*. Too late in the day, my dear boy! But be comforted. With her the bones are for the first comer."

She spoke with meaning; the admiration expressed in the youth's face was evidently more for the picture than for the painter whose touch had missed its purpose.

"In spite of her being a blonde," she resumed, "Béatrix has not the delicacy of her coloring; the lines are severe, she is elegant and hard; she has the look of a strictly accurate drawing, and you might fancy she had Southern fires

in her soul. She is a flaming angel, slowly drying up. Her eyes look thirsty. Her front face is the best; in profile her face looks as if it had been flattened between two doors. You will see if I am wrong.

“This is what led to our being such intimate friends: For three years, from 1828 to 1831, Béatrix, while enjoying the last gayeties of the Restoration, wandering through drawing-rooms, going to Court, gracing the fancy-dress balls at the *Élysée Bourbon*, was judging men, things, and events from the heights of her intellect. Her mind was fully occupied. This first bewilderment at seeing the world kept her heart dormant, and it remained torpid under the first startling experiences of marriage—a baby—a confinement, and all the business of motherhood, which I cannot bear; I am not a woman so far as that is concerned. To me children are unendurable; they bring a thousand sorrows and incessant anxieties. I must say that I regard it as one of the blessings of modern society of which that hypocrite Jean-Jacques deprived us, that we were free to be or not to be mothers. Though I am not the only woman that thinks this, I am the only one to say it.

“During the storm of 1830 and 1831 Béatrix went to her husband’s country house, where she was as much bored as a saint in his stall in Paradise. On her return to Paris, the Marquise thought, and perhaps rightly, that the Revolution, which in the eyes of most people was purely political, would be a moral revolution too. The world to which she belonged had failed to reconstitute itself during the unlooked-for fifteen years of triumph under the Restoration, so it must crumble away under the steady battering ram of the middle class. She had understood M. Lainé’s great words, ‘Kings are departing.’ This opinion, I suspect, was not without its influence on her conduct.

“She sympathized intellectually with the new doctrines which, for three years after that July, swarmed into life like flies in the sunshine, and which turned many women’s heads; but, like all the nobility, though she thought the new ideas magnificent, she wished to save the nobility. Finding no opening now for personal superiority, seeing the

uppermost class again setting up the speechless opposition it had already shown to Napoleon—which, during the dominion of actions and facts, was the only attitude it could take, whereas, in a time of moral transition, it was equivalent to retiring from the contest—she preferred a happy life to this mute antagonism.

“When we began to breathe a little, the Marquise met at my house the man with whom I had thought to end my days—Gennaro Conti, the great composer, of Neapolitan parentage, but born at Marseilles. Conti is a very clever fellow, and has gifts as a composer, though he can never rise to the highest rank. If we had not Meyerbeer and Rossini, he might perhaps have passed for a genius. He has this advantage over them, that he is as a singer what Paganini is on the violin, Liszt on the piano, Taglioni as a dancer—in short, what the famous Garat was, of whom he reminds those who ever heard that singer. It is not a voice, my dear boy, it is a soul. When that singing answers to certain ideas, certain indescribable moods in which a woman sometimes finds herself, if she hears Gennaro she is lost.—The Marquise fell madly in love with him and won him from me. It was excessively provincial, but fair warfare. She gained my esteem and friendship by her conduct towards me. She fancied I was the woman to fight for my possession; she could not tell that in my eyes the most ridiculous thing in the world under such circumstances is the subject of the contest. She came to see me. The woman, proud as she is, was so much in love that she betrayed her secret and left me mistress of her fate. She was quite charming; in my eyes she remained a woman and a marquise.

“I may tell you, my friend, that women are sometimes bad; but they have a secret greatness which men will never be able to appreciate. And so, as I may wind up my affairs as a woman on the brink of old age, which is awaiting me, I will tell you that I had been faithful to Conti, that I should have continued faithful till death, and that nevertheless I knew him thoroughly. He has apparently a delightful nature, at bottom he is detestable. In matters of feeling he is a charlatan.



“There are men, like Nathan, of whom I have spoken to you, who are charlatans on the surface but honest. Such men lie to themselves. Perched on stilts, they fancy that they are on their feet, and play their tricks with a sort of innocence; their vanity is in their blood; they are born actors, swaggerers, grotesquely funny like a Chinese jar; they might even laugh at themselves. Their personal impulses are generous, and, like the gaudiness of Murat’s royal costume, they attract danger.

“But Conti’s rascality will never be known to anyone but his mistress. He has as an artist that famous Italian jealousy which led Carlone to assassinate Piola, and cost Paësiello a stiletto thrust. This terrible envy is hidden beneath the most charming good-fellowship. Conti has not the courage of his vice; he smiles at Meyerbeer and pays him compliments, while he longs to rend him. He feels himself weak, and gives himself the airs of force; and his vanity is such that he affects the sentiments furthest from his heart. He assumes to be an artist inspired direct from Heaven. To him Art is something sacred and holy. He is a fanatic; he is sublime in his fooling of fashionable folks; his eloquence seems to flow from the deepest convictions. He is a seer, a demon, a god, an angel. In short, though I have warned you, Calyste, you will be his dupe. This Southerner, this seething artist, is as cold as a well-rope.

“You listen to him; the artist is a missionary, Art is a religion that has its priesthood and must have its martyrs. Once started, Gennaro mounts to the most disheveled pathos that ever a German philosopher spouted out on his audience. You admire his convictions—he believes in nothing. He carries you up to heaven by a song that seems to be some mysterious fluid, flowing with love; he gives you a glance of ecstasy! but he keeps an eye on your admiration; he is asking himself, ‘Am I really a god to these people?’ And in the same instant he is perhaps saying to himself, ‘I have eaten too much macaroni.’ You fancy he loves you—he hates you; and you do not know why. But I always knew. He had seen some woman the day before, loved her for a whim, insulted me with false love, with hypocritical

kisses, making me pay dearly for his feigned fidelity. In short, he is insatiable for applause; he shams everything, and trifles with everything; he can act joy as well as grief, and he succeeds to perfection. He can please, he is loved, he can get admiration whenever he chooses.

“I left him hating his voice; he owed it more success than he could get from his talent as a composer; and he would rather be a man of genius like Rossini than a performer as fine as Rubini. I had been so foolish as to attach myself to him, and I would have decked the idol till the last. Conti, like many artists, is very dainty, and likes his ease and his little enjoyments; he is dandified, elegant, well dressed; well, I humored all his manias, I loved that weak but astute character. I was envied, and I sometimes smiled with disdain. I respected his courage; he is brave, and bravery, it is said, is the only virtue which no hypocrisy can simulate. On one occasion, when traveling, I saw him put to the test; he was ready to risk his life—and he loves it; but, strange to say, in Paris I have known him guilty of what I call mental cowardice.

“My dear boy, I knew all this. I said to the poor Marquise, ‘You do not know what a gulf you are setting foot in; you are the Perseus of a hapless Andromeda; you are rescuing me from the rock. If he loves you, so much the better; but I doubt it, he loves no one but himself.’

“Gennaro was in the seventh heaven of pride. I was no marquise; I was not born a Castéran; I was forgotten in a day. I allowed myself the fierce pleasure of studying this character to its depths. Certain of what the end would be, I meant to watch Conti’s contortions. My poor boy, in one week I saw horrors of sentimentality, hideous maneuvering! I will tell you no more; you will see the man here. Only, as he knows that I know him, he hates me now. If he could safely stab me, I should not be alive for two seconds.

“I have never said a word of this to Béatrix. Gennaro’s last and constant insult is that he believes me capable of communicating my painful knowledge to the Marquise. He has become restless and absent-minded, for he cannot believe

in good feeling in anyone. He still performs for my benefit the part of a man grieved to have deserted me. You will find him full of the most penetrating cordiality; he will wheedle, he will be chivalrous. To him every woman is a Madonna! You have to live with him for some time before you detect the secret of that false frankness, or know the stiletto prick of his humbug. His air of conviction would take in God. And so you will be enmeshed by his feline blandishments, and will never conceive of the deep and rapid arithmetic of his inmost mind.—Let him be.

“I carried indifference to the point of receiving them together at my house. The consequence of this was that the most suspicious world on earth, the world of Paris, knew nothing of the intrigue. Though Gennaro was drunk with pride, he wanted, no doubt, to pose before Béatrix; his dissimulation was consummate. He surprised me; I had expected to find that he insisted on a stage-effect. It was she who compromised herself, after a year of happiness under all the vicissitudes and risks of Parisian existence.

“She had not seen Gennaro for some days, and I had invited him to dine with me, as she was coming in the evening. Rochefide had no suspicions; but Béatrix knew her husband so well, that, as she often told me, she would have preferred the worst poverty to the wretched life that awaited her in the event of that man ever having a right to scorn or to torment her. I had chosen the evening when our friend the Comtesse de Montcornet was at home. After seeing her husband served with his coffee, Béatrix left the drawing-room to dress, though she was not in the habit of getting ready so early.

“‘Your hairdresser is not here yet,’ said Rochefide, when he heard why she was going.

“‘Thérèse can do my hair,’ she replied.

“‘Why, where are you going? You cannot go to Mme. de Montcornet’s at eight o’clock.’

“‘No,’ said she, ‘but I shall hear the first act at the Italian Opera.’

“The catechizing bailiff in Voltaire’s *Huron* is a silent man by comparison with an idle husband. Béatrix fled,

to be no further questioned, and did not hear her husband say, 'Very well; we will go together.'

"He did not do it on purpose; he had no reason to suspect his wife; she was allowed so much liberty! He tried never to fetter her in any way; he prided himself on it. And, indeed, her conduct did not offer the smallest hold for the strictest critic. The Marquis was going who knows where—to see his mistress perhaps. He had dressed before dinner; he had only to take up his hat and gloves when he heard his wife's carriage draw up under the awning of the steps in the courtyard. He went to her room and found her ready, but amazed at seeing him.

"'Where are you going?' said she.

"'Did I not tell you I would go with you to the Opera?'

"The Marquise controlled the outward expression of intense annoyance; but her cheeks turned as scarlet as though she had used rouge.

"'Well, come then,' she replied.

"Rochefide followed her, without heeding the agitation betrayed by her voice; she was burning with the most violent suppressed rage.

"'To the Opera,' said her husband.

"'No,' cried Béatrix, 'to Mlle. des Touches'. I have a word to say to her,' she added when the door was shut.

"The carriage started.

"'But if you like,' Béatrix added, 'I can take you first to the Opera and go to her afterwards.'

"'No,' said the Marquis; 'if you have only a few words to say to her, I will wait in the carriage; it is only half-past seven.'

"If Béatrix had said to her husband, 'Go to the Opera and leave me alone,' he would have obeyed her quite calmly. Like every clever woman, knowing herself guilty, she was afraid of rousing his suspicions, and resigned herself. Thus, when she gave up the Opera to come to my house, her husband accompanied her. She came in scarlet with rage and impatience. She walked straight up to me, and said in a low voice, with the calmest manner in the world—

“‘My dear Félicité, I shall start for Italy to-morrow evening with Conti; beg him to make his arrangements, and wait for me here with a carriage and passport.’

“Then she left with her husband.—Violent passions insist on liberty at any cost. Béatrix had for a year been suffering from want of freedom and the rarity of their meetings, for she considered herself one with Gennaro. So nothing could surprise me. In her place, with my temper, I should have acted as she did. Conti’s happiness broke my heart; only his vanity was engaged in this matter.

“‘That is indeed being loved!’ he exclaimed, in the midst of his transports. ‘How few women would thus forego their whole life, their fortune, their reputation!’

“‘Oh yes, she loves you,’ said I; ‘but you do not love her!’

“He flew into a fury and made a scene; he harangued, he scolded, he described his passion, saying he had never thought it possible that he could love so much. I was immovably cool, and lent him the money he might want for the journey that had taken him by surprise.

“Béatrix wrote a letter to her husband, and set out for Italy the next evening. She stayed there two years; she wrote to me several times. Her letters are bewitchingly friendly; the poor child clings to me as the only woman that understands her. She tells me she adores me. Want of money compelled Gennaro to write an opera; he did not find in Italy the pecuniary resources open to a composer in Paris.—Here is her last letter; you can understand it now if, at your age, you can analyze the emotions of the heart,” she added, handing him the letter.

At this moment Claude Vignon came in. At the unexpected sight Calyste and Félicité sat silent for a minute, she from surprise, he from vague dissatisfaction. Claude’s vast, high, and wide forehead, bald at seven-and-thirty, was dark with clouds. His firm, judicious lips expressed cold irony. Claude Vignon is an imposing person, in spite of the changes in a face that was splendid and is now grown livid. From the age of eighteen to five-and-twenty he had

a strong likeness to the divine young Raphael; but his nose, the human feature which most readily alters, has grown sharp; his countenance has, as it were, sunk under mysterious hollows, the outlines have grown puffy, and with a bad color; leaden grays predominate in the worn complexion, though no one knows what the fatigues can be of a young man, aged perhaps by crushing loneliness, and an abuse of keen discernment. He is always examining other men's minds, without object or system; the pickax of his criticism is always destroying, and never constructing anything. His weariness is that of the laborer, not of the architect.

His eyes, light blue and once bright, are dimmed with unconfessed suffering, or clouded by sullen sadness. Dissipation has darkened the eyelids beneath the brows; the temples have lost their smoothness. The chin, most nobly molded, has grown double without dignity. His voice, never very sonorous, has grown thin; it is not hoarse, not husky, but something between the two. The inscrutability of this fine face, the fixity of that gaze, cover an irresolution and weakness that are betrayed in the shrewd and ironical smile. This weakness affects his actions, but not his mind; the stamp of encyclopedic intellect is on that brow and in the habit of that face, at once childlike and lofty.

One detail may help to explain the eccentricities of this character. The man is tall and already somewhat bent, like all who bear a world of ideas. These tall, long frames have never been remarkable for tenacious energy, for creative activity. Charlemagne, Narses, Belisarius, and Constantine have been, in this particular, very noteworthy exceptions. Claude Vignon, no doubt, suggests mysteries to be solved. In the first place, he is at once very simple and very deep. Though he rushes into excess with the readiness of a courtesan, his mind remains unclouded. The intellect which can criticise art, science, literature, and politics is inadequate to control his outer life. Claude contemplates himself in the wide extent of his intellectual realm, and gives up the form of things with Diogenes-like indifference. Content with seeing into everything, understanding everything, he scorns material details; but, being beset with hesitancy as soon as

creation is needed, he sees obstacles without being carried away by beauties, and by dint of discussing means, he sits, his hands hanging idle, producing no results. Intellectually he is a Turk in whom meditation induces sleep. Criticism is his opium, and his harem of books has disgusted him with any work he might do.

He is equally indifferent to the smallest and to the greatest things, and is compelled by the mere weight of his brain to throw himself into debauchery to abdicate for a little while the irresistible power of his omnipotent analysis. He is too much absorbed by the seamy side of genius, and you may now conceive that Camille Maupin should try to show him the right side.

The task was a fascinating one. Claude Vignon believed himself no less great as a politician than he was as a writer; but this Machiavelli of private life laughs in his sleeve at ambitious persons, he knows all he can ever know, he instinctively measures his future life by his faculties, he sees himself great, he looks obstacles in the face, perceives the folly of parvenus, takes fright, or is disgusted, and lets the time slip by without doing anything. Like Étienne Lousteau, the feuilleton writer; like Nathan, the famous dramatic author; like Blondet, another journalist, he was born in the middle class to which we owe most of our great writers.

“Which way did you come?” said Mlle. des Touches, coloring with pleasure or surprise.

“In at the door,” replied Claude Vignon dryly.

“Well,” she replied, with a shrug, “I know you are not a man to come in at the window.”

“Scaling a balcony is a sort of cross of honor for the beloved fair.”

“Enough!” said Félicité.

“I am in the way?” said Claude Vignon.

“Monsieur,” said the guileless Calyste, “this letter——”

“Keep it; I ask no questions. At our age such things need no words,” said he, in a satirical tone, interrupting Calyste.

“But, indeed, monsieur——” Calyste began indignantly.

"Be calm, young man; my indulgence for feelings is boundless."

"My dear Calyste," said Camille, anxious to speak.

"Dear?" said Vignon, interrupting her.

"Claude is jesting," Camille went on, addressing Calyste; "and he is wrong—with you who know nothing of Paris and its 'chaff.'"

"I had no idea that I was funny," said Vignon very gravely.

"By what road did you come? For two hours I have never ceased looking out towards Le Croisic."

"You were not incessantly looking," replied Vignon.

"You are intolerable with your banter."

"Banter! I?"

Calyste rose.

"You are not so badly off here that you need leave," said Vignon.

"On the contrary," said the indignant youth, to whom Camille gave her hand, which he kissed instead of merely taking it, and left on it a scalding tear.

"I wish I were that little young man," said the critic, seating himself, and taking the end of the hookah. "How he will love!"

"Too much, for then he will not be loved," said Mlle. des Touches. "Mme. de Rochefide is coming here."

"Good!" said Claude; "and with Conti?"

"She will stay here alone, but he is bringing her."

"Have they quarreled?"

"No."

"Play me a sonata by Beethoven; I know nothing of the music he has written for the piano."

Claude filled the bowl of the hookah with tobacco, watching Camille more closely than she knew; a hideous idea possessed him; he fancied that a straightforward woman believed she had duped him. The situation was a new one.

Calyste as he went away was thinking neither of Béatrix de Rochefide nor her letter; he was furious with Claude Vignon, full of wrath at what he thought want of delicacy,



and of pity for poor Félicité. How could a man be loved by that perfect woman and not worship her on his knees, not trust her on the faith of a look or a smile? After being the privileged spectator of the suffering Félicité had endured while waiting, he felt an impulse to rend that pale cold specter. He knew nothing himself, as Félicité had told him, of the sort of deceptive witticisms in which the satirists of the press excel. To him love was a human form of religion.

On seeing him cross the courtyard, his mother could not restrain a joyful exclamation, and old Mlle. du Guénic whistled for Mariotte.

“Mariotte, here is the child; give us the *lubine*.”

“I saw him, mademoiselle,” replied the cook.

His mother, a little distressed by the melancholy that sat on Calyste’s brow, never suspecting that it was caused by what he thought Vignon’s bad treatment of Félicité, took up her worsted work. The old aunt pulled out her knitting. The Baron gave up his easy-chair to his son, and walked up and down the room as if to unstiffen his legs before taking a turn in the garden. No Flemish or Dutch picture represents an interior of richer tone, or furnished with more happily suitable figures. The handsome youth, dressed in black velvet, the mother, still so handsome, and the two old folks, in the setting of ancient paneling, were the expression of the most touching domestic harmony.

Fanny longed to question Calyste, but he had taken Béatrix’s letter out of his pocket—the letter which was, perhaps, to destroy all the happiness this noble family enjoyed. As he unfolded it, Calyste’s lively imagination called up the Marquise dressed as Camille Maupin had fantastically described her.

*From Béatrix to Félicité.*

“GENOA, July 2nd.

“I have not written to you, my dear friend, since our stay at Florence, but Venice and Rome took up all my time; and happiness, as you know, fills a large place in life. We

are neither of us likely to take strict account of a letter more or less. I am a little tired; I insisted on seeing everything, and to a mind not easily satiated the repetition of pleasures brings fatigue. Our friend had great triumphs at the Scala, at the Fenice, and these last three days at the San Carlo. Three Italian operas in two years! You cannot say that love has made him idle.

“We have been warmly welcomed everywhere, but I should have preferred silence and solitude. Is not that the only mode of life that suits a woman in direct antagonism with the world? This was what I had expected. Love, my dear, is a more exacting master than marriage; but it is sweet to serve him. After having played at love all my life, I did not know that I must see the world again, even in glimpses, and the attentions paid me on all hands were so many wounds. I was no longer on an equal footing with women of the highest type. The more kindly I was treated, the more was my inferiority marked. Gennaro did not understand these subtleties, but he was so happy that I should have been graceless if I had not sacrificed such petty vanities to a thing so splendid as an artist’s life.

“We live only by love, while men live by love and action—otherwise they would not be men. There are, however, immense disadvantages to a woman in the position in which I have placed myself; and you have avoided them. You have remained great in the face of the world which had no rights over you; you have perfect liberty, and I have lost mine. I am speaking only with reference to concerns of the heart, and not to social matters, which I have wholly sacrificed. You might be vain and willful, you might have all the graces of a woman in love, who can give or refuse anything as she chooses; you had preserved the privilege of being capricious, even in the interest of your affection and of the man you might like. In short, you, even now, have still your own sanction; I have not the freedom of feeling which, as I think, it is always delightful to assert in love, even when the passion is an eternal one. I have not the right to quarrel in jest, which we women so highly and so rightly prize: is it not the line by which we sound the heart?

I dare not threaten, I must rely for attractiveness on infinite docility and sweetness, I must be impressive through the immenseness of my love; I would rather die than give up Gennaro, for the holiness of my passion is its only plea for pardon.

“I did not hesitate between my social dignity and my own little dignity—a secret between me and my conscience. Though I have fits of melancholy, like the clouds which float across the clearest sky, to which we women like to give way, I silence them at once; they would look like regret. Dear me! I so fully understood the extent of my debt to him, that I have equipped myself with unlimited indulgence; but hitherto Gennaro has not roused my sensitive jealousy. Indeed, I cannot see how my dear great genius can do wrong. I am, my dear, rather like the devotees who argue with their God, for is it not to you that I owe my happiness? And you cannot doubt that I have often thought of you.

“At last I have seen Italy! As you saw it, as it ought to be seen, illuminated to the soul by love, as it is by its glorious sun and its masterpieces of art. I pity those who are incessantly fired by the admiration it calls for at every step when they have not a hand to clasp, a heart into which they may pour the overflow of emotions which then subside as they grow deeper. These two years are to me all my life, and my memory will have reaped a rich harvest. Did you not, as I did, dream of settling at Chiavari, of buying a palace at Venice, a villa at Sorrento, a house at Florence? Do not all women who love shun the world? And I, forever an outcast, could I help longing to bury myself in a lovely landscape, in a heap of flowers, looking out on the pretty sea, or a valley as good as the sea, like the valley you look on from Fiesole?

“But, alas, we are poor artists, and want of money is dragging the wanderers back to Paris again. Gennaro cannot bear me to feel that I have left all my luxury, and he is bringing a new work, a grand opera, to be rehearsed in Paris. Even at the cost of my love, I cannot bear to meet one of those looks from a woman or a man which would make me feel murderous. Yes! for I could hack anyone to pieces

who should condescend to pity me, should offer me the protection of patronage—like that enchanting Châteauneuf who, in the time of Henri III., I think, spurred her horse to trample down the Provost of Paris for some such offense.

“So I am writing to tell you that without delay I shall arrive to join you at Les Touches, and wait for our Gennaro in that quiet spot. You see how bold I am with my benefactress and sister. Still, the magnitude of the obligation will not betray my heart, like some others, into ingratitude.

“You have told me so much about the difficulties of the journey that I shall try to reach Le Croisic by sea. This idea occurred to me on hearing that there was here a little Danish vessel, loaded here with marble, which will put in at Le Croisic to take up salt on its way back to the Baltic. By this voyage I shall avoid the fatigue and expense of traveling by post. I know you are not alone, and I am glad of it; I had some remorse in the midst of my happiness. You are the only person with whom I could bear to be alone without Conti. Will it not be a pleasure to you too to have a woman with you who will understand your happiness and not be jealous of it?

“Well, till our meeting! The wind is fair, and I am off, sending you a kiss.”

“Well, well, she too knows how to love!” said Calyste to himself, folding up the letter with a sad expression.

This sadness flashed on his mother’s heart like a gleam lighting up an abyss. The Baron had just left the room. Fanny bolted the door to the turret, and returned to lean over the back of the chair in which her boy was sitting, as Dido’s sister bends over her in Guérin’s picture. She kissed his forehead and said—

“What is the matter, my child? what makes you unhappy? You promised to account to me for your constant visits to Les Touches; I ought to bless its mistress, you say?”

“Yes, indeed,” he replied. “She, my dear mother, has shown me all the defects of my education; my education in these times, when men of noble birth must acquire personal merit if they are to restore their names to life again. I

was as remote from my day as Guérande is from Paris. She has been, in a way, the mother of my intelligence."

"Not for that can I bless her!" said the Baroness, her eyes filling with tears.

"Mother," cried Calyste, on whose forehead the hot tears fell, drops of heartbroken motherhood, "mother, do not cry. Just now, when, to do her a pleasure, I proposed scouring the coast from the custom-house hut to the Bourg de Batz, she said to me, 'How anxious your mother would be!'"

"She said so! Then I can forgive her much," said Fanny.

"Félicité wishes me well," replied Calyste, "and she often checks herself from saying some of those hasty and doubtful things which artists let fall, so as not to shake my faith—knowing that it is not immovable. She has told me of the life led in Paris by youths of the highest rank, going from their country homes as I might from mine, leaving their family without any fortune, and making great wealth by the force of their will and their intelligence. I can do what the Baron de Rastignac has done, and he is in the Ministry.—She gives me lessons on the piano, she teaches me Italian, she has let me into a thousand social secrets of which no one has an inkling at Guérande. She could not give me the treasures of her love; she gives me those of her vast intellect, her wit, her genius. She does not choose to be a mere pleasure, but a light to me; she offends none of my creeds; she believes in the nobility, she loves Brittany——"

"She has changed our Calyste," said the old blind woman, interrupting him, "for I understand nothing of this talk. You have a fine old house over your head, nephew, old relations who worship you, good old servants; you can marry a good little Bretonne, a pious and well-bred girl who will make you happy, and you can reserve your ambitions for your eldest son, who will be three times as rich as you are if you are wise enough to live quietly and economically, in the shade and in the peace of the Lord, so as to redeem the family estates. That is as simple as a Breton heart. You will get rich less quickly, but far more surely."

"Your aunt is right, my darling; she cares as much for your happiness as I do. If I should not succeed in arrang-

ing your marriage with Miss Margaret, your uncle Lord Fitz-William's daughter, it is almost certain that Mlle. de Pen-Hoël will leave her money to either of her nieces you may prefer."

"And there will be a few crown pieces here!" said the old aunt in a low mysterious voice.

"I! Marry at my age?" said he, with one of those looks which weaken a mother's reason. "Am I to have no sweet and crazy love-making? Am I never to tremble, thrill, flutter, fear, lie down under a pitiless gaze and presently melt it? May I never know the beauty that is free, the fancy of the soul, the clouds that fleet over the serene blue of happiness and that the breath of enjoyment blows away? May I never stand under a gutter spout without discovering that it is raining, like the lovers seen by Diderot? Shall I never hold a burning coal in the palm of my hand like the Duc de Lorraine? Shall I never climb a silken rope-ladder, nor cling to a rotten old trellis without feeling it yield? Am I never to hide in a closet or under a bed? Can I know nothing of woman but wifely surrender, or of love but its equable lamplight? Is all my curiosity to be satiated before it is excited? Am I to live without ever feeling that fury of the heart which adds to a man's power? Am I to be a married monk?—No! I have set my teeth in the Paris apple of civilization. Do you not perceive that by your chaste, your ignorant family habits you have laid the fire that is consuming me, and that I shall be burnt up before I can adore the divinity I see wherever I turn—in the green foliage and in the sand glowing in the sunshine, and in all the beautiful, lordly, and elegant women who are described in the books and poems I have devoured at Camille's? Alas! There is but one such woman in all Guérande, and that is you, mother! The lovely Blue Birds of my dreams come from Paris; they live in the pages of Lord Byron and Scott; they are Parisina, Effie, Minna! Or, again, that Royal Duchess I saw in the moors among the heath and broom, whose beauty sent my blood with a rush to the heart!"

These thoughts were clearer, more brilliant, more living, to the Baroness's eye, than art can make them to the reader;

she saw them in a flash shot from the boy's glance like the arrows from a quiver that is upset. Though she had never read Beaumarchais, she thought, as any woman would, that it would be a crime to make this Cherubino marry.

"Oh, my dear boy!" said she, taking him in her arms, pressing him to her, and kissing his beautiful hair—still her own—"marry when you please, only be happy. It is not my part to tease you."

Mariotte came to lay the table. Gasselin had gone out to exercise Calyste's horse, for he had not ridden it these two months. The three women, the mother, the aunt, and Mariotte were of one mind, with the natural cunning of women, to make much of Calyste when he dined at home. Breton penuriousness, fortified by the memories and habits of childhood, tried to contend with the civilization of Paris so faithfully represented at Les Touches, so close to Guérande. Mariotte tried to disgust her young master with the elaborate dishes prepared in Camille Maupin's kitchen, as his mother and aunt vied with each other in attentions to enmesh their child in the nets of their tenderness, and to make comparisons impossible.

"Ah, ha! You have a *lubine* [a sort of fish], M. Calyste, and snipe, and pancakes such as you will never get anywhere but here," said Mariotte, with a knowing and triumphant air, as she looked down on the white cloth, a perfect sheet of snow.

After dinner, when his old aunt had settled down to her knitting again, when the Curé of Guérande and the Chevalier du Halga came in, attracted by their game of *mouche*, Calyste went out to go back to Les Touches, saying he must return Béatrix's letter.

Claude Vignon and Mlle. des Touches were still at table. The great critic had a tendency to greediness, and this vice was humored by Félicité, who knew how a woman makes herself indispensable by such attentions.

The dining-room, lately finished by considerable additions, showed how readily and how quickly a woman can marry the nature, adopt the professions, the passions, and the tastes

of the man she loves, or means to love. The table had the rich and dazzling appearance which modern luxury, seconded by the improvements in manufactures, stamps on every detail. The noble but impoverished house of du Guénic knew not the antagonist with whom it had to do battle, nor how large a sum was needed to contend with the brand-new plate brought from Paris by Mlle. des Touches, with her china—thought good enough for the country—her fine linen, her silver gilt, all the trifles on her table, and all the skill of her man cook.

Calyste declined to take any of the liqueurs contained in one of the beautiful inlaid cases of precious woods, that might be shrines.

“Here is your letter,” he said, with childish ostentation, looking at Claude, who was sipping a glass of West Indian liqueur.

“Well, what do you think of it?” asked Mlle. des Touches, tossing the letter across the table to Vignon, who read it, alternately lifting and setting down his glass.

“Why—that the women of Paris are very happy; they all have men of genius, who love them, to worship.”

“Dear me, you are still but a rustic!” said Félicité, with a laugh. “What! You did not discover that she already loves him less, that——”

“It is self-evident!” said Claude Vignon, who had as yet read no more than the first page. “When a woman is really in love, does she trouble her head in the least about her position? Is she as finely observant as the Marquise? Can she calculate? Can she distinguish? Our dear Béatrix is tied to Conti by her pride; she is condemned to love him, come what may.”

“Poor woman!” said Camille.

Calyste sat staring at the table, but he saw nothing. The beautiful creature in her fantastic costume, as sketched by Félicité that morning, rose before him, radiant with light; she smiled on him, she played with her fan, and her other hand, emerging from a frill of lace and cherry-colored velvet, lay white and still on the full folds of her magnificent petticoat.



“This is the very thing for you,” said Claude Vignon, with a sardonic smile at Calyste.

Calyste was offended at the words *the very thing*.

“Do not suggest the idea of such an intrigue to the dear child; you do not know how dangerous such a jest may be. I know Béatrix; she has too much magnanimity of temper to change; besides, Conti will be with her.”

“Ah!” said Claude Vignon satirically, “a little twinge of jealousy, heh?”

“Can you suppose it?” said Camille proudly.

“You are more clear-sighted than a mother could be,” replied Claude.

“But, I ask you, is it possible?” and she looked at Calyste.

“And yet,” Vignon went on, “they would be well matched. She is ten years older than he is; he would be the girl.”

“A girl, monsieur, who has twice been under fire in La Vendée. If there had but been twenty thousand of such girls——”

“I was singing your praise,” said Vignon, “an easier matter than singeing your beard.”

“I have a sword to cut the beards of those who wear them too long,” retorted Calyste.

“And I have a tongue that cuts sharply too,” replied Vignon, smiling. “We are Frenchmen—the affair can be arranged.”

Mlle. des Touches gave Calyste a beseeching look, which calmed him at once.

“Why,” said Félicité, to end the discussion, “why is it that youths, like my Calyste there, always begin by loving women no longer young?”

“I know of no more guileless and generous impulse,” said Vignon. “It is the consequence of the delightful qualities of youth. And besides, to what end would old women come if it were not for such love? You are young and handsome, and will be for twenty years to come; before you we may speak plainly,” he went on, with a keen glance at Mlle. des Touches. “In the first place, the semi-dowagers to whom very young men attach themselves know how to love far

better than young women. A youth is too like a woman for a young woman to attract him. Such a passion is too suggestive of the myth of Narcissus. Besides this, there is, I believe, a common want of experience which keeps them asunder. Hence the reason which makes it true that a young woman's heart can only be understood by a man in whom long practice is veiled by his real or assumed passion, is the same as that which, allowing for differences of nature, makes a woman past her youth more seductive to a boy; he is intensely conscious that he shall succeed with her, and the woman's vanity is intensely flattered by his pursuit of her.

“Then, again, it is natural that the young should seize on fruit, and autumn offers many fine and luscious kinds. Is it nothing to meet those looks, at once bold and reserved, languishing at the proper moments, soft with the last gleams of love, so warm, so soothing? And the elaborate elegance of speech, the splendid ripe shoulders so finely filled out, the ample roundness, the rich and undulating plumpness, the hands full of dimples, the pulpy, well-nourished skin, the brow full of overflowing sentiment, on which the light lingers, the hair, so carefully cherished and dressed, where fine partings of white skin are delicately traced, and the throat with those fine curves, the inviting nape where every resource of art is applied to bring out the contrast between the hair and the tones of the flesh, to emphasize all the audacity of life and love? Dark women then get some of the tones of the fairest, the amber shade of maturity.

“Then, again, these women betray their knowledge of the world in their smiles, and display it in their conversation; they know how to talk; they will set the whole world before you to raise a smile; they have sublime touches of dignity and pride; they can shriek with despair in a way to break your heart, wail a farewell to love, knowing that it is futile, and only resuscitates passion; they grow young again by dint of varying the most desperately simple things. They constantly expect to be contradicted as to the falling off they so coquettishly proclaim, and the intoxication of their triumph is contagious. Their devotion is complete; they

listen, in short, they love; they clutch at love as a man condemned to death clings to the smallest trifles of living; they are like those lawyers who can urge every plea in a case without fatiguing the Court; they exhaust every means in their power; indeed, perfect love can only be known in them.

“I doubt if they ever are forgotten, any more than we can forget anything vast and sublime.

“A young woman has a thousand other things to amuse her, these women have nothing; they have no conceit left, no vanity, no meanness; their love is the Loire at its mouth, immense, swelled by every disenchantment, every affluent of life, and that is why—my daughter is dumb!” he ended, seeing Mlle. des Touches in an attitude of ecstasy, clutching Calyste’s hand tightly, perhaps to thank him for having been the cause of such a moment for her, of such a tribute of praise that she could detect no snare in it.

All through the evening Claude Vignon and Félicité were brilliantly witty, telling anecdotes and describing the life of Paris to Calyste, who quite fell in love with Claude, for wit exerts a peculiar charm on men of feeling.

“I should not be in the least surprised to see Mme. de Rochefide land here to-morrow with Conti, who is accompanying her no doubt,” said Claude at the end of the evening. “When I came up from Le Croisic the seamen had spied a small ship, Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian.”

This speech brought the color to Camille’s cheeks, calm as she was.

That night, again, Mme. du Guénic sat up for her son till one o’clock, unable to imagine what he could be doing at Les Touches if Félicité did not love him.

“He must be in the way,” thought this delightful mother.

“What have you had to talk about so long?” she asked, as she saw him come in.

“Oh, mother! I never spent a more delightful evening. Genius is a great, a most sublime thing! Why did you not bestow genius on me? With genius a man must be able to choose the woman he loves from all the world; she must inevitably be his!”

"But you are handsome, my Calyste."

"Beauty has no place but in women. And besides, Claude Vignon is fine. Men of genius have a brow that beams, eyes where lightnings play—and I, unhappy wretch, I only know how to love."

"They say that is all-sufficient, my darling," said she, kissing his forehead.

"Really, truly?"

"I have been told so. I have had no experience."

It was Calyste's turn to kiss his mother's hand with reverence.

"I will love for all those who might have been your admirers," said he.

"Dear child, it is in some degree your duty; you have inherited all my feelings. So do not be rash; try to love only high-souled women, if you must love."

What young man, welling over with passion and suppressed vitality, but would have had the triumphant idea of going to Le Croisic to see Mme. de Rochefide land, so as to be able to study her, himself unknown? Calyste greatly amazed his father and mother, who knew nothing of the fair Marquise's arrival, by setting out in the morning without waiting for breakfast. Heaven knows how briskly the boy stepped out. He felt as if some new strength had come to his aid, he was so light; he kept close under the walls of Les Touches to avoid being seen. The delightful boy was ashamed of his ardor, and had perhaps a miserable fear of being laughed at; Félicité and Claude Vignon were so horribly keen-sighted! And, then, in such cases a youth believes that his forehead is transparent.

He followed the zigzag path across the maze of salt-marshes, reached the sands, and was across them with a skip and a hop, in spite of the scorching sun that twinkled on them.

This brought him to the edge of the strand, banked up with a breakwater, near which stands a house where travelers may find shelter from storms, sea-gales, rain, and the whirlwind. It is not always possible to cross the little

strait, nor are there always boats, and it is convenient, while they are crossing from the port, to have shelter for the horses, asses, merchandise, or passengers' luggage. From thence men can scan the open sea and the port of Le Croisic; and from thence Calyste soon discerned two boats coming, loaded with baggage—bundles, trunks, carpet-bags, and cases, of which the shape and size proclaimed to the natives the arrival of extraordinary things, such as could only belong to a voyager of distinction.

In one of these boats sat a young woman with a straw hat and green veil, accompanied by a man. This boat was the first to come to land. Calyste felt a thrill; but their appearance showed them to be a maid- and a man-servant, and he dared not question them.

“Are you crossing to Le Croisic, M. Calyste?” asked one of the boatmen, who knew him; but he replied only by a negative shake of the head, ashamed of having his name mentioned.

Calyste was enchanted at the sight of a trunk covered with waterproof canvas, on which he read *Mme. la Marquise de Rochefide*. The name glittered in his eyes like some talisman; it had to him a purport of mysterious doom; he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he should fall in love with this woman; the smallest things relating to her interested him already, spurred his fancy and his curiosity. Why?—In the burning desert of its immeasurable and objectless desires does not youth put forth all its powers towards the first woman who comes within reach? Béatrix had fallen heir to the love that Camille had disdained.

Calyste watched the landing of the luggage, looking out from time to time at Le Croisic, hoping to see a boat come out of the harbor, cross to this little headland, and reveal to him the Béatrix who had already become to him what another Béatrix was to Dante, an eternal statue of marble on whose hands he would hang his flowers and wreaths. He stood with his arms folded, lost in the dream of expectancy. A thing worthy of remark, but which nevertheless has never been remarked, is the way in which we frequently subordinate our feelings to our will, how we pledge ourself to

ourself as it were, and how we make our fate; chance has certainly far less share in it than we suppose.

"I see no horses," said the maid, sitting on a trunk.

"And I see no carriage-road," said the valet.

"Well, horses have certainly been here," replied the woman, pointing to their traces. "Monsieur," said she, addressing Calyste, "is that the road leading to Guérande?"

"Yes," said he, "whom are you expecting?"

"We were told that we should be met, fetched to Les Touches.—If they are very late, I do not know how madame can dress," said she to the man. "You had better walk on to Les Touches. What a land of savages!"

It dawned on Calyste that he was in a false position.

"Then your mistress is going to Les Touches?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle came to meet her at seven this morning," was the reply. "Ah! here come the horses."

Calyste fled, running back to Guérande with the swiftness and lightness of a chamois, and doubling like a hare to avoid being seen by the servants from Les Touches; still, he met two of them in the narrow way across the marsh which he had to cross.

"Shall I go in? Shall I not?" he asked himself as he saw the tops of the pine-trees of Les Touches.

He was afraid; he returned to Guérande hang-dog and repentant, and walked up and down the Mall, where he continued the discussion with himself.

He started as he caught sight of Les Touches, and studied the weather-cocks.

"She can have no idea of my excitement," said he to himself.

His wandering thoughts became so many grapnels that caught in his heart and held the Marquise there. Calyste had felt none of these terrors, these anticipatory joys with regard to Camille; he had first met her on horseback, and his desire had sprung up, as at the sight of a beautiful flower he might have longed to pluck. These vacillations constitute a sort of poem in a timid soul. Fired by the first flames of imagination, these souls rise up in wrath, are appeased, and eager by turns, and in silence and solitude

reach the utmost heights of love before they have even spoken to the object of so many struggles.

Calyste saw from afar, on the Mall, the Chevalier du Halga, walking with Mlle. de Pen-Hoël; he hid himself. The Chevalier and the old lady, believing themselves alone on the Mall, were talking aloud.

“Since Charlotte de Kergarouët is coming to you,” said the Chevalier, “keep her three or four months. How can you expect her to flirt with Calyste? She never stays here long enough to attempt it; whereas, if they see each other every day, the two children will end by being desperately in love, and you will see them married this winter. If you say two words of your plans to Charlotte, she will at once say four to Calyste; and a girl of sixteen will certainly win the day against a woman of forty-something!”

The two old folks turned to retrace their steps. Calyste heard no more, but he had understood what Mlle. de Pen-Hoël’s plan was. In his present frame of mind nothing could be more disastrous. Is it in the fever of a preconceived passion that a young man will accept as his wife a girl found for him by others? Calyste, who cared not a straw for Charlotte de Kergarouët, felt inclined to repulse her. Considerations of money could not touch him; he had been accustomed from childhood to the modest style of his father’s house; besides, seeing Mlle. de Pen-Hoël live as poorly as the Guénics themselves, he had no notion of her wealth. And a youth brought up as Calyste had been would not, in any case, consider anything but feeling; and all his mind was set on the Marquise.

Compared with the portrait drawn by Camille, what was Charlotte? The companion of his childhood, whom he treated as his sister.

He did not get home till five o’clock. When he went into the room, his mother, with a melancholy smile, handed him a note from Mlle. des Touches as follows:—

“MY DEAR CALYSTE,—The beautiful Marquise de Rochefide has arrived; we count on you to do honor to her advent. Claude, always satirical, declares that you will be Bice and

she Dante. The honor of Brittany and of the Guénics is at stake when there is a Castéran to be welcomed. So let us meet soon.—Yours,

“CAMILLE MAUPIN.

“Come as you are, without ceremony, or we shall look ridiculous.”

Calyste showed his mother the note, and went at once.

“What are these Castérans?” said she to the Baron.

“An old Norman family, related to William the Conqueror,” he replied. “Their arms are In tierce per fess azure gules and or, a horse rearing argent hoofed or.—The beautiful creature for whom Le Gars was killed at Fougères in 1800 was the daughter of a Castéran who became a nun at Sééz, and was made abbess after being thrown over by the Duc de Verneuil.”

“And the Rochefides?”

“I do not know the name; I should want to see their arms,” said he.

The Baroness was a little relieved at hearing that the Marquise Béatrix de Rochefide was of an old family; still, she felt some alarm at knowing that her son was exposed to fresh fascinations.

Calyste, as he walked, felt the most violent and yet delightful impulses; his throat was choked, his heart full, his brain confused; he was devoured by fever. He wanted to walk slower, but a superior power urged him on. All young men have known this perturbation of the senses caused by a vague hope: a subtle fire flames within and raises a halo, like the glory shown about the divine persons in a sacred picture, through which they see nature in a glow and woman radiant. Are they not then, like the saints themselves, full of faith, ardor, hope, and purity?

The young Breton found the whole party in Camille's little private drawing-room. It was by this time nearly six o'clock; through the windows the sinking sun shed a



ruddy light, broken by the trees; the air was still, the room was full of the soft gloom that women love so well.

"Here is the member for Brittany," said Camille Maupin, smiling to her friend, as Calyste lifted the tapestry curtain over the door. "As punctual as a king!"

"You recognized his step?" said Claude Vignon to Mlle. des Touches.

Calyste bowed to the Marquise, who merely nodded to him; he had not looked at her. He shook hands with Claude Vignon, who offered him his hand.

"Here is the great man of whom you have heard so much, Gennaro Conti," Camille went on, without answering Claude Vignon.

She introduced to Calyste a man of middle height, thin and slender, with chestnut hair, eyes that were almost orange color, with a white, freckled skin, in short, so exactly the well-known head of Lord Byron, that it would be superfluous to describe it—but perhaps he held it better. Conti was not a little proud of this resemblance.

"I am delighted, being but one day at Les Touches, to meet monsieur," said Gennaro.

"It is my part to say as much to you," replied Calyste, with sufficient ease of manner.

"He is as handsome as an angel!" the Marquise said to Félicité. Calyste, standing between the divan and the two women, overheard the words, though spoken in a whisper. He moved to an armchair, and stole watchful looks at the Marquise. In the soft light of the setting sun he saw lounging on the divan, as though a sculptor had placed her in position, a white sinuous figure which seemed to dazzle his sight. Félicité, without knowing it, had served her friend well by her description.

Béatrix was superior to the not too flattering portrait drawn by Camille. Was it not partly for the stranger's benefit that Béatrix had placed in her splendid hair bunches of blue cornflowers, which showed off the pale gleam of her ringlets, arranged to frame her face and flicker over her cheeks. Her eyes were set in circles darkened by fatigue, but only to the tone of the purest and most opalescent mother-

of-pearl; her cheeks were as bright as her eyes. Under her white skin, as delicate as the silky lining of an egg-shell, life flushed in the purple blood. The finish of her features was exquisite; her brow seemed diaphanous. This fair and gentle head, finely set on a long neck of marvelous beauty, lent itself to the most varying expression.

Her waist, slight enough to span, had a bewitching grace; her bare shoulders gleamed in the twilight like a white camellia in black hair. The bosom, well supported, but covered with a clear handkerchief, showed two exquisitely enticing curves. The muslin dress—white flowered with blue, the wide sleeves, the bodice, pointed, and without any sash, the shoes with sandals crossed over fine thread stockings—all showed perfect knowledge of the arts of dress. Earrings of silver filigree, marvels of Genoese work which no doubt were coming into fashion, were admirably suited to the exquisite softness of the fair hair starred with cornflowers.

At a single eager glance Calyste took in all this beauty, which stamped itself on his soul. Béatrix, so fair, and Félicité, so dark, recalled the "Keepsake" contrasts, so much affected by English engravers and draughtsmen. They were woman's weakness and woman's strength in their utmost expression, a perfect antithesis. These two women could never be rivals; each had her empire. They were like a delicate pale periwinkle or lily by the side of a sumptuous and gorgeous red poppy, or a turquoise by a ruby. In an instant Calyste was possessed by a passion which crowned the secret working of his hopes, his fears, his doubts. Mlle. des Touches had roused his senses, Béatrix fired his mind and heart. The young Breton was conscious of the birth within himself of an all-conquering force that would respect nothing. And he shot at Conti a look of envy and hatred, gloomy, and full of alarms, a look he had never had for Claude Vignon.

Calyste called up all his resolution to restrain himself, thinking, nevertheless, that the Turks were very right to keep their women shut up, and that such beautiful creatures should be forbidden to show themselves in their tempting

witcheries to young men aflame with love. This hot hurricane was lulled as soon as Béatrix turned her eyes on him and her gentle voice made itself heard; the poor boy already feared her as he feared God.

The dinner-bell rang.

“Calyste, give your arm to the Marquise,” said Mlle. des Touches, taking Conti on her right and Claude on her left, as she stood aside to let the young couple pass.

Thus to go down the old staircase of Les Touches was to Calyste like a first battle; his heart failed him, he found nothing to say, a faint moisture stood on his brow and down his spine. His arm trembled so violently that at the bottom step the Marquise said to him—

“What is the matter?”

“Never,” said he in a choked voice, “never in my life have I seen a woman so beautiful as you are, excepting my mother; and I cannot control my agitation.”

“Why, have you not Camille Maupin here?”

“But what a difference!” said Calyste artlessly.

“Ha! Calyste,” Félicité whispered in his ear; “did I not tell you that you would forget me as though I had never existed? Sit there, next her on the right, and Vignon on her left.—As for you, Gennaro, I keep you by me,” she added, laughing; “we will keep an eye on her flirtations.”

The accent in which Camille spoke struck Claude, who looked at her with the wily and apparently absent glance, which in him showed that he was observant. He never ceased watching Mlle. des Touches throughout dinner.

“Flirtations!” replied the Marquise, drawing off her gloves and showing her beautiful hands; “I have every excuse; on one side of me I have a poet,” and she turned to Claude, “on the other poetry.”

Gennaro bestowed on Calyste a gaze full of flattery.

By candle-light Béatrix looked even more beautiful than before. The pale gleam of the wax-lights cast a satin sheen on her forehead, set sparks in her gazelle-like eyes, and fell through her silky ringlets, making separate hairs shine like threads of gold. With a graceful movement she threw off her gauze scarf, uncovering her shoulders. Calyste

could then see the delicate nape, as white as milk, with a deep hollow that parted into two, curving off towards each shoulder with a lovely and delusive symmetry. The changes of aspect in which pretty women indulge produce very little effect in the fashionable world, where every eye is blasé, but they commit fearful ravages in a soul as fresh as was Calyste's. This bust, so unlike Camille's, revealed a perfectly different character in Béatrix. There could be seen pride of race, a tenacity peculiar to the aristocracy, and a certain hardness in that double muscle of the shoulder, which is perhaps the last surviving vestige of the conqueror's strength.

Calyste found it very difficult to seem to eat; he was full of nervous feelings, which took away his hunger. As in all young men, Nature was in the clutches of those throes which precede first love, and stamp it so deeply on the soul. At his age the ardor of the heart repressed by the ardor of the moral sense leads to an internal conflict, which accounts for the long, respectful hesitancy, the deep absorption of love, the absence of all self-interest,—all the peculiar attractions of youths whose heart and life are pure.

As he noted—by stealth, so as not to rouse Gennaro's jealous suspicions—all the details which made the Marquise de Rochefide so supremely beautiful, Calyste was oppressed by the majesty of the lady beloved; he felt himself shrink before the haughtiness of some of her glances, the imposing aspect of her face, overflowing with aristocratic self-consciousness, a pride which women can express by slight movements, by airs of the head and a magnificent slowness of gesture, which are all less affected and less studied than might be supposed. There is a sentiment behind all these modes of expression. The ambiguous position in which Béatrix found herself compelled her to keep a watch over herself, to be imposing without being ridiculous; and women of the highest stamp can all achieve this, though it is the rock on which ordinary women are wrecked.

Béatrix could guess from Félicité's looks all the secret adoration she inspired in her neighbor, and that it was unworthy of her to encourage it; so from time to time she

bestowed on him a repellent glance that fell on him like an avalanche of snow. The unfortunate youth appealed to Mlle. des Touches by a gaze in which she felt the tears kept down in his heart by superhuman determination, and Félicité kindly asked him why he ate nothing. Calyste stuffed to order, and made a feint of joining in the conversation. The idea of being tiresome instead of agreeable was unendurable, and hammered at his brain. He was all the more bashful because he saw, behind the Marquise's chair, the man-servant he had met in the morning on the jetty, who would no doubt report his curiosity.

Whether he were contrite or happy, Mme. de Rochefide paid no attention to him. Mlle. des Touches had led her to talk of her journey in Italy, and she gave a very witty account of the point-blank fire of passion with which a little Russian diplomat at Florence had honored her, laughing at these little young men who fling themselves at a woman as a locust rushes on grass. She made Claude Vignon and Gennaro laugh, and Félicité also; but these darts of sarcasm went straight to Calyste's heart, who only heard words through the humming in his ears and brain. The poor boy made no vow, as some obstinate men have done, to win this woman at any cost; no, he was not angry, he was miserable. When he discerned in Béatrix an intention to sacrifice him at Gennaro's feet, he only said to himself—"If only I can serve her in any way!" and allowed himself to be trampled on with the meekness of a lamb.

"How is it," said Claude Vignon to the Marquise, "that you, who so much admire poetry, give it so bad a reception? Such artless admiration, so sweet in its expression, with no second thought, no reservation, is not that the poetry of the heart? Confess now that it gives you a sense of satisfaction and well-being."

"Certainly," she replied, "but we should be very unhappy and, above all, very worthless if we yielded to every passion we inspire."

"If you made no selection," said Conti, "we should not be so proud of being loved."

"When shall I be chosen and distinguished by a woman?"

Calyste wondered to himself, restraining his agony of emotion with difficulty.

He reddened like a sufferer on whose wound a finger is laid. Mlle. des Touches was startled by the expression she saw in Calyste's face, and tried to comfort him with a sympathizing look. Claude Vignon caught that look. From that moment the writer's spirits rose, and he vented his gayety in sarcasms: he maintained that love lived only in desire, that most women were mistaken in their love, that they often loved for reasons unknown to the men and to themselves, that they sometimes wished to deceive themselves, that the noblest of them were still insincere.

"Be content to criticise books, and do not criticise our feelings," said Camille, with an imperious flash.

The dinner ceased to be lively. Claude Vignon's satire had made both the women grave. Calyste was in acute torment in spite of the happiness of gazing at Béatrix. Conti tried to read Mme. de Rochefide's eyes and guess her thoughts. When the meal was ended, Mlle. des Touches took Calyste's arm, left the other two men to the Marquise, and allowed them to lead the way, so as to say to the youth—

"My dear boy, if the Marquise falls in love with you, she will pitch Conti out of the window; but you are behaving in such a way as to tighten their bonds. Even if she were enchanted by your worship, could she take any notice of it? Command yourself."

"She is so hard on me, she will never love me," said Calyste; "and if she does not love me, I shall die."

"Die! you! My dear Calyste, you are childish," said Camille. "You would not have died for me, then?"

"You made yourself my friend," replied he.

After the little chat that always accompanies the coffee, Vignon begged Conti to sing. Mlle. des Touches sat down to the piano. Camille and Gennaro sang *Dunque il mio bene tu mia sarai*, the final duet in Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta*, one of the most pathetic pages of modern music. The passage *Di tanti palpiti* expresses love in all its passion. Calyste, sitting in the armchair where he had sat when Félicité had told him the story of the Marquise, listened

devoutly. Béatrix and Vignon stood on each side of the piano.

Conti's exquisite voice blended perfectly with Félicité's. They both had frequently sung the piece; they knew all its resources, and agreed wonderfully in bringing them out. It was in their hands what the musician had intended to create, a poem of divine melancholy, the swan's song of two lovers. When the duet was ended the hearers were all in a state of feeling that cannot find expression in vulgar applause.

"Oh, Music is the queen of the arts!" exclaimed the Marquise.

"Camille gives the first place to youth and beauty—the queen of all poetry," said Claude Vignon.

Mlle. des Touches looked at Claude, dissembling a vague uneasiness. Béatrix, not seeing Calyste, looked round to see what effect the music had had on him, less out of interest in him than for Conti's satisfaction. In a recess she saw a pale face covered with tears. At the sight she hastily turned away, as if some acute pain had stung her, and looked at Gennaro.

It was not merely that Music had risen up before Calyste, had touched him with her divine hand, had launched him on creation and stripped it of its mysteries to his eyes—he was overwhelmed by Conti's genius. In spite of what Camille Maupin had told him of the man's character, he believed at this moment that the singer must have a beautiful soul, a heart full of love. How was he to contend against such an artist? How could a woman ever cease to adore him? The song must pierce her soul like another soul.

The poor boy was as much overcome by poetic feeling as by despair: he saw himself as so small a thing! This ingenuous conviction of his own nothingness was to be read in his face, mingling with his admiration. He did not observe Béatrix, who, attracted to Calyste by the contagion of genuine feeling, pointed him out by a glance to Mlle. des Touches.

"Oh! such a delightful nature!" said Félicité. "Conti, you will never receive any applause to compare with the

homage paid you by this boy. Let us sing a trio.—Come, Béatrix, my dear.”

When the Marquise, Camille, and Conti had returned to the piano, Calyste rose unperceived, flung himself on a sofa in the adjoining bedroom, of which the door was open, and remained there sunk in despair.





## PART II

### THE DRAMA

“**W**HAT is the matter with you, my boy?” said Claude Vignon, stealing quietly in after him and taking his hand. “You are in love, you believe yourself scorned; but it is not so. In a few days the field will be open to you, you will be supreme here, and be loved by more than one woman; in fact, if you know how to manage matters, you will be a Sultan here.”

“What are you saying?” cried Calyste, starting to his feet and dragging Claude away into the library. “Who that is here loves me?”

“Camille,” said Vignon.

“Camille loves me?” said Calyste. “And what of you?”

“I,” said Claude, “I——”

He paused. Then he sat down and rested his head against a pillow, in the deepest melancholy.

“I am weary of life,” he went on, after a short silence, “and I have not the courage to end it. I wish I were mistaken in what I have told you; but within the last few days more than one vivid gleam has flashed upon me. I did not wander about the rocks of Le Croisic for my amusement, on my soul! The bitterness of my tone when, on my return, I found you talking to Camille, had its source in the depths of my wounded self-respect. I will have an explanation presently with Camille. Two minds so clear-sighted as hers and mine cannot deceive each other. Between two professional duelists a fight is soon ended. So I may at once announce my departure. Yes, I shall leave Les Touches, to-morrow perhaps, with Conti.

“When we are no longer here, some strange—perhaps terrible—things will certainly happen, and I shall be sorry not to look on at these struggles of passion, so rare in France, and so dramatic!—You are very young to enter on so perilous a fight; I am interested in you. But for the

deep disgust I feel for women, I would stay to help you to play the game; it is difficult; you may lose it; you have two remarkable women to deal with, and you are already too much in love with one to make use of the other.

“Béatrix must surely have some tenacity in her nature, and Camille has magnanimity. You, perhaps, like some fragile and brittle thing, will be dashed between the two rocks, swept away by the torrent of passion. Take care.”

Calyste’s amazement on hearing these words allowed Claude Vignon to finish his speech and leave the lad, who remained in the position of a traveler in the Alps to whom his guide has proved the depth of an abyss by dropping a stone in.

He had heard from Claude himself that Camille loved him, Calyste, at the moment when he knew that his love for Béatrix would end only with his life. There was something in the situation too much for such a guileless young soul. Crushed by immense regret that weighed upon him for the past, killed by the perplexities of the present, between Béatrix, whom he loved, and Camille, whom he no longer loved, when Claude said that she loved him, the poor youth was desperate; he sat undecided, lost in thought. He vainly sought to guess the reasons for which Félicité had rejected his devotion, to go to Paris and accept that of Claude Vignon.

Now and again Mme. de Rochefide’s voice came to his ear, pure and clear, reviving the violent excitement from which he had fled in leaving the drawing-room. Several times he could hardly master himself so far as to restrain a fierce desire to seize her and snatch her away.—What would become of him? Could he ever come again to Les Touches? Knowing that Camille loved him, how could he here worship Béatrix?—He could find no issue from his difficulties.

Gradually silence fell on the house. Without heeding it, he heard the shutting of doors. Then suddenly he counted the twelve strokes of midnight told by the clock in the next room, where the voices of Camille and Claude now roused him from the numbing contemplation of the future. A light shone there amid the darkness. Before he could show himself, he heard these dreadful words spoken by Vignon.

“You came back from Paris madly in love with Calyste,” he was saying to Félicité. “But you were appalled at the consequences of such a passion at your age; it would lead you into a gulf, a hell—to suicide perhaps. Love can exist only in the belief that it is eternal, and you could foresee a few paces before you in life, a terrible parting—weariness and old age putting a dreadful end to a beautiful poem. You remember *Adolphe*, the disastrous termination of the loves of Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant, who were, nevertheless, much better matched in age than you and Calyste.

“So, then, you took me, as men take fascines, to raise an intrenchment between yourself and the enemy. But while you tried to attach me to Les Touches, was it not that you might spend your days in secret worship of your divinity? But to carry out such a scheme, at once unworthy and sublime, you should have chosen a common man, or a man so absorbed by lofty thought that he would be easily deceived. You fancied that I was simple, and as easy to cheat as a man of genius. I am, it would seem, no more than a clever man: I saw through you. When yesterday I sang the praises of women of your age, and explained to you why Calyste loved you, do you suppose that I thought all your ecstatic looks—brilliant, enchanting—were meant for me? Had I not already read your soul? The eyes, indeed, were fixed on mine, but the heart throbbed for Calyste.—You have never been loved, my poor Maupin; and you never will be now, after denying yourself the beautiful fruit which chance put in your way at the very gates of woman’s hell, which must close at the touch of the figure 50.”

“And why has love always avoided me?” she asked, in a broken voice. “You who know everything, tell me.”

“Why, you are unamiable,” said he; “you will not yield to love, you want it to yield to you. You can perhaps be led into the mischief and spirit of a schoolboy; but you have no youth of heart, your mind is too deep, you never were artless, and you cannot begin now. Your charm lies in mystery; it is abstract, and not practical. And, again, your power repels very powerful natures; they dread a conflict.

Your strength may attract young souls, which, like Calyste's, love to feel protected; but, in the long run, it is fatiguing. You are superior, sublime! You must accept the disadvantages of these two qualities; they are wearisome."

"What a verdict!" cried Camille. "Can I never be a woman? Am I a monster?"

"Possibly," said Claude.

"We shall see," cried the woman, stung to the quick.

"Good-night, my dear. I leave to-morrow.—I owe you no grudge, Camille; I think you the greatest of women; but if I should consent to play the part any longer of a screen or a curtain," said Claude, with two marked inflexions of his voice, "you would despise me utterly. We can part now without grief or remorse; we have no happiness to mourn for, no hopes to disappoint.

"To you, as to some infinitely rare men of genius, love is not what Nature made it—a vehement necessity, with acute but transient delights attached to its satisfaction, and then death; you regard it as what Christianity has made it: an ideal realm full of noble sentiments, of immense small things, of poetry and spiritual sensations, of sacrifices, flowers of morality, enchanting harmonies, placed far above all vulgar grossness, but whither two beings joined to be one angel are carried up on the wings of pleasure. This was what I hoped for; I thought I held one of the keys which open the door that is shut to so many persons, and through which we soar into infinitude. You were there already! And so I was deceived.

"I am going back to misery in my vast prison, Paris. Such a deception at the beginning of my career would have been enough to make me flee from woman; now, it fills my soul with such disenchantment as casts me forever into appalling solitude; I shall be destitute even of the faith which helped the Holy Fathers to people it with sacred visions.—This, my dear Camille, is what a superior nature brings us to. We may each of us sing the terrible chant that a poet has put into the mouth of Moses addressing the Almighty—

"O Lord! Thou hast made me powerful and alone!"

At this moment Calyste came in.

"I ought to let you know that I am here," said he.

Mlle. des Touches looked absolutely terrified; a sudden color flushed her calm features with a fiery red. All through the scene she was handsomer than she had ever been in her life.

"We thought you had gone, Calyste," said Claude; "but this involuntary indiscretion on both sides will have done no harm; perhaps you will feel more free at Les Touches now that you know Félicité so completely. Her silence shows me that I was not mistaken as to the part she intended that I should play. She loves you, as I told you; but she loves you for yourself, and not for herself—a feeling which few women are fitted to conceive of or to cling to: very few of them know the delights of pain kept alive by desire. It is one of the grander passions, reserved for men;—but she is somewhat of a man," he added, with a smile. "Your passion for Béatrix will torture her and make her happy, both at once."

Tears rose to Mlle. des Touches' eyes; she dared not look either at the merciless Claude or the ingenuous Calyste. She was frightened at having been understood; she had not supposed that any man, whatever his gifts, could divine such a torment of refined feeling, such lofty heroism as hers. And Calyste, seeing her so humiliated at finding her magnanimity betrayed, sympathized with the agitation of the woman he had placed so high, and whom he beheld so stricken. By an irresistible impulse, he fell at Camille's feet and kissed her hands, hiding his tear-washed face in them.

"Claude!" she cried, "do not desert me; what will become of me?"

"What have you to fear?" replied the critic. "Calyste already loves the Marquise like a madman. You can certainly have no stronger barrier between him and yourself than this passion fanned into life by your own act. It is quite as effectual as I could be. Yesterday there was danger for you and for him; but to-day everything will give you maternal joys," and he gave her a mocking glance. "You will be proud of his triumphs."

Félicité looked at Calyste, who, at these words, raised his head with a hasty movement. Claude Vignon was sufficiently revenged by the pleasure he took in seeing their confusion.

“You pushed him towards Mme. de Rochefide,” Vignon went on; “he is now under the spell. You have dug your own grave. If you had but trusted yourself to me, you would have avoided the disasters that await you.”

“Disasters!” cried Camille Maupin, raising Calyste’s head to the level of her own, kissing his hair, and wetting it with her tears. “No, Calyste. Forget all you have just heard, and count me for nothing!”

She stood up in front of the two men, drawn to her full height, quelling them by the lightnings that flashed from her eyes in which all her soul shone.

“While Claude was speaking,” she went on, “I saw all the beauty, the dignity of hopeless love; is it not the only sentiment that brings us near to God?—Do not love me, Calyste; but I—I will love you as no other woman can ever love!”

It was the wildest cry that ever a wounded eagle sent out from his eyrie. Claude, on one knee, took her hand and kissed it.

“Now go, my dear boy,” said Mlle. des Touches to Calyste; “your mother may be uneasy.”

Calyste returned to Guérande at a leisurely pace, turning round to see the light which shone from the windows of Béatrix’s rooms. He was himself surprised that he felt so little pity for Camille; he was almost annoyed with her for having deprived him of fifteen months of happiness. And again, now and then, he felt the same thrill in himself that Camille had just caused him, he felt the tears she had shed on his hair, he suffered in her suffering, he fancied he could hear the moans—for, no doubt, she was moaning—of this wonderful woman for whom he had so longed a few days since.

As he opened the courtyard gate at home, where all was silent, he saw through the window his mother working by

the primitive lamp while waiting for him. Tears rose to his eyes at the sight.

“What more has happened?” asked Fanny, her face expressive of terrible anxiety. Calyste’s only reply was to clasp his mother in his arms and kiss her cheeks, her forehead, her hair, with the passionate effusion which delights a mother, infusing into her the subtle fires of the life she gave.

“It is you that I love!” said Calyste to his mother, blushing, and almost shamefaced; “you who live for me alone, whom I would fain make happy.”

“But you are not in your usual frame of mind, my child,” said the Baroness, looking at her son. “What has happened?”

“Camille loves me,” said he; “and I no longer love her.”

The Baroness drew him towards her and kissed him on the forehead, and in the deep silence of the gloomy old tapestried room he could hear the rapid beating of his mother’s heart. The Irishwoman was jealous of Camille, and had suspected the truth. While awaiting her son night after night she had studied that woman’s passion; led by the light of persistent meditation, she had entered into Camille’s heart; and without being able to account for it, she had understood that in that unwedded soul there was a sort of motherly affection. Calyste’s story horrified this simple and guileless mother.

“Well,” said she, after a pause, “love Mme. de Rochefide; she will cause me no sorrow.”

Béatrix was not free; she could not upset any of the plans they had made for Calyste’s happiness, at least so Fanny thought; she saw in her a sort of daughter-in-law to love, and not a rival mother to contend with.

“But Béatrix will never love me!” cried Calyste.

“Perhaps,” replied the Baroness, with a knowing air. “Did you not say that she is to be alone to-morrow?”

“Yes.”

“Well, my child,” said the mother, coloring, “jealousy lurks in all our hearts, but I did not know that I should ever find it at the bottom of my own, for I did not think that anyone would try to rob me of my Calyste’s affection!”



She sighed. "I fancied," she went on, "that marriage would be to you what it was to me. What lights you have thrown on my mind during these two months! What colors are reflected on your very natural passion, my poor darling!—Well, still seem to love your Mlle. des Touches; the Marquise will be jealous of her, and will be yours."

"Oh, my sweet mother, Camille would never have told me that!" cried Calyste, taking his mother by the waist, and kissing her in the neck.

"You make me very wicked, you bad child," said she, quite happy at seeing the beaming face hope gave to her son, who gayly went up the winding stairs.

Next morning Calyste desired Gasselín to stand on the road from Guérande to Saint-Nazaire, and watch for Mlle. des Touches' carriage; then, as it went past, he was to count the persons in it.

Gasselín returned just as the family had sat down together at breakfast.

"What can have happened?" said Mlle. du Guénic; "Gasselín is running as if Guérande were burning."

"He must have caught the rat," said Mariotte, who was bringing in the coffee, milk, and toast.

"He is coming from the town and not from the garden," replied the blind woman.

"But the rat's hole is behind the wall to the front by the street," said Mariotte.

"M. le Chevalier, there were five of them; four inside and the coachman."

"Two ladies on the back seat?" asked Calyste.

"And two gentlemen in front," replied Gasselín.

"Saddle my father's horse, ride after them; be at Saint-Nazaire by the time the boat starts for Paimbœuf; and if the two men go on board, come back and tell me as fast as you can gallop."

Gasselín went.

"Why, nephew, you have the very Devil in you!" exclaimed old Aunt Zéphirine.

"Let him please himself, sister," cried the Baron. "He was as gloomy as an owl, and now he is as merry as a lark."

“Perhaps you told him that our dear Charlotte was coming,” said the old lady, turning to her sister-in-law.

“No,” replied the Baroress.

“I thought he might wish to go to meet her,” said Mlle. du Guénic, slyly.

“If Charlotte is to stay three months with her aunt, he has time enough to see her in,” replied the Baroness.

“Why, sister, what has occurred since yesterday?” asked the old lady. “You were so delighted to think that Mlle. de Pen-Hoël was going this morning to fetch her niece.”

“Jacqueline wants me to marry Charlotte to snatch me from perdition, aunt,” said Calyste, laughing, and giving his mother a look of intelligence. “I was on the Mall this morning when Mlle. de Pen-Hoël was talking to M. du Halga; she did not reflect that it would be far worse perdition for me to be married at my age.”

“It is written above,” cried the old aunt, interrupting Calyste, “that I am to die neither happy nor at peace. I should have liked to see our family continued, and some of our lands redeemed—but nothing of the kind! Can you, my fine nephew, put anything in the scale to outweigh such duties as these?”

“Why,” said the Baron, “can Mlle. des Touches hinder Calyste from marrying in due course? I must go to see her.”

“I can assure you, father, that Félicité will never be an obstacle in the way of my marriage.”

“I cannot make head or tail of it!” said the blind woman, who knew nothing of her nephew’s sudden passion for the Marquise de Rochefide.

The mother kept her son’s secret; in such matters silence is instinctive in all women. The old aunt sank into deep meditation, listening with all her might, spying every voice, every sound, to guess the mystery they were keeping from her.

Gasselin soon returned, and told his young master that he had not needed to go so far as Saint-Nazaire to learn that Mlle. des Touches and the lady would return

alone; he had heard it in the town, from Bernus the carrier, who had taken charge of the gentlemen's baggage.

"They will come back alone?" said Calyste. "Bring out my horse."

Gasselin supposed from his young master's voice that there was something serious on hand; he saddled both the horses, loaded the pistols without saying anything, and dressed to ride out with Calyste. Calyste was so delighted to know that Claude and Gennaro were gone, that he never thought of the party he would meet at Saint-Nazaire; he thought only of the pleasure of escorting the Marquise. He took his old father's hands and pressed them affectionately, he kissed his mother, and put his arm round his old aunt's waist.

"Well, at any rate I like him better thus than when he is sad," said old Zéphirine.

"Where are you off to, Chevalier?" asked his father.

"To Saint-Nazaire."

"The deuce you are! And when is the wedding to be?" said the Baron, who thought he was in a hurry to see Charlotte de Kergarouët. "I should like to be a grandfather; it is high time."

When Gasselin showed his evident intention of riding out with Calyste, it occurred to the young man that he might return in Camille's carriage with Beatrix, leaving his horse in Gasselin's care, and he clapped the man on the shoulder, saying—

"That was well thought of."

"So I should think," replied Gasselin.

"Spare the horses, my boy," said his father, coming out on the steps with Fanny; "they have twelve leagues before them."

Calyste exchanged looks full of meaning with his mother, and was gone.

"Dearest treasure!" said she, seeing him bend his head under the top of the gate.

"God preserve him!" replied the Baron, "for we shall never make another."

This little speech, in the rather coarse taste of a country gentleman, made the Baroness shiver.

“My nephew is not so much in love with Charlotte as to rush to meet her,” said old mademoiselle to Mariotte, who was clearing the table.

“Oh, a fine lady has come to Les Touches, a Marquise, and he is running after her. Well, well, he is young!” said Mariotte.

“Those women will be the death of him,” said Mlle. du Guénic.

“That won’t kill him, mademoiselle, quite the contrary,” replied Mariotte, who seemed quite happy in Calyste’s happiness.

Calyste was riding at a pace that might have killed his horse, when Gasselin very happily asked his master whether he wished to arrive before the departure of the boat; this was by no means his purpose; he had no wish to be seen by either Conti or Vignon. The young man reined in his horse and looked complacently at the double furrow traced by the wheels of the carriage on the sandy parts of the road. He was wildly gay merely at the thought: “She passed this way; she will come back this way; her eyes rested on those woods, on these trees!”

“What a pretty road!” said he to Gasselin.

“Yes, sir, Brittany is the finest country in the world,” replied the servant. “Are there such flowers in the hedges, or green lanes that wind like this one, anywhere else to be found?”

“Nowhere, Gasselin.”

“Here comes Bernus’s carriage,” said Gasselin.

“Mlle. de Pen-Hoël will be in it with her niece; let us hide,” said Calyste.

“Hide here, sir! are you crazy? We are in the midst of the sands.”

The carriage, which was in fact crawling up a sandy hill above Saint-Nazaire, presently appeared, in all the artless simplicity of rude Breton construction. To Calyste’s great astonishment, the conveyance was full.

“We have left Mlle. de Pen-Hoël and her sister and her

niece in a great pother," said the driver to Gasselin; "all the places had been taken by the custom-house."

"I am done for!" cried Calyste. The vehicle was in fact full of custom-house men, on their way, no doubt, to relieve those in charge at the salt marshes.

When Calyste reached the little esplanade surrounding the Church of Saint-Nazaire, whence there is a view of Paimbœuf and of the majestic estuary of the Loire where it struggles with the tide, he found Camille and the Marquise waving their handkerchiefs to bid a last farewell to the two passengers borne away by the steam packet. Béatrix was quite bewitching, her face tenderly shaded by the reflection from a rice-straw hat on which poppies were lightly piled, tied by a scarlet ribbon; in a flowered muslin dress, one little slender foot put forward in a green gaitered shoe, leaning on her slight parasol-stick, and waving her well-gloved hand. Nothing is more strikingly effective than a woman on a rock, like a statue on its pedestal.

Conti could see Calyste go up to Camille.

"I thought," said the youth to Mlle. des Touches, "that you two ladies would be returning alone."

"That was very nice of you, Calyste," she replied, taking his hand. Béatrix looked round, glanced at her young adorer, and gave him the most imperious flash at her command. A smile that the Marquise caught on Calyste's eloquent lips made her feel the vulgarity of this impulse, worthy of a mere bourgeoisie. Mme. de Rochefide then said with a smile to Calyste—

"And was it not rather impertinent to suppose that I could bore Camille on the way?"

"My dear, one man for two widows is not much in the way," said Mlle. des Touches, taking Calyste's arm, and leaving Béatrix to gaze after the boat.

At this instant Calyste heard in the street of what must be called the port of Saint-Nazaire the voices of Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, Charlotte, and Gasselin, all three chattering like magpies. The old maid was catechizing Gasselin, and wanted

to know what had brought him and his master to Saint-Nazaire; Mlle. des Touches' carriage had made a commotion.

Before the lad could escape, Charlotte had caught sight of him.

"There is Calyste!" cried the girl.

"Go and offer them my carriage; their woman can sit by my coachman," said Camille, who knew that Mme. de Kergarouët with her daughter and Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had failed to get places.

Calyste, who could not avoid obeying Camille, went to deliver this message. As soon as she knew that she would have to ride with the Marquise de Rochefide and the famous Camille Maupin, Mme. de Kergarouët ignored her elder sister's objections; Mlle. de Pen-Hoël refused to avail herself of what she called the Devil's chariot. At Nantes people lived in rather more civilized latitudes than at Guérande; Camille was admired; she was regarded as the Muse of Brittany and an honor to the country; she excited as much curiosity as jealousy. The absolution granted her in Paris by the fashionable world was consecrated by Mlle. des Touches' fine fortune, and perhaps by her former successes at Nantes, which was proud of having been the birthplace of Camille Maupin.

So the Viscountess, crazy with curiosity, dragged away her old sister, turning a deaf ear to her jeremiads.

"Good-morning, Calyste," said little Charlotte.

"Good-morning, Charlotte," replied Calyste, but he did not offer her his arm.

Both speechless with surprise, she at his coldness, he at his own cruelty, they went up the hollow ravine that is called a street at Saint-Nazaire, following the two sisters in silence. In an instant the girl of sixteen saw the castle in the air which her romantic hopes had built and furnished crumble into ruins. She and Calyste had so constantly played together during their childhood, they had been so intimately connected, that she imagined her future life secure. She had hurried on, carried away by heedless happiness, like a bird rushing down on a field of wheat; she was checked in

her flight without being able to imagine what the obstacle could be.

“What is the matter, Calyste?” she asked, taking his hand.

“Nothing,” he replied, withdrawing his hand with terrible haste as he thought of his aunt’s schemes and Mlle. de Pen-Hoël’s.

Tears filled Charlotte’s eyes. She looked at the handsome youth without animosity; but she was to feel the first pangs of jealousy and know the dreadful rage of rivalry at the sight of the two Parisian beauties, which led her to suspect the cause of Calyste’s coldness.

Charlotte de Kergarouët was of middle height; she had rustic rosy cheeks, a round face with wide-awake black eyes that affected intelligence, a quantity of brown hair, a round waist, flat back, and thin arms, and the crisp, decided tone of speech adopted by country-bred girls who do not wish to seem simpletons. She was the spoilt child of the family in consequence of her aunt’s preference for her. At this moment she was wearing the plaid tweed cloak lined with green silk that she had put on for the passage in the steamboat. Her traveling gown of cheap stuff, with a chaste gathered body and a finely pleated collar, would presently strike her as being hideous in comparison with the fresh morning dress worn by Béatrix and Camille. She would be painfully conscious of stockings soiled on the rocks and the boats she had jumped into, of old leather shoes, chosen especially that there might be nothing good to spoil on the journey, as is the manner and custom of provincial folks.

As to the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, she was typically provincial. Tall, lean, faded, full of covert pretentiousness which only showed when it was wounded, a great talker, and by dint of talk picking up a few ideas as a billiard-player makes a cannon, which gave her a reputation for brilliancy; trying to snub Parisians by a display of blunt country shrewdness, and an assumption of perfect contentment constantly paraded; stooping in the hope of being picked up, and furious at being left on her knees; fishing for compliments, as the English have it, and not always

catching them; dressing in a style at once exaggerated and slatternly; fancying that lack of politeness was lofty impertinence, and that she could distress people greatly by paying them no attention; refusing things she wished for to have them offered a second time and pressed on her beyond reason; her head full of extinct subjects, and much astonished to find herself behind the times; finally, hardly able to abstain for one hour from dragging in Nantes, and the small lions of Nantes, and the gossip of the upper ten of Nantes; complaining of Nantes and criticising Nantes, and then regarding as a personal affront the concurrence extorted from the politeness of those who rashly agreed with all she said.

Her manners, her speech, and her ideas had to some extent rubbed off on her four daughters.

To meet Camille Maupin and Mme. de Rochefide! Here was fame for the future, and matter for a hundred conversations! She marched on the church as if to take it by storm, flourishing her handkerchief, which she unfolded to show the corners ponderously embroidered at home, and trimmed with worn-out lace. She had a rather stalwart gait, which did not matter in a woman of seven-and-forty.

"M. le Chevalier," said she, and she pointed to Calyste, who was following sulkily enough with Charlotte, "has informed us of your amiable offer; but my sister, my daughter, and I fear we shall incommode you."

"Not I, sister; I shall not inconvenience these ladies," said the old maid sharply. "I can surely find a horse in Saint-Nazaire to carry me home."

Camille and Béatrix exchanged sidelong looks, which Calyste noted, and that glance was enough to annihilate every memory of his youth, all his belief in the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, and to wreck forever the schemes laid by the two families.

"Five can sit quite easily in the carriage," replied Mlle. des Touches, on whom Jacqueline had turned her back. "Even if we were horribly squeezed, which is impossible, as you are all so slight, I should be amply compensated by the pleasure of doing a service to friends of Calyste's. Your maid, madame, will find a seat; and your bundles,



if you have any, can be put in the rumble: I have no servant with me."

The Viscountess was profusely grateful, and blamed her sister Jacqueline, who had been in such a hurry for her niece that she would not give her time to travel by land in their carriage; to be sure, the post road was not only longer, but expensive; she must return immediately to Nantes, where she had left three more little kittens eager to have her back again—and she stroked her daughter's chin. But Charlotte put on a little victimized air as she looked up at her mother, which made it seem likely that the Viscountess bored her four daughters most consumedly by trotting them out as persistently as, in *Tristram Shandy*, Corporal Trim puts his cap on.

"You are a happy mother, and you must——" Camille began; but she broke off, remembering that Béatrix must have deserted her boy to follow Conti.

"Oh!" said the Viscountess, "though it is my misfortune to spend my life in the country and at Nantes, I have the comfort of knowing that my children adore me. Have you any children?" she asked Camille.

"I am Mlle. des Touches," replied Camille. "Madame is the Marquise de Rochefide."

"Then you are to be pitied for not knowing the greatest happiness we poor mere women can have. Is it not so, madame?" said she to the Marquise, to remedy her blunder. "But you have many compensations."

A hot tear welled up in Béatrix's eyes; she turned hastily away and went to the clumsy parapet at the edge of the rock, whither Calyste followed her.

"Madame," said Camille in a low voice to Mme. de Kergarouët, "do you not know that the Marquise is separated from her husband, that she has not seen her son for two years, and does not know when they may meet again?"

"Dear!" cried Mme. de Kergarouët. "Poor lady! Is it a judicial separation?"

"No, incompatibility," said Camille.

"I can quite understand that," replied the Viscountess, undaunted.

Old Mlle. de Pen-Hoël had intrenched herself a few yards off with her dear Charlotte. Calyste, after assuring himself that no one could see them, took the Marquise's hand and kissed it, leaving a tear on it. Béatrix turned on him, her eyes dried by anger; some cruel word was on her tongue, but she could say nothing as she saw the tears on the beautiful face of the angelic youth, as deeply moved as she was.

"Good Heavens, Calyste!" said Camille in a whisper as he rejoined them with Mme. de Rochefide, "you will have *that* for a mother-in-law, and that little gaby for your wife."

"Because her aunt is rich," added Calyste sarcastically.

The whole party now moved towards the inn, and the Viscountess thought it incumbent on her to make some satirical remarks to Camille on the savages of Saint-Nazaire.

"I love Brittany, madame," replied Félicité gravely. "I was born at Guérande."

Calyste could not help admiring Mlle. des Touches, who, by the tones of her voice, her steady gaze, and placid manners, put him at his ease, notwithstanding the terrible confessions of the scene that had taken place last night. Still, she looked tired; her features betrayed that she had not slept; they looked thickened, but the forehead suppressed the internal storm with relentless calm.

"What queens!" said he to Charlotte, pointing to Béatrix and Camille, as he gave the girl his arm, to Mlle. de Pen-Hoël's great satisfaction.

"What notion was this of your mother's," said the old lady, also giving a lean arm to her niece, "to throw us into the company of this wretched woman?"

"Oh, aunt! a woman who is the glory of Brittany."

"The disgrace, child!—Do not let me see you too cringing to her."

"Mlle. Charlotte is right," said Calyste; "you are unjust."

"Oh, she has bewitched you!" retorted Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

"I have the same friendship for her that I have for you," said Calyste.

"How long have the du Guénics taken to lying?" said the old woman.

“Since the Pen-Hoëls took to being deaf,” retorted Calyste.

“Then you are not in love with her?” asked the aunt, delighted.

“I was, but I am no longer,” he replied.

“Bad boy! Then why have you given us so much anxiety? I knew that love was but a folly; only marriage is to be relied on,” said she, looking at Charlotte.

Charlotte, somewhat reassured, hoped to reconquer her advantages by an appeal to the memories of their childhood, and clung to Calyste’s arm; but he vowed to himself that he would come to a clear understanding with the little heiress.

“Oh, what famous games of *mouche* we will have, Calyste,” said she, “and what capital fun!”

The horses were put in; Camille made the Viscountess and Charlotte take the best seats, for Jacqueline had disappeared; then she and the Marquise sat with their back to the horses. Calyste, forced to give up the pleasure he had promised himself, rode at the side of the carriage; and the horses, all tired, went slowly enough to allow of his gazing at Béatrix.

History has kept no record of the singular conversation of these four persons, so strangely thrown together by chance in this carriage; for it is impossible to accept the hundred and something versions which were current at Nantes as to the stories, the repartees, and the witticisms which Mme. de Kergarouët heard from Camille Maupin *himself*. She took good care not to repeat, nor even understand, the replies made by Mlle. des Touches to all her ridiculous inquiries—such as writers so often hear, and by which they are made to pay dearly for their few joys.

“How do you write your books?” asked Mme. de Kergarouët.

“Why, just as you do your needlework,” said Camille, “your netting, or cross-stitch.”

“And where did you find all those deep observations and attractive pictures?”

“Where you find all the clever things you say, madame.—Nothing is easier than writing, and if you chose——”

“Ah, it all lies in the choosing? I should never have

thought it!—And which of your works do you yourself prefer?”

“It is difficult to have any preference for these little kittens.”

“You are surfeited with compliments; it is impossible to say anything new.”

“Believe me, madame, I appreciate the form you give to yours.”

The Viscountess, anxious not to seem neglectful of the Marquise, said, looking archly at her—

“I shall never forget this drive, sitting between wit and beauty.”

The Marquise laughed.

“You flatter me, madame,” said she. “It is not in nature that wit should be noticed in the company of genius, and I have not yet said much.”

Charlotte, keenly alive to her mother’s absurdity, looked at her, hoping to check her; but the Viscountess still valiantly showed fight against the two laughing Parisian ladies. Calyste, trotting at an easy pace by the carriage, could only see the two women on the back seat, and his eyes fell on them alternately, betraying a very melancholy mood. Béatrix, who could not help being seen, persistently avoided looking at the youth; with a placidity that is maddening to a lover, she sat with her hands folded over her crossed shawl, and seemed lost in deep meditation.

At a spot where the road is shaded and as moist and green as a cool forest path, where the wheels of the carriage were scarcely audible, and the wind brought a resinous scent, Camille remarked on the beauty of the place, and, leaning her hand on Béatrix’s knee, she pointed to Calyste and said—

“How well he rides!”

“Calyste?” said Mme. de Kergarouët. “He is a capital horseman.”

“Oh, Calyste is so nice!” said Charlotte.

“There are so many Englishmen just like him——” replied the Marquise indifferently, without finishing her sentence.

“His mother is Irish—an O’Brien,” said Charlotte, feeling personally attacked.

Camille and the Marquise drove into Guérande with the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët and her daughter, to the great astonishment of the gaping townspeople; they left their traveling companions at the corner of the little Rue du Guénic, where there was something very like a crowd. Calyste had ridden on to announce to his mother the arrival of the party, who were expected to dinner. The meal had been politely put off till four o’clock.

The Chevalier went back to give the ladies his arm; he kissed Camille’s hand, hoping to touch that of the Marquise, but she firmly kept her arms folded, and he besought her in vain with eyes sparkling through wasted tears.

“You little goose!” said Camille in his ear, with a light, friendly kiss on it.

“True enough!” said Calyste to himself as the carriage turned. “I forget my mother’s counsels—but I believe I always shall forget them.”

Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, who arrived valiantly mounted on a hired nag, Mme. de Kergarouët, and Charlotte found the table laid, and were cordially, if not luxuriously, received by the du Guénics. Old Zéphirine had sent for certain bottles of fine wine from the depths of the cellar, and Mariotte had surpassed herself in Breton dishes. The Viscountess, delighted to have traveled with the famous Camille Maupin, tried to expatiate on modern literature, and the place held in it by Camille; but as it had been with the game of whist, so it was with literary matters; neither the du Guénics, nor the Curé, who looked in, nor the Chevalier du Halga understood anything about them. The Abbé and the old naval officer sipped the liqueurs at dessert.

As soon as Mariotte, helped by Gasselín and by Mme. de Kergarouët’s maid, had cleared the table, there was an enthusiastic clamor for *mouche*. Joy prevailed. Everybody believed Calyste to be free, and saw him married ere long to little Charlotte. Calyste sat silent. For the first time in his life he was making comparisons between the Kergarouëts and the two elegant and clever women, full of

taste, who, at this very moment, were probably laughing at the two provincials, if he might judge from the first glances they had exchanged. Fanny, knowing Calyste's secret, noticed his dejection. Charlotte's coquetting and her mother's attacks had no effect on him. Her dear boy was evidently bored; his body was in this room, where of yore he could have been amused by the absurdities of *mouche*, but his spirit was wandering round Les Touches.

"How can I send him off to Camille's?" thought the mother, who loved him, and who was bored because he was bored. Her affection lent her inventiveness.

"You are dying to be off to Les Touches to see *her*?" she whispered to Calyste.

The boy's answer was a smile and a blush that thrilled this devoted mother to her heart's very core.

"Madame," said she to the Viscountess, "you will be very uncomfortable to-morrow in the carrier's chaise, and obliged to start very early in the morning. Would it not be better if you were to have Mlle. des Touches' carriage? Go over, Calyste," said she, turning to her son, "and arrange the matter at Les Touches; but come back quickly."

"It will not take ten minutes," cried Calyste, giving his mother a wild hug out on the steps, whither she followed him.

Calyste flew with the speed of a fawn, and was in the entrance hall of Les Touches just as Camille and Béatrix came out of the dining-room after dinner. He had the wit to offer his arm to Félicité.

"You have deserted the Viscountess and her daughter for us," said she, pressing his arm. "We are able to appreciate the extent of the sacrifice."

"Are these Kergarouëts related to the Portenduères and old Admiral de Kergarouët, whose widow married Charles de Vandenesse?" Mme. de Rochefide asked Camille.

"Mlle. Charlotte is the Admiral's grand-niece," replied Camille.

"She is a charming young person," said Béatrix, seating herself in a Gothic armchair; "the very thing for M. du Guénic."

"That marriage shall never be!" cried Camille vehemently.

Calyste, overwhelmed by the cold indifference of the Marquise, who spoke of the little country girl as the only creature for whom he was a match, sat speechless and bewildered.

“And why not, Camille?” said Mme. de Rochefide.

“My dear,” said Camille, seeing Calyste’s despair, “I did not advise Conti to get married, and I believe I was delightful to him—you are ungenerous.”

Béatrix looked at her with surprise mingled with indefinable suspicions. Calyste almost understood Camille’s self-immolation as he saw the pale flush rise in her cheeks, which, in her, betrayed the most violent emotions: he went up to her awkwardly enough, took her hand, and kissed it. Camille sat down to the piano with an easy air, as if equally sure of her friend and of the lover she had claimed, turning her back upon them, and leaving them to each other. She improvised some variations on airs, unconsciously suggested by her thoughts, for they were all deeply sad. The Marquise appeared to be listening; but she was watching Calyste, who was too young and too guileless to play the part suggested to him by Camille, and sat lost in ecstasy before his real idol. At the end of an hour, during which Mlle. des Touches gave herself up to her jealous feelings, Béatrix went to her room.

Camille at once led Calyste into her own room, so as not to be overheard, for women have an admirable sense of distrust.

“My child,” said she, “you must pretend to love me or you are lost. You are a perfect child; you know nothing about women, you know only how to love. To love and to be loved are two very different things. You are rushing into terrible suffering. I want you to be happy. If you provoke Béatrix, not in her pride, but in her obstinacy, she is capable of flying off to join Conti at a few leagues from Paris. Then what would become of you?”

“I should love her,” replied Calyste.

“You would not see her again.”

“Oh, yes, I should,” said he.

“Pray how?”

“I should follow her.”

“But you are as poor as Job, my dear child!”

“My father, Gasselin, and I lived in La Vendée for three months on a hundred and fifty francs, marching day and night.”

“Calyste,” said Félicité, “listen to me. I see you are too honest to act a part; I do not wish to corrupt so pure a nature as yours. I will take it all on myself. Béatrix shall love you.”

“Is it possible?” he cried, clasping his hands.

“Yes,” said Camille. “But we must undo the vows she had made to herself. I will lie for you. Only, do not interfere in any way with the arduous task I am about to undertake. The Marquise has much aristocratic cunning; she is intellectually suspicious; no hunter ever had to take more difficult game; so in this case, my poor boy, the sportsman must take his dog’s advice. Will you promise to obey me blindly? I will be your Fox,” said she, naming Calyste’s best hound.

“What then am I to do?” replied the young man.

“Very little,” said Camille. “Come here every day at noon. I, like an impatient mistress, shall always be at the window of the corridor that looks out on the Guérande road to see you coming. I shall fly to my room so as not to be seen—not to let you know the depth of a passion that is a burden on you; but sometimes you will see me and wave your handkerchief to me. Then in the courtyard, and as you come upstairs, you must put on a look of some annoyance. That will be no dissimulation, my child,” said she, leaning her head on his breast, “will it?—Do not hurry up; look out of the staircase window on to the garden to look for Béatrix. When she is there—and she will be there, never fear—if she sees you, come straight, but very slowly, to the little drawing-room, and thence to my room. If you should see me at the window spying your treachery, you must start back that I may not catch you imploring a glance from Béatrix. Once in my room you will be my prisoner.—Yes; we will sit there till four o’clock. You may spend the time in reading; I will smoke. You will be horribly bored by not seeing her, but I will provide you with interesting books.



You have read nothing of George Sand's; I will send a man to-night to buy her works at Nantes, and those of some other writers that are unknown to you.

"I shall be the first to leave the room; you must not put down your book or come into the little drawing-room till you hear Béatrix in there talking to me. Whenever you see a music-book open on the piano, you can ask if you may stay. You may be positively rude to me if you can; I give you leave; all will be well."

"I know, Camille," said he, with delightful good faith, "that you have the rarest affection for me; it makes me quite sorry that I ever saw Béatrix; but what do you hope for?"

"In a week Béatrix will be crazy about you."

"Good God!" cried he, "is that possible?" and, clasping his hands, he fell on his knees before Camille, who was touched and happy to give him such joy at her own cost.

"Listen to me," said she. "If you speak to the Marquise—not merely in the way of conversation, but if you exchange even a few words with her—if you allow her to question you, if you fail in the wordless part I set you to play, and which is certainly easy enough, understand clearly," and she spoke in a serious tone, "you will lose her forever."

"I do not understand anything of all this, Camille," cried Calyste, looking at her with adorable guilelessness.

"If you understood, you would not be the exquisite child that you are, the noble, handsome Calyste," said she, taking his hand and kissing it.

And Calyste did what he had never done before; he put his arm round Camille and kissed her gently in the neck, without passion, but tenderly, as he kissed his mother. Mlle. des Touches could not restrain a burst of tears.

"Now go, child," said she, "and tell your Viscountess that my carriage is at her orders."

Calyste wanted to stay, but he was obliged to obey Camille's imperious and imperative gesture. He went home in high spirits, for he was sure of being loved within a week by the beautiful Rochefide.

The *mouche* players found in him the Calyste they had

lost these two months. Charlotte ascribed the change to her own presence. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël was affectionately teasing. The Abbé Grimont tried to read in the Baroness's eyes the reason for the calm he saw there. The Chevalier du Halga rubbed his hands.

The two old maids were as lively as a couple of lizards. The Viscountess owed five francs' worth of accumulated fines. Zéphirine's avarice was so keenly excited that she lamented her inability to see the cards, and was sharply severe on her sister-in-law, who was distracted from the game, by Calyste's good spirits, and who asked him a question now and then without understanding his replies.

The game went on till eleven o'clock. Two players had retired; the Baron and du Halga were asleep in their arm-chairs. Mariotte had made some buckwheat cakes; the Baroness brought out her tea-caddy; and before the Kergarouëts left, the noble house of du Guénic offered its guests a collation, with fresh butter, fruit, and cream, for which the silver teapot was brought out, and the English china tea-service sent to the Baroness by one of her aunts. This air of modern splendor in that antique room, the Baroness's exquisite grace, accustomed as a good Irishwoman to make and pour out tea, a great business with Englishwomen, were really delightful. The greatest luxury would not have given such a simple, unpretending, and dignified effect as this impulse of glad hospitality.

When there was no one left in the room but the Baroness and her son, she looked inquiringly at Calyste.

"What happened this evening at Les Touches?" she asked.

Calyste told her of the hope Camille had put into his heart and of her strange instructions.

"Poor woman!" exclaimed Fanny, clasping her hands, and for the first time pitying Mlle. des Touches.

Some minutes after Calyste had left, Béatrix, who had heard him leave the house, came into her friend's room, and found her sunk on a sofa, her eyes wet with tears.

"What is the matter, Félicité?" asked the Marquise.

“That I am forty and in love, my dear!” said Mlle. des Touches, in a tone of terrible fury, her eyes suddenly dry and hard. “If only you could know, Béatrix, how many tears I shed daily over the lost days of my youth! To be loved out of pity, to know that one’s pittance of happiness is earned by painful toil, by catlike tricks, by snares laid for the innocence and virtue of a mere boy—is not that shameful? Happily, we find a sort of absolution in the infinitude of passion, in the energy of happiness, in the certainty of being forever supreme above other women in a young heart, on which our name is graven by unforgettable pleasure and insane self-sacrifice. Yes, if he asked it of me, I would throw myself into the sea at his least signal. Sometimes I catch myself wishing that he would desire it; it would be a sacrifice, and not suicide.

“Oh! Béatrix, in coming here you set me a cruel task! I know how difficult it is to triumph against you; but you love Conti, you are noble and generous, and you will not deceive me; on the contrary, you will help me to preserve my Calyste. I was prepared for the impression you would make on him, but I have not been so foolish as to seem jealous; that would but add fuel to the fire. On the contrary, I announced your arrival, depicting you in such bright colors that you could never come up to the portrait, and unluckily you are handsomer than ever.”

This vehement lament, in which truth and untruth were mingled, completely deceived Mme. de Rochefide. Claude Vignon had told Conti his reasons for leaving; Béatrix was, of course, informed, so she showed magnanimity by behaving coldly to Calyste; but at this instant there awoke in her that thrill of joy which every woman feels at the bottom of her heart on hearing that she is loved. The love she inspires in any man implies an unfeigned flattery which it is impossible not to appreciate; but when the man belongs to another woman, his homage gives more than joy, it is heavenly bliss. Béatrix sat down by her friend, and was full of little coaxing ways.

“You have not a white hair,” said she; “you have not a wrinkle; your temples are smooth still, while I know many

a woman of thirty obliged to cover hers. Look, my dear," she added, raising her curls, "what my journey cost me."

She showed the faintest pucker that ruffled the surface of her exquisite skin; she turned up her sleeve and displayed the same wrinkles on her wrists, where the transparent texture already showed lines, and a network of swollen veins, and three deep marks made a bracelet of furrows.

"Are not these the two spots which can tell no lies, as a writer, investigating our miseries, has said? We must suffer much before we see the truth of his terrible shrewdness; but, happily for us, most men know nothing about it, and do not read that atrocious writer."

"Your letter told me all," replied Camille. "Happiness is not fatuous; you boasted too much of yours. In love, truth is deaf, dumb, and blind. And I, knowing you had reasons for throwing over Conti, dreaded your visit here. My dear, Calyste is an angel; he is as good as he is handsome; the poor innocent will not resist one look from you, he admires you too much not to love on the smallest encouragement; your disdain will preserve him to me. I confess it with the cowardice of true passion: if you take him from me, you kill me. *Adolphe*, that terrible book by Benjamin Constant, has told us of Adolphe's sufferings; but what of the woman's, heh? He did not study them enough to depict them, and what woman would dare reveal them? They would discredit our sex, humiliate our virtues, add to our vices. Ah! if I may measure them by my fears, these tortures are like the torments of hell. But if he deserts me, my determination is fixed."

"And what have you determined?" asked Béatrix, with an eagerness that was a shock to Camille.

On this the two friends looked at each other with the keenness of two Venetian inquisitors of State, a swift glance, in which their souls met and struck fire like two flints. The Marquise's eyes fell.

"Besides man there is only God!" said the famous woman gravely. "God is the unknown. I should cast myself into it as into a gulf. Calyste has just sworn that he admires you only as he might admire a picture; but you are eight-

and-twenty, and in all the splendor of your beauty. So the struggle between him and me has begun by a falsehood. Happily I know how to win."

"And how is that?"

"That, my dear, is my secret. Leave me the advantages of my age. Though Claude Vignon has cast me into the abyss—me, when I had raised myself to a spot which I believed to be inaccessible—I may at least pluck the pale blossoms, etiolated but delicious, which grow at the foot of the precipice."

Mme. de Rochefide was molded like wax by Mlle. des Touches, who reveled in savage pleasure as she involved her in her meshes. Camille sent her to bed, nettled with curiosity, tossed between jealousy and generosity, but certainly thinking much about the handsome youth.

"She would be delighted if she could betray me," said Camille to herself, as they kissed and said good-night.

Then, when she was alone, the author made way for the woman—she melted into tears; she filled her hookah with tobacco dipped in opium, and spent the greater part of the night smoking, and thus numbing the tortures of her love, while seeing, through the clouds of smoke, Calyste's charming head.

"What a fine book might be written containing the story of my sorrows!" said she to herself; "but it has been done. Sappho lived before me. Sappho was young! A touching and lovely heroine indeed is a woman of forty! Smoke your hookah, my poor Camille, you have not even the privilege of making a poem out of your woes; this crowns them all!"

She did not go to bed till daybreak, mingling tears, spasms of rage, and magnanimous resolutions in the long meditation wherein she sometimes considered the mysteries of the Catholic religion of which she had never thought in the course of her reckless life as an artist and an unbelieving writer.

Next day, Calyste, advised by his mother to act exactly on Camille's instructions, came at noon and stole mysteriously up to Mlle. des Touches' room, where he found plenty of books. Félicité sat in an armchair by the window, smoking,

and gazing alternately at the wild marsh landscape, at the sea, and at Calyste, with whom she exchanged a few words concerning Béatrix. At a certain moment, seeing the Marquise walking in the garden, she went to the window to unfasten the curtains, so that her friend should see her, and drew them to shut out the light, leaving only a strip that fell on Calyste's book.

"I shall ask you to stay to dinner this evening, my child," said she, tumbling his hair, "and you must refuse, looking at Béatrix; you will have no difficulty in making her understand how deeply you regret being unable to remain here."

At about four o'clock Camille left him and went to play the dreadful farce of her false happiness to the Marquise, whom she brought back to the drawing-room. Calyste then came out of the adjoining room; at that moment he felt the shame of his position. The look he gave Béatrix, though watched for by Félicité, was even more expressive than she had expected. Béatrix was beautifully dressed.

"How elegant you are, my sweetheart!" said Camille, when Calyste had left.

These maneuvers went on for six days; they were seconded, without Calyste's knowledge, by the most ingenious conversations between Camille and her friend. There was between the two women a duel without truce, in which the weapons were cunning, feints, generosity, false confessions, astute confidences, in which one hid her love and the other stripped hers bare, while nevertheless the iron sharpness, red hot with Camille's treacherous words, pierced her friend's heart to the core, implanting some of those evil feelings which good women find it so hard to suppress. Béatrix in the end took offense at the suspicions betrayed by Camille; she thought them dishonoring to both alike; she was delighted to discover in the great authoress the weakness of her sex, and longed for the pleasure of showing her where her superiority ended, how she might be humiliated.

"Well, my dear, what are going to tell him to-day?" she asked, with a spiteful glance at her friend, when the imaginary lover asked leave to remain. "On Monday we had something to talk over; on Tuesday you had too poor

a dinner; on Wednesday you were afraid of annoying the Baroness; on Thursday we were going out together; yesterday you bid him good-by as soon as he opened his mouth. Now, I want him to stay to-day, poor boy!"

"Already, my dear!" said Camille, with biting irony. Béatrix colored.

"Then stay, M. du Guénic," said Mlle. des Touches, assuming a queenly air, as though she were nettled.

Béatrix turned cold and hard; she was crushing, satirical, and intolerable to Calyste, whom Félicité sent off to play *mouche* with Mlle. de Kergarouët.

"That girl is not dangerous!" said Béatrix, smiling.

Young men in love are like starving people, the cook's preparations do not satisfy them; they think too much of the end to understand the means. As he returned from Les Touches to Guérande, Calyste's mind was full of Béatrix; he did not know what deep feminine skill Félicité was employing to promote his interests—to use a cant phrase. In the course of this week the Marquise had written but one letter to Conti, a symptom of indifference which had not escaped Camille.

Calyste's whole life was concentrated in the short moments when he saw Béatrix; this drop of water, far from quenching his thirst, only increased it. The magic words, "You shall be loved," spoken by Camille and indorsed by his mother, were the talisman by which he checked the fire of his passion. He tried to kill time; he could not sleep, and cheated his sleeplessness by reading, bringing home a barrow-load of books every evening, as Mariotte expressed it. His aunt cursed Mlle. des Touches; but the Baroness, who had often gone up to her son's room on seeing a light there, knew the secret of this wakefulness. Though Fanny had never got beyond her timidity as an ignorant girl, and love's books had remained closed to her, her motherly tenderness guided her to certain notions; still, the abysses of the sentiment were dark to her and hidden by clouds, and she was very much alarmed at the state in which she saw her son, terrifying herself over the one absorbing and incomprehensible desire that was consuming him.

Calyste had, in fact, but one idea; the image of Béatrix was always before him. During the evening, over the cards, his absence of mind was like his father's slumbers. Finding him so unlike what he had been when he had believed himself in love with Camille, his mother recognized with a sort of terror the symptoms of a genuine passion, a thing altogether unknown in the old family home. Feverish irritability and constant dreaming made Calyste stupid. He would often sit for hours gazing at one figure in the tapestry. That morning she had advised him to go no more to Les Touches, but to give up these two women.

"Not go to Les Touches!" cried he.

"Nay, go, my dear, go; do not be angry, my darling," replied she, kissing his eyes, which had flashed flame at her.

In this state Calyste was within an ace of losing the fruits of Camille's skilled maneuvers by the Breton impetuosity of his love, which he could no longer master. In spite of his promises to Félicité, he vowed that he would see and speak to Béatrix. He wanted to read her eyes, to drown his gaze in their depths, to study the little details of her dress, to breathe its fragrance, to hear the music of her voice, to follow the elegant deliberateness of her movements, embrace her figure in a glance—to contemplate her, in short, as a great general studies the field on which a decisive battle is to be fought. He wanted her, as lovers want; he was the prey of such desire as closed his ears, dulled his intellect, and threw him into a morbid condition, in which he no longer saw obstacles or distance, and was not even conscious of his body.

It struck him that he might go to Les Touches before the hour agreed upon, hoping to find Béatrix in the garden. He knew that she walked there while waiting for breakfast. Mlle. des Touches and her friend had been in the morning to see the salt marshes, and the basin with its shore of fine sand, into which the sea oozes, looking like a lake in the midst of the sandhills; they had come home, and were talking as they wandered about the yellow gravel paths in the garden.

"If this landscape interests you," said Camille, "you



should go to Le Croisic with Calyste. There are some very fine rocks there, cascades of granite, little bays with natural basins, wonders of capricious variety, and the sea-shore with thousands of fragments of marble, a whole world of amusement. You will see women *making wood*, that is to say, plastering masses of cow-dung against the wall to dry, and then piling them to keep, like peat in Paris; then in the winter they warm themselves by that fuel."

"And you will trust Calyste?" said the Marquise, laughing, in a tone which plainly showed that Camille, by sulking with Béatrix the night before, had obliged her to think of Calyste.

"Oh, my dear, when you know the angelic soul of a boy like him you will understand me. In him beauty is as nothing, you must know that pure heart, that guilelessness that is amazed at every step taken in the realm of love. What faith! what candor! what grace! The ancients had good reason to worship Beauty as holy.

"Some traveler, I forget who, tells us that horses in a state of freedom take the handsomest of them to be their leader. Beauty, my dear, is the genius of matter; it is the hall-mark set by Nature on her most perfect creations; it is the truest symbol, as it is the greatest chance. Did anyone ever imagine a deformed angel? Do not they combine grace and strength? What has kept us standing for hours together before certain pictures in Italy, in which genius has striven for years to realize one of these caprices of nature? Come, with your hand on your conscience, was it not the ideal of beauty which we combined in our minds with moral grandeur? Well, and Calyste is one of those dreams made real; he has the courage of the lion, who remains quiet without suspecting his sovereignty. When he feels at his ease he is brilliant; I like his girlish diffidence. In his heart, my soul is refreshed after all the corruption, the ideas of science, literature, the world, politics,—all the futile accessories under which we stifle happiness. I am now what I never was before—I am a child! I am sure of him, but I like to pretend jealousy; it makes him happy. Besides, it is part of my secret."

Béatrix walked on, silent and pensive; Camille was enduring unspoken martyrdom, and flashing side glances at her that looked like flames.

"Ah, my dear, you—you are happy," said Béatrix, leaning her hand on Camille's arm like a woman weary of some covert resistance.

"Yes! very happy!" replied poor Félicité, with savage bitterness.

The women sank on to a bench, both exhausted. No creature of her sex was ever subjected to more elaborate seduction or more clear-sighted Machiavelism than Mme. de Rochefide had been during the last week.

"But I—I who see Conti's infidelities, who swallow them, who——"

"And why do you not give him up?" said Camille, discerning a favorable moment for striking a decisive blow.

"Can I?"

"Oh! poor child——"

They both sat stupidly gazing at a clump of trees.

"I will go and hasten breakfast," said Camille, "this walk has given me an appetite."

"Our conversation has taken away mine," said Béatrix.

Béatrix, a white figure in a morning dress, stood out against the green masses of foliage. Calyste, who had stolen into the garden through the drawing-room, turned down a path, walking slowly to meet the Marquise by chance, as it were; and Béatrix could not help starting a little when she saw him.

"How did I displease you yesterday, madame?" asked Calyste, after a few commonplace remarks had been exchanged.

"Why, you neither please me nor displease me," said she gently.

Her tone, her manner, her delightful grace encouraged Calyste.

"I am indifferent to you?" said he, in a voice husky with the tears that rose to his eyes.

"Must we not be indifferent to each other?" replied Béatrix. "Each of us has a sincere attachment——"

“ Oh! ” said Calyste eagerly, “ I did love Camille; but I do not love her now. ”

“ Then what do you do every day, all the morning long? ” asked she, with a perfidious smile. “ I cannot suppose that, in spite of her passion for tobacco, Camille prefers her cigar to you; or that, in spite of your admiration for authoresses, you spend four hours in reading novels by women. ”

“ Then you know? ” said the innocent boy, his face flushed with the joy of gazing at his idol.

“ Calyste! ” cried Camille violently, as she appeared on the scene, seizing him by the arm and pulling him some steps; “ Calyste, is this what you promised me? ”

The Marquise heard this reproof, while Mlle. des Touches went off scolding, and leading away Calyste; she stood mystified by Calyste's avowal, and unable to understand it. Mme. de Rochefide was not so clear-sighted as Claude Vignon. The truth of the terrible and sublime comedy performed by Camille is one of those parts of magnanimous infamy which a woman can conceive of only in the last extremity. It means a breaking heart, the end of her feelings as a woman, and the beginning of a sacrifice, which drags her down to hell or leads her to heaven.

During breakfast, to which Calyste was invited, Béatrix, whose feelings were lofty and proud, had already undergone a revulsion, stifling the germs of love that were sprouting in her heart. She was not hard or cold to Calyste, but her mild indifference wrung his heart. Félicité proposed that they should go on the next day but one to make an excursion through the strange tract of country lying between Les Touches, Le Croisic, and Le Bourg de Batz. She begged Calyste to spend the morrow in finding a boat and some men, in case they should wish to go out by sea. She undertook to supply provisions, horses, and everything necessary to spare them any fatigue in this party of pleasure.

Béatrix cut her short by saying that she would not take the risk of running about the country. Calyste's face, which had expressed lively delight, was suddenly clouded.

“ Why, what are you afraid of, my dear? ” said Camille.

“ My position is too delicate to allow of my compromising,

not my reputation, but my happiness," she said with meaning, and she looked at the lad. "You know how jealous Conti is; if he knew——"

"And who is to tell him?"

"Will he not come back to fetch me?"

At these words Calyste turned pale. Notwithstanding Félicité's arguments, and those of the young Breton, Mme. de Rochefide was inexorable, and showed what Camille called her obstinacy. Calyste, in spite of the hopes Félicité gave him, left Les Touches in one of those fits of lovers' distress of which the violence often rises to the pitch of madness.

On his return home, Calyste did not quit his room till dinner-time, and went back again soon after. At ten o'clock his mother became uneasy, and went up to him; she found him writing in the midst of a quantity of torn papers and rough copy. He was writing to Béatrix, for he distrusted Camille; the Marquise's manner during their interview in the garden had encouraged him strangely.

Never did a first love-letter spring in a burning fount from the soul, as might be supposed. In all youths as yet uncorrupted, such a letter is produced with a flow too hotly effervescent not to be the elixir of several letters begun, rejected, and re-written.

Here is that sent by Calyste, which he read to his poor, astonished mother. To her, the old house was on fire; her son's love blazed up in it like the flare of a conflagration.

*Calyste to Béatrix.*

"MADAME,—I loved you when as yet you were but a dream to me; imagine the fervor assumed by my love when I saw you. The dream was surpassed by the reality. My regret is that I have nothing to tell you that you do not know, when I say how beautiful you are; still, perhaps your beauty never gave rise to so many feelings in anyone as in me. You are beautiful in so many ways; I have studied you so thoroughly by thinking of you day and night, that I have penetrated the mystery of your personality, the

secrets of your heart, and your misprized refinements. Have you ever been loved as you deserve?

“Let me tell you, then, that there is nothing in you which has not its interpretation in my heart: your pride answers to mine, the dignity of your looks, the grace of your mien, the elegance of your movements—everything in you is in harmony with the thoughts and wishes hidden in your secret soul; and it is because I can read them that I think myself worthy of you. If I had not become, within these few days, your second self, should I dare speak to you of myself? To read myself would be egotistic; it is you I speak of here, not Calyste.

“To write to you, Béatrix, I have set my twenty years aside; I have stolen a march on myself and aged my mind—or, perhaps, you have aged it by a week of the most horrible torments, caused, innocently indeed, by you. Do not take me for one of those commonplace lovers at whom you laugh with such good reason. What merit is there, indeed, in loving a young, beautiful, clever, noble woman! Alas, I cannot even dream of deserving you! What am I to you? A boy attracted by beauty and moral worth, as an insect is attracted by light. You cannot do anything else than trample on the flowers of my soul, yet all my happiness lies in seeing you spurn them under foot. Absolute devotion, unlimited faith, the maddest passion,—all these treasures of a true and loving heart are nothing; they help me to love, they cannot win love.

“Sometimes I wonder that such fervid fanaticism should fail to warm the idol; and when I meet your severe, cold eye, I feel myself turn to ice. Your disdain affects me then, and not my adoration. Why? You cannot possibly hate me so much as I love you; so ought the weaker feeling to get the mastery over the stronger?

“I loved Félicité with all the strength of my heart; I forgot her in a day, in an instant, on seeing you. She was a mistake, you are the truth. You, without knowing it, have wrecked my happiness, and you owe me nothing in exchange. I loved Camille without hope, and you give me no hopes; nothing is changed but the divinity. I was a Pagan, I am a Christian; that is all. Only, you have taught

me to love—to be loved does not come till later. Camille says it is not love that loves only for a few days: the love that does not grow day by day is a contemptible passion; to continue growing, it must not foresee its end, and she could see the setting of our sun.

“On seeing you, I understood these sayings which I had struggled against with all my youth, all the rage of my desires, all the fierce despotism of my twenty years. Then our great and sublime Camille mingled her tears with mine. So I may love you on earth and in heaven, as we love God. If you loved me, you could not meet me with the reasoning by which Camille annihilated my efforts. We are both young, we can fly on the same wings, under the same sky, and never fear the storm that threatened that eagle.

“But what am I saying? I am carried far beyond the modesty of my hopes. You will cease to believe in the submission, the patience, the mute worship which I implore you not to wound needlessly. I know, Béatrix, that you cannot love me without falling in your own esteem. And I ask for no return.

“Camille said once that there was an innate fatality in names, as in her own. I felt this fatality in yours when on the pier at Guérande it struck my eyes on the seashore: you will come into my life as Beatrice came into Dante's. My heart will be the pedestal for a white statue—vindictive, jealous, and tyrannous. You are prohibited from loving me; you would endure a thousand deaths; you would be deceived, mortified, unhappy. There is in you a diabolical pride which binds you to the pillar you have laid hold on; you will perish while shaking the temple like Samson. I did not discover all these things; my love is too blind; Camille told me. Here it is not my mind that speaks, but hers; I have no wits when you are in question, a tide of blood comes up from my heart, darkening my intellect with its waves, depriving me of my powers, paralyzing my tongue, making my knees quake and bend. I can only adore you, whatever you do. Camille calls your firmness obstinacy; I defend you; I believe it to be dictated by virtue. You are only

all the more beautiful in my eyes. I know my fate; the pride of Brittany is a match for the woman who has made a virtue of hers.

“And so, dear Béatrix, be kind and comforting to me. When the victims were chosen, they were crowned with flowers; you owe me the garlands of compassion, and music for the sacrifice. Am I not the proof of your greatness, and will you not rise to the height of my love, scorned in spite of its sincerity, in spite of its undying fires?”

“Ask Camille what my conduct has been since the day when she told me that she loved Claude Vignon. I was mute; I suffered in silence. Well, then, for you, I could find yet greater strength, if you do not drive me to desperation, if you understand my heroism. One word of praise from you would enable me to bear the torments of martyrdom. If you persist in this cold silence, this deadly disdain, you will make me believe that I am to be feared. Oh, be to me all you can be—charming, gay, witty, affectionate. Talk to me of Gennaro as Camille did of Claude. I have no genius but that of love; there is nothing formidable in me, and in your presence I will behave as though I did not love you.

“Can you reject the prayer of such humble devotion, of a hapless youth who only asks that his sun should give him light and warm him? The man you love will always see you; poor Calyste has but a few days before him, you will soon be rid of him. So I may go to Les Touches again to-morrow, may I not? You will not refuse my arm to guide you round the shores of Le Croisic and Le Bourg de Batz?—If you should not come, that will be an answer, and understood by Calyste.”

There were four pages more of close small writing, in which Calyste explained the terrible threat contained in these last words, by relating the story of his boyhood and life; but he told it in exclamatory phrases; there were many of those dots and dashes lavishly scattered through modern literature in perilous passages, like planks laid before the reader to enable him to cross the gulf. This artless picture would be a repetition of our narrative; if it did not touch

Mme. de Rochefide, it could scarcely interest those who seek strong sensations; but it made his mother weep and say—

“Then you have not been happy?”

This terrible poem of feeling that had come like a storm on Calyste's heart, and was to be sent like a whirlwind to another, frightened the Baroness; it was the first time in her life that she had ever read a love-letter.

Calyste was standing up: there was one great difficulty; he did not know how to send his letter.

The Chevalier du Halga was still in the sitting-room, where they were playing off the last pool of a very lively *mouche*. Charlotte de Kergarouët, in despair at Calyste's indifference, was trying to charm the old people in the hope of thus securing her marriage. Calyste followed his mother, and came back into the room with the letter in his breast-pocket—it seemed to scorch his heart; he wandered about and up and down the room like a moth that had come in by mistake. At last the mother and son got M. du Halga into the hall, whence they dismissed Mariotte and Mlle. de Pen-Hoël's little servant.

“What do they want of the Chevalier?” said old Zéphirine to the other old maid.

“Calyste seems to me to be out of his mind,” replied she. “He pays no more heed to Charlotte than if she were one of the marsh-girls.”

The Baroness had very shrewdly supposed that the Chevalier du Halga must, somewhere about the year 1780, have sailed the seas of gallant adventure, and she advised Calyste to consult him.

“What is the best way to send a letter secretly to a lady?” said Calyste to the Chevalier in a whisper.

“You can give the note to her lady's-maid, with a few louis in her hand, for sooner or later the maid is in the secret, and it is best to let her know it from the first,” replied the Chevalier, who could not suppress a smile; “but it is better to deliver it yourself.”

“A few louis!” exclaimed the Baroness.

Calyste went away and fetched his hat; then he flew off to Les Touches, and walked like an apparition into the little



drawing-room, where he heard Béatrix and Camille talking. They were sitting on the divan, and seemed on the best possible terms. Calyste, with the sudden wit that love imparts, flung himself heedlessly on the divan by the Marquise, seized her hand, and pressed the letter into it, so that Félicité, watchful as she might be, could not see it done. Calyste's heart fluttered with an emotion that was at once acute and delightful, as he felt Béatrix's hand grasp his, and without even interrupting her sentence or seeming surprised, she slipped the letter into her glove.

"You fling yourself on a woman as if she were a divan," said she with a laugh.

"He has not, however, adopted the doctrine of the Turks!" said Félicité, who could not forbear from this retort.

Calyste rose, took Camille's hand, and kissed it; then he went to the piano and made every note sound in a long scale by running one finger over them. This glad excitement puzzled Camille, who told him to come to speak to her.

"What is it?" she asked in his ear.

"Nothing," said he.

"There is something between them," said Mlle. des Touches to herself.

The Marquise was impenetrable. Camille tried to make Calyste talk, hoping that he might betray himself; but the boy made an excuse of the uneasiness his mother would feel, and he left Les Touches at eleven o'clock, not without having stood the fire of a piercing look from Camille, to whom he had never before made this excuse.

After the agitations of a night filled with Béatrix, after he had been into the town twenty times in the course of the morning, in the hope of meeting the answer which did not come, the Marquise's maid came to the Hôtel du Guénic, and gave the following reply to Calyste, who went off to read it in the arbor at the end of the garden:—

*Béatrix to Calyste.*

"You are a noble boy, but you are a boy. You owe yourself to Camille, who worships you. You will not find

in me either the perfections that distinguish her, or the happiness she lavishes on you. Whatever you may think, it is she who is young and I who am old; her heart is full of treasures, and mine is empty. She is devoted to you in a way you do not appreciate enough; she has no selfishness, and lives wholly in you. I should be full of doubts; I should drag you into a life that is weariful, ignoble, and spoiled by my own fault. Camille is free, she comes and goes at her will; I am a slave. In short, you forget that I love and am loved. The position in which I find myself ought to protect me against any homage. To love me, to tell me that you love me, is an insult. Would not a second lapse place me on the level of the most abandoned women?

“You, who are young and full of delicate feeling, how can you compel me to say things which the heart cannot utter without being torn?”

“I preferred the scandal of an irreparable disaster to the shame of perpetual deceit, my own ruin to the loss of my self-respect. In the eyes of many people whose esteem I value, I stand still high; if I should change, I should fall some steps lower. The world is still merciful to women whose constancy cloaks their illicit happiness, but it is pitiless to a vicious habit.

“I feel neither scorn nor anger; I am answering you with frank simplicity. You are young, you know nothing of the world, you are carried away by imagination, and, like all men of pure life, you are incapable of the reflections induced by disaster. I will go further: If I should be of all women the most mortified; if I had horrible misery to hide; if I were deceived and deserted at last—and, thank God, nothing of that is possible—if, I say, by the vengeance of Heaven these things were, no one in the world would ever see me again. And then I could find it in me to kill the man who should speak to me of love, if a man could still find me where I should be. There you have the whole of my mind.

“Perhaps I have to thank you for having written to me. After your letter, and especially after my reply, I may be quite at my ease with you at Les Touches, follow the bent of my humor, and be what you ask me to be. I say nothing

of the bitter ridicule I should incur if my eyes should cease to express the sentiments of which you complain. To rob Camille a second time would be an evidence of weakness to which no woman could twice resign herself. If I loved you madly, if I were blind, if I were forgetful of everything else, I should always see Camille. Her love for you is a barrier too high to be crossed by any force, even with the wings of an angel; only demons would not recoil from such base treachery.

“In this, my child, lies a world of reasons which noble and refined women keep to themselves, of which you men know nothing, even when a man is so like a woman as you are at this moment.

“Finally, you have a mother who has shown you what a woman’s life ought to be; pure and spotless, she has fulfilled her fate nobly; all I know of her has filled my eyes with tears of envy which has risen from the depths of my heart. I might have been like her! Calyste, this is what your wife ought to be; this is what her life ought to be.

“I will not again cast you back maliciously, as I have done, on little Charlotte, who would bore you from the first, but on some exquisite girl who is worthy of you. If I gave myself to you, I should spoil your life. Either you would fail in faithfulness, in constancy, or you would resolve to devote your life to me: I will be honest—I should take it; I should carry you off I know not whither, far from the world; I should make you very unhappy; I am jealous. I see monsters in a drop of water; I am in despair over odious trifles which many women put up with; there are even inexorable thoughts, originating in myself, not caused by you, which would wound me to death. When a man is not as respectful and as delicate in the tenth year of his happiness as he was on the eve of the day when he was a beggar for a favor, he seems to me a wretch, and degrades me in my own eyes. Such a lover no longer believes in the Amadis and Cyrus of my dreams. In our day love is purely mythical; and in you I find no more than the fatuity of a desire which knows not its end. I am not forty; I cannot yet bring my pride to bend to the authority of experience; I know not the

love that could make me humble ; in fact, I am a woman whose nature is still too youthful not to be detestable. I cannot answer for my moods ; all my graciousness is on the surface. Perhaps I have not suffered enough yet to have acquired the indulgent ways, the perfect tenderness that we owe to cruel deceptions. Happiness has its impertinence, and I am very impertinent. Camille will always be your devoted slave, I should be an unreasonable tyrant.

“ Indeed, is not Camille set by your side by your good angel, to guard you till you have reached the moment when you must start on the life that is in store for you, and which you must not fail in? I know Félicité! Her tenderness is inexhaustible ; she may perhaps lack some of the graces of her sex, but she shows that vivifying strength, that genius for constancy, and that lofty courage which make everything acceptable. She will see you marry while suffering tortures ; she will find you a free Béatrix, if Béatrix fulfills your ideal of woman and answers to your dreams ; she will smooth out all the difficulties in your future life. The sale of a single acre of her land in Paris will redeem your estates in Brittany ; she will make you her heir—has she not already adopted you as a son? And I, alas! What can I do for your happiness? Nothing.

“ Do not be false to an immeasurable affection which has made up its mind to the duties of motherliness. To me she seems most happy—this Camille! The admiration you feel for poor Béatrix is such a peccadillo as women of Camille’s age view with the greatest indulgence. When they are sure of being loved they will allow constancy a little infidelity ; nay, one of their keenest pleasures is to triumph over the youth of their rivals.

“ Camille is superior to other women, all this does not bear upon her ; I only say it to reassure your conscience. I have studied Camille well ; she is in my eyes one of the grandest figures of our time. She is both clever and kind, two qualities rarely united in a woman ; she is generous and simple, two more great qualities seldom found together. I have seen trustworthy treasures in the depth of her heart ; it would seem as though Dante had written for her in the

*Paradiso* the beautiful lines on eternal happiness which she was interpreting to you the other evening, ending with *Senza brama sicura ricchezza*.

“She has talked to me of her fate in life, told me all her experience, and proved to me that love, the object of our desires and dreams, had always evaded her; I replied that she seemed to me a proof of that difficulty of matching anything sublime which accounts for much unhappiness. Yours is one of the angelic souls whose sister-soul it seems impossible to find. This misfortune, dear child, is what Camille will spare you; even if she should die for it, she will find you a being with whom you may live happy as a husband.

“I offer you a friend’s hand, and trust, not to your heart, but to your sense, to find that we are henceforth to each other a brother and sister, and to terminate our correspondence, which, between Les Touches and Guérande, is odd, to say the least of it.

“BÉATRIX DE CASTÉRAN.”

The Baroness, in the highest degree excited by the details and progress of her son’s love affairs with the beautiful Rochefide, could not sit still in the room, where she was working at her cross-stitch, looking up at every stitch to watch Calyste; she rose from her chair and came up to him with a mixture of diffidence and boldness. The mother had all the graces of a courtesan about to ask a favor.

“Well?” said she, trembling, but not actually asking to see the letter.

Calyste showed it her in his hand, and read it aloud to her. The two noble souls, so simple and ingenuous, discovered in this astute and perfidious reply none of the treachery and snares infused into it by the Marquise.

“She is a noble and high-minded woman!” said the Baroness, whose eyes glistened with moisture. “I will pray to God for her. I never believed that a mother could desert her husband and child and preserve so much virtue. She deserves to be forgiven.”

“Am I not right to worship her?” cried Calyste.

“But whither will this love lead you?” said his mother. “Oh! my child, how dangerous are these women of noble sentiments! Bad women are less to be feared.—Marry Charlotte de Kergarouët, and release two-thirds of the family estates. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël can achieve this great end by selling a few farms, and the good soul will devote herself to improving the property. You may leave your children a noble name, a fine fortune——”

“What, forget Béatrix?” said Calyste in a hollow voice, his eyes fixed on the floor.

He left his mother, and went up to his room to reply to this letter.

Mme. du Guénic had Mme. de Rochefide’s words stamped on her heart: she wanted to know on what Calyste founded his hopes. At about this hour the Chevalier would be exercising his dog on the Mall; the Baroness, sure of finding him there, put on a bonnet and shawl and went out. It was so extraordinary an event to see Mme. du Guénic out, excepting at church, or in one of the two pretty alleys that were frequented on fête-days, when she would accompany her husband and Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, that, within two hours, everyone was saying to everyone else, “Mme. du Guénic was out to-day; did you see her?” Thus before long the news came to Mlle. de Pen-Hoël’s ears, and she said to her niece—

“Something very strange is happening at the du Guénics’.”

“Calyste is madly in love with the beautiful Marquise de Rochefide,” said Charlotte. “I should do better to leave Guérande and go back to Nantes.”

At this moment the Chevalier du Halga, surprised at being sought out by the Baroness, had released Thisbe from her cord, recognizing the impossibility of attending to two ladies at once.

“Chevalier, you have had some experience in love affairs?” said the Baroness.

Captain du Halga drew himself up with not a little of the airs of a coxcomb. Mme. du Guénic, without naming her son or the Marquise, told him the contents of the love letter, asking him what could be the meaning of such an answer. The Chevalier stood with his nose in the air caressing his

chin; he listened with little grimaces; and at last he looked keenly at the Baroness.

“When a thoroughbred horse means to leap a fence, it goes up to it first to smell it and examine it,” he said. “Calyste will be the happiest young rogue——”

“Hush!” said the Baroness.

“I am dumb. In old times that was my only point,” said the old man. “It is fine weather,” he went on after a pause, “the wind is north-easterly. By Heaven! how the *Belle-Poule* danced before that wind on the day—— But,” he went on, interrupting himself, “I have a singing in my ears, and pains in the false-ribs; the weather will change.—You know that the fight of the *Belle-Poule* was so famous that ladies wore caps à la *Belle-Poule*.—Mme. de Kergarouët was the first to appear at the Opera in such a head-dress. ‘You are dressed for conquest,’ I said to her. The words were repeated in every box.”

The Baroness listened politely to the old man, who, faithful to the laws of old-world etiquette, escorted her back to the little street, neglecting Thisbe. He let out the secret of Thisbe’s birth. She was the grand-daughter of that sweet Thisbe that had belonged to Mme. la Comtesse de Kergarouët, the Admiral’s first wife. This Thisbe the third was eighteen years old.

The Baroness ran lightly up to Calyste’s room, as gleeful as if she were in love herself. Calyste was not there, but Fanny saw a letter on the table addressed to Mme. de Rochefide, folded, but not sealed. Irresistible curiosity prompted the anxious mother to read her son’s answer. The indiscretion was cruelly punished; she felt horrible anguish when she saw the precipice towards which love was driving Calyste.

### *Calyste to Béatrix.*

“What do I care for the family of du Guénic in such times as we live in, dearest Béatrix! My name is Béatrix, the happiness of Béatrix is my happiness, her life is my life, and all my fortune is in her heart. Our lands have been in pledge these two hundred years, and may remain so for

two hundred more; our farmers have them, no one can take them away. To see and love you! That is my religion.

“Marry! The idea has made me heartsick. Are there two such as Béatrix? I will marry no one but you; I will wait twenty years if I must; I am young, and you will always be beautiful. My mother is a saint, and it is not for me to judge her. She never loved! I know now how much she has lost, and what sacrifices she has made. You, Béatrix, have taught me to love my mother better; she dwells in my heart with you—there will never be anyone else; she is your only rival. Is not this as much as to say that no one shares your throne? So your reassuring letter has no effect on my mind.

“As to Camille, you have only to give me a hint, and I will beg her to tell you herself that I do not love her; she is the mother of my intelligence; nothing more, nothing less. As soon as I saw you, she became a sister to me, my friend—my man friend—what you will; but we have no claims on each other beyond those of friendship. I thought she was a woman till the moment when I first saw you. But you show me that Camille is a man; she swims, hunts, rides; she smokes and drinks; she writes, she can analyze a book or a heart; she has not the smallest weakness; she walks on in her strength; she has not your free grace, your step like the flight of a bird, your voice—the voice of love—your arch looks, your gracious demeanor. She is Camille Maupin, and nothing else; she has nothing of the woman about her, and you have everything that I love in woman; I felt from the day when I first saw you that you were mine.

“You will laugh at this feeling, but it has gone on increasing; it strikes me as monstrous that we should be divided; you are my soul, my life, and I cannot live where you are not. Let me love you! We will fly, we will go far, far from the world, into some country where you will know nobody, and where you will have no one but me and God in your heart. My mother, who loves you, will come some day to live with us. Ireland has many country houses, and my mother’s family will surely lend us one. Great God! Let us be off! A boat, some sailors, and we shall be there before



anyone can guess whither we have fled from the world you dread so greatly.

“You have never been loved; I feel it as I re-read your letter, and I fancy I can perceive that if none of the reasons of which you speak existed you would allow yourself to be loved by me. Béatrix, a holy love will wipe out the past.

“Is it possible in your presence to think of anything but you? Oh! I love you so much that I could wish you a thousand times disgraced, so as to prove to you the power of my love by adoring you as if you were the holiest of creatures. You call my love for you an insult. Oh, Béatrix, you do not think that! The love of a ‘noble child’—you call me so—would do honor to a queen.

“So to-morrow we will wander lover-like along by the rocks and the sea, and you shall tread the sands of old Brittany and consecrate them anew for me. Give me that day of joy, and the transient alms—leaving perhaps, alas! no trace on your memory—will be a perennial treasure to Calyste——”

The Baroness dropped the letter unfinished; she knelt on a chair and put up a silent prayer to God, imploring Him to preserve her son’s wits, to deliver him from madness and error, and snatch him back from the ways in which she saw him rushing.

“What are you doing, mother?” said Calyste’s voice.

“Praying for you,” she replied, looking at him with eyes full of tears. “I have been so wrong as to read this letter.—My Calyste is gone mad.”

“It is the sweetest form of madness,” said the youth, kissing his mother.

“I should like to see this woman, my child.”

“Well, mamma, we shall take a boat to-morrow to cross over to Le Croisic; come to the jetty.”

He sealed his letter and went off to Les Touches. The thing which above all others appalled the Baroness was to see that, by sheer force of instinct, feeling could acquire the insight of consummate experience. Calyste had written to

Béatrix as he might have done under the guidance of M. du Halga.

One of the greatest joys, perhaps, that a small mind can know is that of duping a great soul and catching it in a snare. Béatrix knew herself to be very inferior to Camille Maupin. This inferiority was not merely in the sum-total of intellectual qualities known as talent, but also in those qualities of the heart that are called passion. At the moment when Calyste arrived at Les Touches, with the impetuous haste of first love borne on the pinions of hope, the Marquise was conscious of keen satisfaction in knowing herself to be loved by this charming youth. She did not go so far as to wish to be his accomplice in this feeling; she made it a point of heroism to repress this *capriccio*, as the Italians say, and fancied she would thus be on a par with her friend; she was happy to be able to make her some sacrifice. In short, the vanities peculiar to a Frenchwoman, which constitute the famous *coquetterie* whence she derives her superiority, were in her flattered and amply satisfied: she was tempted by the utmost seduction, and she resisted it; her virtues sang a sweet concert of praise in her ear.

The two women, apparently indolent, were lounging on the divan in that little drawing-room so full of harmony, in the midst of a world of flowers, with the window open, for the north winds had ceased to blow. A melting southerly breeze dimpled the salt-water lake that they could see in front of them, and the sun scorched the golden sands. Their spirits were as deeply tossed as Nature lay calm, and not less burning. Camille, broken on the wheel of the machinery she was working, was obliged to keep a guard over herself, the friendly foe she had admitted into her cage was so prodigiously keen; not to betray her secret she gave herself up to observing the secrets of nature; she cheated her pain by seeking a meaning in the motions of the spheres, and found God in the sublime solitude of the sky.

When once an infidel acknowledges God, he throws himself headlong into Catholicism, which, viewed as a system, is perfect.

That morning Camille had shown the Marquise a face still radiant with the light of her research, carried on during a night spent in lamentation. Calyste was always before her like a heavenly vision. She regarded this beautiful youth, to whom she devoted herself, as her guardian angel. Was it not he who was leading her to the supernal regions where sufferings have an end under the weight of incomprehensible immensity? Still, Camille was made uneasy by Béatrix's triumphant looks. One woman does not gain such an advantage over another without allowing it to be guessed, while justifying herself for having taken it. Nothing could be stranger than this covert moral struggle between the two friends, each hiding a secret from the other, and each believing herself to be the creditor for unspoken sacrifices.

Calyste arrived holding his letter under his glove, ready to slip it into Béatrix's hand. Camille, who had not failed to mark the change in her guest's manner, affected not to look at her, but studied her in a mirror just when Calyste made his entrance. That is the sunken rock for every woman. The cleverest and the most stupid, the most frank and the most astute, are not then mistress of their secret; at that moment it blazes out to another woman's eyes. Too much reserve or too much freedom, an open and a beaming glance, or a mysterious droop of the eyelids—everything then reveals the feeling above all others difficult to conceal, for indifference is so absolutely cold that it can never be well acted. Women have the genius of shades of manner—they use them too often not to know them all—and on these occasions they take in a rival from head to foot at a glance; they see the slightest twitch of a foot under a petticoat, the most imperceptible start in the figure, and know the meaning of what to a man seems to have none. Two women watching one another play one of the finest comedies to be seen.

“Calyste has committed some folly,” thought Camille, observing in both of them the indefinable look of persons who understand each other.

There was no formality or affected indifference in the Marquise now; she looked at Calyste as if he belonged to

her. Calyste explained matters; he reddened like a guilty creature, like a happy lover. He had just settled everything for their excursion on the morrow.

“Then you are really going, my dear?” said Camille.

“Yes,” said Béatrix.

“How did you know that?” said Mlle. des Touches to Calyste.

“I have come to ask,” he replied, at a glance shot at him by Mme. de Rochefide, who did not wish her friend to have any suspicion of their correspondence.

“They have already come to an understanding,” said Camille to herself, catching this look by a side-glance from the corner of her eye. “It is all over; there is nothing left to me but to disappear.”

And under the pressure of this thought, a deathlike change passed over her face that gave Béatrix a chill.

“What is the matter, dear?” said she.

“Nothing.—Then, Calyste, will you send on my horses and yours so that we may find them ready on the other side of Le Croisic and ride back through Le Bourg de Batz. We will breakfast at Le Croisic and dine here. You will undertake to find boatmen. We will start at half-past eight in the morning.—Such fine scenery!” she added to Béatrix. “You will see Cambremer, a man who is doing penance on a rock for having murdered his son. Oh! you are in a primitive land where men do not feel like the common herd. Calyste will tell you the story.”

She went into her room; she was stifling. Calyste delivered his letter and followed Camille.

“Calyste, she loves you, I believe; but you are hiding something; you have certainly disobeyed my injunctions.”

“She loves me!” said he, dropping into a chair.

Camille looked out at the door. Béatrix had vanished. This was strange. A woman does not fly from a room where the man is whom she loves and whom she is certain to see again, unless she has something better to do. Mlle. des Touches asked herself, “Can she have a letter from Calyste?” But she thought the innocent lad incapable of such audacity.

"If you have disobeyed me, all is lost by your own fault," said she gravely. "Go and prepare for the joys of to-morrow."

She dismissed him with a gesture which Calyste could not rebel against. There are silent sorrows that are despotically eloquent. As he went to Le Croisic to find the boatmen, Calyste had some qualms of fear. Camille's speech bore a stamp of doom that revealed the foresight of a mother.

Four hours later, when he returned, very tired, counting on dining at Les Touches, he was met at the door by Camille's maid, who told him that her mistress and the Marquise could not see him this evening. Calyste was surprised, and wanted to question the maid, but she shut the door and vanished.

Six o'clock was striking by the clocks of Guérande. Calyste went home, asked for some dinner, and then played *mouche*, a prey to gloomy meditations. These alternations of joy and grief, the overthrow of his hopes following hard upon what seemed the certainty that he was loved, crushed the young soul that had been soaring heavenward to the sky, and had risen so high that the fall must be tremendous.

"What ails you, my Calyste?" his mother whispered to him.

"Nothing," said he, looking at her with eyes whence the light of his soul and the flame of love had died out.

It is not hope but despair that gives the measure of our ambitions. We give ourselves over in secret to the beautiful poems of hope, while grief shows itself unveiled.

"Calyste, you are not at all nice," said Charlotte, after vainly wasting on him those little provincial teasing ways which always degenerate into annoyance.

"I am tired," he said, rising and bidding the party good-night.

"Calyste is much altered," said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

"We haven't fine gowns covered with lace; we don't flourish our sleeves like this; we don't sit so, or know how to look on one side and wriggle our heads," said Charlotte, imitating and caricaturing the Marquise's airs and attitude and looks. "We haven't a voice with a squeak in the head, or a little interesting cough, *heugh! heugh!* like the siçb

of a ghost; we are so unfortunate as to have robust health and be fond of our friends without any nonsense; when we look at them we do not seem to be stabbing them with a dart, or examining them with a hypocritical glance. We don't know how to droop our heads like a weeping willow, and appear quite affable merely by raising it, so!"

Mlle. de Pen-Hoël could not help laughing at her niece's performance; but neither the Chevalier nor the Baron understood this satire of the country on Paris.

"But the Marquise de Rochefide is very handsome," said the old lady.

"My dear," said the Baroness to her husband, "I happen to know that she is going to-morrow to Le Croisic; we will walk down there. I should very much like to meet her."

While Calyste was racking his brain to divine why the door of Les Touches should have been closed in his face, a scene was taking place between the two friends which was to have its effect on the events of the morrow. Calyste's letter had given birth to unknown emotions in Mme. de Rochefide's heart. A woman is not often the object of a passion so youthful, so guileless, so sincere and absolute as was this boy's. Béatrix had loved more than she had been loved. After being a slave she felt an unaccountable longing to be the tyrant in her turn.

In the midst of her joy, as she read and re-read Calyste's letter, a cruel thought pierced her like a stab. What had Calyste and Camille been about together since Claude Vignon's departure? If Calyste did not love Camille, and Camille knew it, what did they do in those long mornings? The memory of her brain insidiously compared this remark with all Camille had said. It was as though a smiling devil held up before her, as in a mirror, the portrait of her heroic friend, with certain looks, certain gestures, which finally enlightened Béatrix. Far from being Félicité's equal, she was crushed by her; far from deceiving her, it was she who was deceived; she herself was but a toy that Camille wanted to give the child she loved with an extraordinary and never vulgar passion.

To a woman like Béatrix this discovery was a thunderbolt. She recalled every detail of the past week. In an instant Camille's part and her own lay before her in their fullest development; she saw herself strangely abased. In the rush of her jealous hatred she fancied she detected in Camille some plot of revenge on Conti. All the events of the past two years had perhaps led up to these two weeks. Once started on the downward slope of suspicions, hypotheses, and anger, Béatrix did not check herself; she walked up and down her rooms, spurred by impulses of passion, or, sitting down now and again, tried to make a plan; still, until the dinner-hour she remained a prey to indecision, and only went down when dinner was served without changing her dress.

On seeing her rival come in, Camille guessed everything. Béatrix, in morning dress, had a cold look and an expression of reserve, which to an observer so keen as Camille betrayed the animosity of embittered feelings. Camille immediately left the room and gave the order that had so greatly astonished Calyste; she thought that if the guileless lad, with his insane adoration, came into the middle of the quarrel he might never see Béatrix again, and compromise the future of his passion by some foolish bluntness. She meant to fight out this duel of dupery without any witness. Béatrix, with no one to uphold her, must certainly yield. Camille knew how shallow her soul was, and how mean her pride, to which she had justly given the name of obstinacy.

The dinner was gloomy. Both the women had too much spirit and good taste to have any explanation before the servants, or when they might listen at the doors. Camille was gentle and kind; she felt herself so much the superior! The Marquise was hard and biting; she knew she was being fooled like a child. There was, all through dinner, a warfare of looks, shrugs, half-spoken words, to which the servants could have no clew, but which gave warning of a terrible storm. When they were going upstairs again Camille mischievously offered Béatrix her arm; the Marquise affected not to see, and rushed forward alone. As soon as coffee was served, Mlle. des Touches said to her servant, "You can go," and this was the signal for battle.

“The romances you act out, my dear, are rather more dangerous than those you write,” said the Marquise.

“They have, however, one great merit,” said Camille, taking a cigarette.

“What is that?” asked Béatrix.

“They are unpublished, my angel.”

“Will that in which you have plunged me make a book?”

“I have no genius for the task of *Œdipus*; you have the wit and beauty of the sphinx, I know, but do not ask me any riddles; speak out, my dear Béatrix.”

“When in order to make men happy, to amuse them, please them, dispel their annoyances, we appeal to the Devil to help us——”

“The men blame us afterwards for our endeavor, and believe it to be dictated by a spirit of depravity,” said Camille, taking her cigarette from her lips to interrupt her friend.

“They forget the love which carried us away, and which justified our excesses—for whither may we not be carried?—But they are only playing out their part as men, they are ungrateful and unjust,” said Béatrix. “Women know each other; they know how truly lofty and noble their attitude is under all circumstances—nay, I may say how virtuous.

“Still, Camille, I have begun to perceive the truth of certain remarks I have heard you complain of. Yes, my dear, there is something of the man in you; you behave like men; nothing checks you; and if you have not all their merits, your mind conducts itself like theirs, and you share their contempt for us women. I have no reason to be pleased with you, my dear, and I am too frank to conceal the fact. Nobody, perhaps, will ever inflict so deep a wound on my heart as that I am now suffering from. Though you are not always a woman in love matters, you become one again in revenge. Only a woman of genius could have discovered the tenderest spot in our delicate sentiments—I am speaking of *Calyste*, and of the trickery, my dear, for that is the right word, that you have employed against me. How low you have fallen, you, Camille Maupin; and to what end?”

“Still and still more the sphinx,” said Camille, smiling.



“ You wanted to make me throw myself at Calyste’s head ; I am still too young for such doings. To me love is love, with its intolerable jealousy and despotic demands. I am not a writer ; it is not possible to me to find ideas in feelings——”

“ You think yourself capable of loving foolishly ? ” Camille asked her. “ Be quite easy, you still have all your wits about you. You malign yourself, my dear ; you are cold enough for your head always to remain supreme judge of the achievements of your heart.”

This epigram brought the color to the Marquise’s face ; she shot a look full of hatred, an envenomed look, at Camille ; and at once, without stopping to choose them, let fly all the sharpest arrows in her quiver. Camille, smoking her cigarettes, listened calmly to this furious attack, bristling with such virulent abuse that it is impossible to record it. Béatrix, provoked by her adversary’s imperturbable manner, fell back on odious personalities and Mlle. des Touches’ age.

“ Is that all ? ” asked Camille, blowing a cloud of smoke. “ Are you in love with Calyste ? ”

“ Certainly not.”

“ So much the better,” replied Camille. “ I am, and far too much for my happiness. He has, no doubt, a fancy for you. You are the loveliest blonde in the world, and I am as brown as a mole ; you are slim and slender, my figure is too dignified. In short, you are young ; that is the great fact, and you have not spared me. You have made an abuse of your advantages over me as a woman, neither more nor less than as a comic paper makes an abuse of humor. I have done all in my power to prevent what is now inevitable,” and she raised her eyes to the ceiling. “ However little I may seem to be a woman, I still have enough of the woman in me for a rival to need my help in order to triumph over me ! ” This cruel speech, uttered with an air of perfect innocence, went to the Marquise’s heart. “ You must think me a very idiotic person if you believe all that Calyste tries to make you believe about me. I am neither lofty nor mean ; I am a woman, and very much a woman. Throw off your airs and give me your hand,” said Camille, taking possession of Béatrix’s hand. “ You do not love Calyste, that is the

truth—is it not? Then do not get in a rage! Be stern with him to-morrow, cold and hard, and he will end by submitting after the scolding I shall give him, for I have not exhausted the resources of our arsenal, and, after all, pleasure always gets the better of desire.

“But Calyste is a Breton. If he persists in paying you his addresses, tell me honestly, and you can go at once to a little country-house of mine at six leagues from Paris, where you will find every comfort, and where Conti can join you. If Calyste slanders me! Why, good Heavens! The purest love lies six times a day; its illusions prove its strength.”

There was a proud coldness in Camille’s expression that made the Marquise uneasy and afraid. She did not know what answer to make.

Camille struck the final blow.

“I am more trusting and less bitter than you,” she went on. “I do not imagine that you intended to hide under recrimination an attack which would imperil my life; you know me; I should not survive the loss of Calyste, and I must lose him sooner or later. But, indeed, Calyste loves me, and I know it.”

“Here is his answer to a letter from me in which I wrote only of you,” said Béatrix, holding out Calyste’s letter.

Camille took it and read it. As she read her eyes filled with tears; she wept, as all women weep in acute suffering.

“Good God!” said she. “He loves her. Then I must die without ever having been understood or loved!”

She sat for some minutes with her head resting on her friend’s shoulder; her pain was genuine; she felt in her own soul the same terrible blow that Mme. du Guénic had received on reading this letter.

“Do you love him?” said she, sitting up and looking at Béatrix. “Do you feel for him that infinite devotion which triumphs over all suffering, and survives scorn, betrayal, even the certainty of never being loved again? Do you love him for himself, for the very joy of loving?”

“My dearest friend!” said the Marquise, much moved. “Well, be content, I will leave to-morrow.”

“Do not go away; he loves you, I see it! And I love

him so well that I should be in despair if I saw him miserable and unhappy. I had dreamed of many things for him; but if he loves you, that is all at an end."

"Yes, Camille, I love him," said the Marquise with delightful simplicity, but coloring.

"You love him, and you can resist him!" cried Camille. "No, you do not love him!"

"I do not know what new virtues he has aroused in me, but he has certainly made me ashamed of myself," said Béatrix. "I could wish to be virtuous and free, so as to have something else to sacrifice to him besides the remnants of a heart and disgraceful bonds. I will not accept an incomplete destiny either for him or for myself."

"Cold brain! it can love and calculate!" cried Camille, with a sort of horror.

"Whatever you please, but I will not blight his life or be a stone round his neck, an everlasting regret. As I cannot be his wife, I will not be his mistress. He has—you will not laugh at me? No?—Well, then, his beautiful love has purified me."

Camille gave Béatrix a look—the wildest, fiercest look that ever a jealous woman flung at her rival.

"On that ground," said she, "I fancied I stood alone. Béatrix, that speech has parted us forever; we are no longer friends. We are at the beginning of a hideous struggle. Now, I tell you plainly, you must succumb or fly."

Félicité rushed away into her own room after showing to Béatrix, who was amazed, a face like an infuriated lioness.

"Are you coming to Le Croisic to-morrow?" said Camille, lifting the curtain.

"Certainly," said the Marquise loftily; "I will not fly—nor will I succumb."

"I play with my hand on the table," retorted Camille; "I shall write to Conti."

Béatrix turned as white as her gauze scarf.

"For each of us life is at stake," replied Béatrix, who did not know what to decide on.

The violent passions to which this scene had given rise

between the two women subsided during the night. They both reasoned with themselves, and came back to a reliance on the perfidious temporizing which fascinates most women—an excellent system between them and men, but a bad one between woman and woman. It was in the midst of this last storm that Mlle. des Touches heard the great voice which dominates even the bravest. Béatrix listened to the counsels of worldly wisdom; she feared the contempt of society. So Félicité's last master-stroke, weighted with the accents of intense jealousy, was perfectly successful. Calyste's blunder was remedied, but any fresh mistake might ruin his hope forever.

The month of August was drawing to a close, the sky was magnificently clear. On the horizon the ocean, like a Southern sea, had a hue as of molten silver, and fluttered to the strand in sparkling ripples. A sort of glistening vapor, produced by the sun's rays falling directly on the sand, made an atmosphere at least equal to that of the tropics. The salt blossomed into little white stars on the surface of the salt-pans. The laborious marshmen, dressed in white on purpose to defy the heat of the sun, were at their post by daybreak armed with their long rakes, some leaning against the mud-walls dividing the pots, and watching this process of natural chemistry, familiar to them from their infancy; others playing with their little ones and wives. Those green dragons called excise-men smoked their pipes in peace. There was something Oriental in the picture, and certainly a Parisian, suddenly dropped there, would not have believed that he was in France.

The Baron and Baroness, who had made a pretext of their wish to see how the salt-raking was going on, were on the jetty, admiring the silent scene, where no sound was to be heard but the sea moaning with regular rhythm, where boats cut through the water, and the green belt of cultivated land was all the more lovely in its effect because it is so uncommon on the desert shores of the ocean.

“Well, my friends, I shall have seen the marshes of Guérande once more before I die,” said the Baron to the

marshmen, who stood in groups at the fringe of the marsh to greet him.

“As if the du Guénics died!” said one of the men.

At this moment the little party from Les Touches came down the narrow road. The Marquise led the way alone, Calyste and Camille followed arm in arm. About twenty yards behind them came Gasselin.

“There are my father and mother,” said Calyste to Camille.

The Marquise stopped. Mme. du Guénic felt the most vehement repulsion at the sight of Béatrix, though she was dressed to advantage, in a broad-brimmed Leghorn hat trimmed with blue cornflowers, her hair waved beneath it; a dress of gray linen stuff, and a blue sash with long ends; in short, the garb of a princess disguised as a shepherdess.

“She has no heart!” said Fanny to herself.

“Mademoiselle,” said Calyste to Camille, “here are Mme. du Guénic and my father.”

Then he added to his parents—

“Mlle. des Touches and Mme. la Marquise de Rochefide, née de Castéran—my father.”

The Baron bowed to Mlle. des Touches, who bowed with an air of humble gratitude to the Baroness.

“She,” thought Fanny, “really loves my boy; she seems to be thanking me for having brought him into the world.”

“You, like me, are come to see if the yield is good; but you have more reasons than I for curiosity, mademoiselle,” said the Baron to Camille, “for you have property here.”

“Mademoiselle is the richest owner of them all,” said one of the marshmen; “and God preserve her, for she is a very good lady!”

The two parties bowed and went their way.

“You would never suppose Mlle. des Touches to be more than thirty,” said the good man to his wife. “She is very handsome. And Calyste prefers that jade of a Parisian Marquise to that good daughter of Brittany?”

“Alas, yes!” said the Baroness.

A boat was lying at the end of the jetty; they got in, but not in high spirits. Béatrix was cold and dignified.

Camille had scolded Calyste for his disobedience, and explained to him the position of his love affair. Calyste, sunk in gloomy despair, cast eyes at Béatrix, in which love and hatred struggled for the upper hand.

Not a word was spoken during the short passage from the jetty of Guérande to the extreme point of the harbor of Le Croisic, the spot where the salt is shipped, being brought down to the shore by the women in large earthen pans, which they carry on their heads, holding them in such a way as to look like caryatides. These women are barefoot, and wear a very short skirt. Many of them leave the kerchief that covers their shoulders to fly loose, and several wear only a shift, and are the proudest, for the less clothes they wear the more they display their modest beauties.

The little Danish bark was taking in her cargo. Thus the landing of these two beautiful ladies excited the curiosity of the salt-carriers; and partly to escape them, as well as to do Calyste a service, Camille hurried on towards the rocks, leaving him with Béatrix. Gasselin lingered at least two hundred yards behind his master.

On the seaward side the peninsula of Le Croisic is fringed with granite rocks so singularly grotesque in form that they can only be appreciated by travelers who are able from experience to make comparisons between the different grand spectacles of wild nature. The rocks of Le Croisic have, perhaps, the same superiority over other similar scenes that the road to the Grande Chartreuse is admitted to have over other narrow gorges. Neither the Corsican shore, where the granite forms very remarkable reefs, nor that of Sardinia, where nature has reveled in grand and terrible effects, nor the basaltic formations of northern seas, have quite so distinctive a character. Fancy seems to have disported itself there in endless arabesques, where the most grotesque shapes mingle or stand forth. Every form may be seen there. Imagination may, perhaps, be weary of this vast collection of monsters, among which, in furious weather, the sea rushes in, and has at last polished down all the rough edges.

Under a natural vault, arched with a boldness only faintly

imitated by Brunelleschi—for the greatest efforts of art are but a timid counterpart of some work of nature—you will find a basin polished like a marble bath, and strewn with smooth, fine white sand, in which you may bathe in safety in four feet of tepid water. As you walk on you admire the cool little creeks, under shelter of porticoes rough-hewn but stately, like those of the Pitti palace—another imitation of the freaks of nature. The variety is infinite; nothing is lacking that the most extravagant fancy could invent or wish for.

There is even a large shrub of box,<sup>1</sup> a thing so rare on the shore of the Atlantic that perhaps this is the only specimen. This box-shrub, the greatest curiosity in Le Croisic, where trees cannot grow, is at about a league from the port, on the utmost headland of the coast. On one of the promontories formed by the granite, rising so high above the sea that the waves cannot reach it even in the wildest storms, and facing the south, the floods have worn a hollow shelf about four feet deep. In this cleft, chance, or perhaps man, has deposited soil enough to enable a box, sown by some bird, to grow thick and closely shorn. The gnarled roots would indicate an age of at least three hundred years. Below it the rock falls sheer.

Some shock, of which the traces are stamped in indelible characters on this coast, has swept off the fragments of granite I know not whither. The sea comes, without breaking over any shoals, to the bottom of this cliff, where the water is more than five hundred feet deep. On either hand some reefs, just beneath the surface, form a sort of large *cirque*, traceable by the foaming breakers. It needs some courage and resolution to climb to the top of this little Gibraltar; its cap is almost spherical, and a gust of wind might carry the inquirer into the sea, or, which would be worse, on to the rocks below. This giant sentinel is like the lantern towers of old châteaux, whence miles of country could be scanned and attacks guarded against; from its height are seen the steeple and the thrifty fields of Le Croisic, the sandhills that threaten to encroach on the arable land,

<sup>1</sup> *Buis*, "whence" (says Balzac) "the word *buisson*," shrub or bush.

and which have invaded the neighborhood of Le Bourg de Batz. Some old men declare that there was, long ago, a castle on this spot. The sardine fishers have a name for this headland, which can be seen from afar at sea; but I must be forgiven for having forgotten that Breton name, as hard to pronounce as it is to remember.

Calyste led Béatrix towards this height, whence the view is superb, and where the forms of the granite surpass all the surprises they can have caused along the sandy margin of the shore.

It is vain to explain why Camille had hurried on in front; like a wounded animal, she longed for solitude; she lost herself in the grottoes, reappeared on the boulders, chased the crabs out of their holes, or discovered them in the very act of their eccentric behavior. Not to be inconvenienced by her woman's skirts, she had put on Turkish trousers with embroidered frills, a short blouse, and a felt hat; and, by way of a traveler's staff, she carried a riding-whip, for she was always vain of her strength and agility. Thus attired, she was a hundred times handsomer than Béatrix; she had tied a little red China silk shawl across her bosom and knotted behind, as we wrap a child. For some little time Béatrix and Calyste saw her flitting over rocks and rifts like a will-o'-the-wisp, trying to stultify grief by facing perils.

She was the first to arrive at the box cliff, and sat down in the shade of one of the clefts, lost in meditation. What could such a woman as she do in old age, after drinking the cup of fame which all great talents, too greedy to sip the dull dribbles of vanity, drain at one draught? She has since confessed that then and there, one of the coincidences suggested by a mere trifle, by one of the accidents which count for nothing with ordinary people, though they open a gulf of meditation to a great soul, brought her to a decision as to the strange deed which was afterwards the close of her social career. She drew out of her pocket a little box in which she had brought, in case of thirst, some strawberry pastilles; she ate several; but as she sucked them, she could not help reflecting that the strawberries, which were no more, yet lived by their qualities. Hence she concluded that it



might be the same with us. The sea offered her an image of the infinite. No great mind can get away from the infinite, granting the immortality of the soul, without being brought to infer some religious future. This idea still haunted her when she smelt at her scent-bottle of Eau de Portugal.

Her maneuvers for handing Béatrix over to Calyste then struck her as very sordid; she felt the woman die in her, and she emerged the noble angelic being hitherto veiled in the flesh. Her vast intellect, her learning, her acquirements, her spurious loves had brought her face to face with what? Who could have foretold it? With the yearning mother, the consoler of the sorrowing—the Roman Church, so mild towards repentance, so poetical to poets, so artless with children, so deep and mysterious to wild and anxious spirits, that they can forever plunge deeper into it and still satisfy their inextinguishable curiosity, which is constantly excited.

She glanced back at the devious ways to which she had been led by Calyste, comparing them to the tortuous paths among these rocks. Calyste was still in her eyes the lovely messenger from Heaven, a divine leader. She smothered earthly in sacred love.

After walking on for some time in silence, Calyste, at an exclamation from Béatrix at the beauty of the ocean, very different from the Mediterranean, could not resist drawing a comparison between that sea and his love, in its purity and extent, its agitations, its depth, its eternity.

“It has a rock for its shore,” said Béatrix with a laugh.

“When you speak to me in that tone,” replied he with a heavenly flash, “I see you and hear you, and I can find an angel’s patience; but when I am alone, you would pity me if you could see me. My mother cries over my grief.”

“Listen, Calyste, this must come to an end,” said the Marquise, stepping down on to the sandy path. “Perhaps we are now in the one propitious spot for the utterance of such things, for never in my life have I seen one where nature was more in harmony with my thoughts. I have seen Italy, where everything speaks of love; I have seen Switzerland, where all is fresh and expressive of true happiness,

laborious happiness, where the verdure, the calm waters, the most placid outlines are overpowered by the snow-crowned Alps; but I have seen nothing which more truly paints the scorching barrenness of my life than this little plain, withered by sea-gales, corroded by salt mists, where melancholy tillage struggles in the face of the immense ocean and under the hedgerows of Brittany, whence rise the towers of your Guérande.

“Well, Calyste, that is Béatrix. Do not attach yourself to that. I love you, but I will never be yours, for I am conscious of my inward desolation. Ah! you can never know how cruel I am to myself when I tell you this. No, you shall never see your idol—if I am your idol—stoop; it shall not fall from the height where you have set it. I have now a horror of a passion which the world and religion alike reprobate; I will be humbled no more, nor will I steal happiness. I shall remain where I am; I shall be the sandy, unfertile desert, without verdure or flowers, which lies before you.”

“And if you should be deserted?” said Calyste.

“Then I should go and beg for mercy. I would humble myself before the man I have sinned against, but I would never run the risk of rushing into happiness which I know would end.”

“End?” cried Calyste.

“End,” repeated the Marquise, interrupting the rhapsody into which her lover was plunging, by a tone which reduced him to silence.

This contradiction gave rise in the youth's soul to one of those wordless rages which are known only to those who have loved without hope. He and Béatrix walked on for about three hundred yards in utter silence, looking neither at the sea, nor the rocks, nor the fields of Le Croisic.

“I should make you so happy!” said Calyste.

“All men begin by promising us happiness, and they bequeath to us shame, desertion, disgust. I have nothing of which to accuse the man to whom I ought to be faithful; he made no promises; I went to him. But the only way to make my fault less is to make it eternal.”

“Say at once, madame, that you do not love me! I who love you, know by myself that love does not argue, it sees nothing but itself, there is no sacrifice I could not make for it. Command me, and I will attempt the impossible. The man who, of old, scorned his mistress for having thrown her glove to the lions and commanding him to rescue it, did not love! He misprized your right to test us, to make sure of our love, and never to lay down your arms but to superhuman magnanimity. To you I would sacrifice my family, my name, my future life.”

“What an insult lies in that word sacrifice!” replied she in a reproachful tone, which made Calyste feel all the folly of his expression.

Only women who love wholly, or utter coquettes, can take a word as a fulcrum, and spring to prodigious heights; wit and feeling act on the same lines; but the woman who loves is grieved, the coquette is contemptuous.

“You are right,” said Calyste, dropping two tears, “the word can only be applied to the achievement you demand of me.”

“Be silent,” said Béatrix, startled by a reply in which for the first time Calyste really expressed his love. “I have done wrong enough.—Do not tempt me.”

They had just reached the base of the box-cliff. Calyste felt intoxicating joys in helping the Marquise to climb the rock; she was bent on mounting to the very top. The poor boy thought it the height of rapture to support her by the waist, to feel her slightly tremulous; she needed him! The unhopèd-for joy turned his brain, he saw nothing, he put his arm round her body.

“Well!” said she with an imperious look.

“You will never be mine?” he asked in a voice choked by a storm in his blood.

“Never, my dear,” said she. “To you I can only be Béatrix—a dream. And is not a dream sweet? We shall know no bitterness, no regrets, no repentance.”

“And you will return to Conti?”

“There is no help for it.”

“Then you shall never more be any man’s,” cried Calyste, flinging her from him with mad violence.

He listened for her fall before throwing himself after her, but he only heard a dull noise, the harsh rending of stuff, and the heavy sound of a body falling on earth. Instead of tumbling head foremost, Béatrix had turned over; she had fallen into the box-tree; but she would have rolled to the bottom of the sea nevertheless if her gown had not caught on a corner, and, by tearing, checked the force of her fall on the bush.

Mlle. des Touches, who had witnessed the scene, could not call out, for she was aghast, and could only signal to Gasselin to hasten up. Calyste leaned over, prompted by a fierce sort of curiosity; he saw Béatrix as she lay, and shuddered. She seemed to be praying; she thought she must die, she felt the box-tree giving way. With the sudden presence of mind inspired by love, and the supernatural agility of youth in the face of danger, he let himself down the nine feet of rock by his hands, clinging to the rough edges, to the little shelf, where he was in time to rescue the Marquise by taking her in his arms, at the risk of their both falling into the sea. When he caught Béatrix she became unconscious; but he could dream that she was his, wholly his, in this aërial bed where they might have to remain a long time, and his first feeling was an impulse of gladness.

“Open your eyes, forgive me!” said Calyste. “Or we die together.”

“Die?” said she, opening her eyes, and unsealing her pale lips.

Calyste received the word with a kiss, and then was aware of a spasmodic thrill in the Marquise, which was ecstasy to him. At that instant Gasselin’s nailed shoes were audible above them. Camille followed the Breton, and they were anxiously considering the means of saving the lovers.

“There is but one way, mademoiselle,” said Gasselin. “I will let myself down; they will climb up on my shoulders, and you will give them your hand.”

“And you?” said Camille.

The man seemed astonished at being held of any account when his young master was in danger.

"It will be better to fetch a ladder from Le Croisic," said Camille.

"She is a knowing one, she is!" said Gasselin to himself, as he went off. Béatrix, in a feeble voice, begged to be laid on the ground; she felt faint. Calyste laid her down on the cool earth between the rock and the box-tree.

"I saw you, Calyste," said Camille. "Whether Béatrix dies or is saved, this must never be anything but an accident."

"She will hate me!" he cried, his eyes full of tears.

"She will worship you," replied Camille. "This is an end to our excursion; she must be carried to Les Touches.—What would have become of you if she had been killed?" she said.

"I should have followed her."

"And your mother?—and," she softly added after a pause, "and me?"

Calyste stood pale, motionless, and silent, his back against the granite. Gasselin very soon returned from one of the little farms that lie scattered among the fields, running with a ladder he had borrowed. Béatrix had somewhat recovered her strength. When Gasselin had fixed the ladder, the Marquise, helped by Gasselin, who begged Calyste to put Camille's red shawl round Béatrix under her arms, and to give him up the ends, climbed up to the little plateau, where Gasselin took her in his arms like a child, and carried her down to the shore.

"Death I would not say nay to—but pain!" said she in a weak voice to Mlle. des Touches.

The faintness and shock from which Béatrix was suffering made it necessary that she should be carried as far as the farm whence Gasselin had borrowed the ladder. Calyste, Gasselin, and Camille took off such garments as they could dispense with, and made a sort of mattress on the ladder, on which they laid Béatrix, carrying it like a litter. The farm-people offered their bed. Gasselin hurried off to the spot where the horses were waiting for them, took one, and fetched a surgeon from Le Croisic, after ordering the boat-

men to come up the creek that lay nearest to the farm. Calyste, sitting on a low stool, answered Camille's remarks with nods and rare monosyllables, and Mlle. des Touches was equally uneasy as to Béatrix's condition and Calyste's.

After being bled, the patient felt better; she could speak; she consented to go in the boat; and at about five in the afternoon they crossed to Guérande, where the town doctor was waiting for her. The news of the accident had spread in this deserted and almost uninhabited land with amazing rapidity.

Calyste spent the night at Les Touches at the foot of Béatrix's bed with Camille. The doctor promised that by next morning the Marquise would suffer from nothing worse than stiffness. Through Calyste's despair a great happiness beamed. He was at the foot of Béatrix's bed watching her asleep or waking; he could study her pale face, her lightest movements. Camille smiled bitterly as she recognized in the lad all the symptoms of a passion such as tinges the soul and mind of a man by becoming a part of his life at a time when no thought, no cares counteract this torturing mental process.

Calyste would never discern the real woman in Béatrix. How guilelessly did the young Breton allow her to read his most secret soul!—Why, he fancied she was his, merely because he found himself here, in her room, admiring her in the disorder of the bed. He watched Béatrix in her slightest movement with rapturous attention; his face expressed such sweet curiosity, his ecstasy was so artlessly betrayed, that there was a moment when the two women looked at each other with a smile. As Calyste read in the invalid's fine sea-green eyes a mixed expression of confusion, love, and amusement, he blushed and looked away.

“Did I not say to you, Calyste, that you men promised us happiness and ended by throwing us over a precipice?”

As he heard this little jest, spoken in a charming tone of voice, which betrayed some change in Béatrix's heart, Calyste knelt down, took one of her moist hands, which she allowed him to hold, and kissed it very submissively.

“You have every right to reject my love forever,” said he, “and I have no right ever to say a single word to you again.”

“Ah!” cried Camille, as she saw the expression of her friend’s face, and compared it with that she had seen after every effort of diplomacy; “love unaided will always have more wit than all the world beside.—Take your draught, my dear, and go to sleep.”

This evening spent by Calyste with Mlle. des Touches, who read books on mystical theology, while Calyste read *Indiana*—the first work of Camille’s famous rival, in which he found the captivating picture of a young man who loved with idolatry and devotion, with mysterious rapture, and for his whole life—a book of fatal teaching for him!—this evening left an ineffaceable mark on the heart of the unhappy youth, for Félicité at last convinced him that any woman who was not a monster could only be happy and flattered in every vanity, by knowing herself to be the object of a crime.

“You would never, never, have thrown me into the sea!” said poor Camille, wiping away a tear.

Towards morning Calyste, quite worn out, fell asleep in his chair. It was now the Marquise’s turn to look at the pretty boy, pale with agitation and his first love-watch; she heard him murmuring words in his sleep.

“He loves in his very dreams!” said she to Camille.

“We must send him home to bed,” said Félicité, awaking him.

No one was alarmed at the du Guénics’: Mlle. des Touches had written a few words to the Baroness.

Calyste dined at Les Touches next day. He found Béatrix up, pale, languid, and tired. After that evening, which Camille filled with music, seating herself at the piano to allow Calyste to hold and press Béatrix’s hands while they could say nothing to each other, there was never a storm at Les Touches. Félicité completely effaced herself.

Women like Mme. de Rochefide, cold, fragile, hard, and thin—such women, whose throat shows a form of collar-bone suggestive of the feline race—have souls as pale and colorless as their pale gray or green eyes; to melt them, to vitrify these

flints, a thunderbolt is needed. To Béatrix this thunderbolt had fallen in Calyste's rage of love and attempt on her life; it was such a flame as nothing can resist, changing the most stubborn nature. Béatrix felt herself softened; pure and true love flooded her soul with its soothing lapping glow. She floated in a mild and tender atmosphere of feeling hitherto unknown, in which she felt ennobled, elevated; she had entered into the heaven where, in all ages, woman has dwelt, in Brittany. She enjoyed the respectful worship of this boy, whose happiness cost her so little; for a smile, a look, a word was enough for Calyste. Such value set by feeling on such trifles touched her extremely. To this angelic soul, the glove she had worn could be more than her whole body was to the man who ought to have adored her. What a contrast!

What woman could have resisted this persistent idolatry? She was sure of being understood and obeyed. If she had bid Calyste to risk his life for her smallest whim, he would not even have paused to think. And Béatrix acquired an indescribable air of imposing dignity; she looked at love on its loftiest side, and sought in it a footing, as it were, which would enable her to remain, in Calyste's eyes, the supreme woman; she wished her power over him to be eternal. She coquetted all the more persistently because she felt herself weak.

For a whole week she played the invalid with engaging hypocrisy. How many times did she walk round and round the green lawn that spread on the garden side of the house, leaning on Calyste's arm, and reviving in Camille the torments she had caused her during the first week of her visit.

"Well, my dear, you are taking him the Grand Tour!" said Mlle. des Touches to the Marquise.

One evening, before the excursion to Le Croisic, the two women had been discussing love, and laughing over the various ways in which men made their declarations, confessing that the most skillful, and, of course, therefore the least devoted, did not waste time in wandering through the mazes of sentimentality, and were right; so that those who loved best were, at a certain stage, the worst used.



“They set to work as La Fontaine did to get into the Academy,” said Camille.

Her remark now recalled this conversation to Béatrix’s memory while reproving her Machiavelian conduct. Mme. de Rochefide had absolute power over Calyste, and could keep him within the bounds she chose, reminding him by a look or a gesture of his horrible violence by the seashore. Then the poor martyr’s eyes would fill with tears; he was silent, swallowing down his arguments, his hopes, his griefs, with a heroism that would have touched any other woman.

Her infernal coquetting brought him to such desperation that he came one day to throw himself into Camille’s arms and ask her advice. Béatrix, armed with Calyste’s letter, had picked out the passage in which he said that loving was the chief happiness, that being loved was second to it, and she had made use of this axiom to suppress his passion to such a degree of respectful idolatry as she chose to permit. She reveled in having her spirit soothed by the sweet concert of praise and adoration which nature suggests to youth; and there is so much art too, though unconscious, so much innocent seductiveness in their cries, their prayers, their exclamations, their appeals to themselves, in their readiness to mortgage the future, that Béatrix took care not to answer him. She had told him she doubted! Happiness was not yet in question, only the permission to love that the lad was constantly asking for, persistently bent on taking the citadel from the strongest side—that of the mind and heart.

The woman who is bravest in word is often weak in action. After seeing what progress he had made by his attempt to push Béatrix into the sea, it is strange that Calyste should not have continued the pursuit of happiness through violence; but love in these young lads is so ecstatic and religious that it insists on absolute conviction. Hence its sublimity.

However, one day Calyste, driven to bay by desire, complained vehemently to Camille of Mme. de Rochefide’s conduct.

“I wanted to cure you by enabling you to know her from the first,” replied Mlle. des Touches, “but you spoilt all by your impetuosity. Ten days since you were her master; now

you are her slave, my poor boy. So you would never be strong enough to carry out my orders."

"What must I do?"

"Quarrel with her on the ground of her cruelty. A woman is always carried away by talk; make her treat you badly, and do not return to Les Touches till she sends for you."

There is a moment in every severe disease when the patient accepts the most painful remedies, and submits to the most horrible operations. Calyste was at this crisis. He took Camille's advice; he stayed at home for two days; but on the third he was tapping at Béatrix's door and telling her that he and Camille were waiting breakfast for her.

"Another chance lost!" said Camille, seeing him sneak back so tamely.

During those two days Béatrix had stopped frequently at the window whence the Guérande road could be seen. When Camille found her there she said that she was studying the effect of the gorse by the roadside, its golden bloom blazing under the September sun. Thus Camille had read her friend's secret; she had only to say the word for Calyste to be happy. But she did not speak it; she was still too much a woman to urge him to the deed so dreaded by young hearts, who seem aware of all that their ideal must lose by it.

Béatrix kept Camille and Calyste waiting some little time; if he had been any other man, the delay would have seemed significant, for the Marquise's dress suggested her wish to fascinate Calyste and prevent his absenting himself again. After breakfast she went to walk in the garden, and enchanted him with joy, as she enchanted him with love, by expressing her wish to go with him again to see the spot where she had so nearly perished.

"Let us go alone," said Calyste in a broken voice.

"If I refused," said she, "I might give you reason to think that you were dangerous. Alas! as I have told you a thousand times, I belong to another, and must forever be his alone. I chose him, knowing nothing of love. The fault was twofold, and the punishment double."

When she spoke thus, her eyes moist with the rare tears such women can shed, Calyste felt a sort of pity that cooled his furious ardor; he worshiped her then as a Madonna. We must not expect that different natures should resemble each other in the expression of their feelings, any more than we look for the same fruits from different trees. Béatrix at this moment was torn in her mind; she hesitated between herself and Calyste; between the world, where she hoped some day to be seen again, and perfect happiness; between ruining herself finally by a second unpardonable passion and social forgiveness. She was beginning to listen without even affected annoyance to the language of blind love; she allowed herself to be soothed by the gentle hands of pity. Already, many times, she had been moved to tears by hearing Calyste promising her love enough to make up for all she could lose in the eyes of the world, and pitying her for being bound to such an evil genius, to a man as false as Conti. More than once she had not silenced Calyste when she had told him of the misery and sufferings that overwhelmed her in Italy when she found that she did not reign alone in Conti's heart. Camille had given Calyste more than one lecture on this subject, and Calyste had profited by them.

"I," said he, "love you wholly; you will find in me none of the triumphs of art, nor the pleasures derived from seeing a crowd bewildered by the wonders of talent; my only talent is for loving you, my only joys will be in yours; no woman's admiration will seem to me worthy of consideration; you need fear no odious rivals. You are misprized; and wherever you are accepted I desire also to be accepted every day."

She listened to his words with a drooping head, allowing him to kiss her hands, and confessing to herself silently but very readily that she was perhaps a misunderstood angel.

"I am too much humiliated," she replied; "my past deprives me of all security for the future."

It was a great day for Calyste when, on reaching Les Touches at seven in the morning, he saw from between two gorse bushes Béatrix at a window, wearing the same straw hat that she had worn on the day of their excursion.

He felt quite dazzled. These small details of passion make the world wider.

Only Frenchwomen, perhaps, have the secret of these theatrical touches; they owe them to their graceful wit, of which they infuse just so much into feeling as it can bear without losing its force.

Ah! how lightly she leaned on Calyste's arm. They went out together by the garden gate leading to the sandhills. Béatrix thought their wildness pleasing; she saw the little rigid plants that grow there with their pink blossoms, and gathered several, with some of the Carthusian pinks, which also thrive on barren sands, and divided the flowers significantly with Calyste, to whom these blossoms and leaves were to have an eternally sinister association.

"We will add a sprig of box!" said she with a smile.

She stood for some time waiting for the boat on the jetty, where Calyste told her of his childish eagerness the day of her arrival.

"That expedition, which I heard of, was the cause of my severity that first day," said she.

Throughout their walk Mme. de Rochefide talked in the half-jesting tone of a woman who loves, and with tenderness and freedom of manner. Calyste might believe himself loved. But when, as they went along the strand under the rocks, and down into one of those pretty bays where the waves have thrown up a marvelous mosaic of the strangest marbles, with which they played like children at picking up the finest specimens—when Calyste, at the height of intoxication, proposed in so many words that they should fly to Ireland, she assumed a dignified and mysterious air, begged to take his arm, and went on towards the cliff she had called her Tarpeian rock.

"My dear fellow," said she, as they slowly climbed the fine block of granite she meant to take as her pedestal, "I have not courage enough to conceal all you are to me. For the last ten years I have known no happiness to compare with that we have just enjoyed in hunting for shells among those tide-washed rocks, in exchanging pebbles, of which I shall have a necklace made, more precious in my eyes than

if it were composed of the finest diamonds. I have been a child again, a little girl such as I was at thirteen or fourteen, when I was worthy of you. The love I have been so happy as to inspire you with has elevated me in my own eyes. Understand this in all its magical meaning. You have made me the proudest, the happiest of my sex, and you will live longer in my memory than I probably shall in yours."

At this moment she had reached the summit of the cliff, whence the vast ocean was seen spreading on one side, and on the other the Brittany coast with its golden islets, its feudal towers, and its clumps of gorse. Never had a woman a finer stage on which to make a grand avowal.

"But," she went on, "I am not my own; I am more firmly bound by my own act than I was by law. So you are punished for my misfortune; you must be content to know that we suffer together. Dante never saw Beatrice again, Petrarca never possessed his Laura. Such disasters befall none but great souls.

"Oh! if ever I should be deserted, if I should fall a thousand degrees lower in shame and infamy, if your Béatrix is cruelly misunderstood by a world that will be loathsome to her, if she should be the most despised of women! . . . Then, beloved child," she added, taking his hand, "you will know that she is the foremost of them all, that she could rise to heaven with your support. But then, my friend," she added, with a lofty glance at him, "when you want to throw her down, do not miss your stroke; after your love, death!"

Calyste had his arm round her waist; he clasped her to his heart. To confirm her tender words, Mme. de Rochefide sealed Calyste's forehead with the most chaste and timid kiss. Then they went down the path and returned slowly, talking like two people who perfectly understand and enter into each other's minds; she believing she had secured peace, he no longer doubting that he was to be happy—and both deceived.

Calyste hoped from what Camille had observed that Conti would be delighted to seize the opportunity of giving up Béatrix. The Marquise on her part abandoned herself to the uncertainty of things, waiting on chance. Calyste was

too deeply in love and too ingenuous to create the chance. They both reached *Les Touches* in the most delightful frame of mind, going in by the garden gate, of which Calyste had taken the key.

It was now about six o'clock. The intoxicating perfumes, the mild atmosphere, the golden tones of the evening light were all in harmony with their tender mood and talk. Their steps were matched and equal as those of lovers are; their movements betrayed the unison of their minds. Such silence reigned at *Les Touches* that the sound of the opening and closing gate echoed distinctly, and must have been heard all over the grounds. As Calyste and Béatrix had said all they had to say, and their agitating walk had tired them, they came in slowly and without speaking.

Suddenly, as she turned an angle, Béatrix was seized with a spasm of horror—the infectious dread that is caused by the sight of a reptile, and that chilled Calyste before he saw its occasion. On a bench under a weeping ash Conti sat talking to Camille Maupin. Mme. de Rochefide's convulsive internal trembling was more evident than she wished. Calyste now knew how dear he was to this woman who had just built up the barrier between herself and him, no doubt with a view to securing a few days more for coquetting before overleaping it.

In one instant a tragical drama in endless perspective was felt in each heart.

“You did not expect me so soon, I dare say,” said the artist, offering Béatrix his arm.

The Marquise could not avoid relinquishing Calyste's arm and taking Conti's. This undignified transition, so imperatively demanded, so full of offense to the later love, was too much for Calyste, who went to throw himself on the bench by Camille, after exchanging the most distant greeting with his rival. He felt a hundred contending sensations. On discerning how much Béatrix loved him, his impulse was to rush at the artist and declare that she was his; but the poor woman's moral convulsions, betraying her sufferings—for she had in that one moment paid the forfeit of all her sins—had startled him so much that he remained stupefied, stricken,

like her, by relentless necessity. These antagonistic impulses produced the most violent storm of feeling he had yet known since he had loved Béatrix.

Mme. de Rochefide and Conti went past the seat where Calyste had thrown himself by Camille's side; the Marquise looking at her rival with one of those terrible flashes by which a woman can convey everything. She avoided Calyste's eye, and seemed to listen to Conti, who was talking lightly.

"What can they be saying?" asked Calyste of Camille.

"Dear child, you have no idea yet of the terrible hold a man has over a woman on the strength of a dead passion. Béatrix could not refuse him her hand. He is laughing at her, no doubt, over her fresh love affair; he guessed it, of course, from your behavior, and the way in which you came in together when he saw you."

"He is laughing at her!" cried the vehement youth.

"Keep calm," said Camille, "or you will lose the few chances that remain to you. If he wounds Béatrix too much in her vanities, she will trample him under foot like a worm. But he is astute; he will know how to do it cleverly. He will not suppose that the haughty Mme. de Rochefide could possibly be false to him! It would be too base to love a young man for his beauty! He will no doubt speak of you to her as a mere boy bewitched by the notion of possessing a Marquise and of ruling the destinies of two women. Finally, he will thunder with the rattling artillery of insulting insinuations. Then Béatrix will be obliged to combat him with false denials, of which he will take advantage, and remain master of the field."

"Ah!" cried Calyste, "he does not love. I should leave her free. Love demands a choice renewed every minute, confirmed every day. The morrow is the justification of yesterday, and increases our hoard of joys.—A few days later, and he would not have found us here. What brought him back?"

"A journalist's taunt," said Camille. "The opera on whose success he had counted is a failure—a dead failure. These words spoken in the greenroom, perhaps by Claude Vignon, 'It is hard to lose your reputation and your mistress

both at once!’ stung him no doubt in all his vanities. Love based on mean sentiments is merciless.

“I questioned him; but who can trust so false and deceitful a nature? He seemed weary of poverty and of love, disgusted with life. He regretted having connected himself so publicly with the Marquise, and in speaking of their past happiness fell into a strain of poetic melancholy rather too elegant to be genuine. He hoped no doubt to extract the secret of your love from the joy his flattery must give me.”

“Well?” said Calyste, looking at Béatrix and Conti returning, and listening no longer to Camille.

Camille had prudently kept on the defensive; she had not betrayed either Calyste’s secret or Béatrix’s. The artist was a man to dupe anyone in the world, and Mlle. des Touches warned Calyste to be on his guard with him.

“My dear child,” said she, “this is for you the most critical moment; such prudence and skill are needed as you have not, and you will be fooled by the most cunning man on earth; for I can do no more for you.”

A bell announced that dinner was served. Conti offered his arm to Camille, Béatrix took that of Calyste. Camille let the Marquise lead the way; she had a moment to look at Calyste and enjoin prudence by putting her finger to her lips.

All through dinner Conti was in the highest spirits. This was perhaps a way of gauging Mme. de Rochefide, who played her part badly. As a coquette she might have deceived Conti; but, being seriously in love, she betrayed herself. The wily musician, far from watching her, seemed not to observe her embarrassment. At dessert he began talking of women and crying up their noble feelings.

“A woman who would desert us in prosperity will sacrifice everything to us in adversity,” said he. “Women have the advantage of men in constancy; a woman must be deeply offended indeed to throw over a first lover; she clings to him as to her honor; a second love is a disgrace——” and so forth.

He was astoundingly moral; he burnt incense before the altar on which a heart was bleeding pierced by a thousand stabs. Only Camille and Béatrix understood the virulence



of the acrid satire he poured out in the form of praises. Now and again they both colored, but they were obliged to control themselves; they went up to Camille's sitting-room arm in arm, and with one consent passed through the larger drawing-room, where there were no lights, and they could exchange a few words.

"I cannot endure to let Conti walk over my prostrate body, to give him a right over me," said Béatrix in an undertone. "The convict on the hulks is always at the mercy of the man he is chained to. I am lost! I must go back to the hulks of love!—And it is you who have sent me back. Ah, you made him come a day too late—or too soon. I recognize your infernal gift of romance. Yes, the revenge is complete, the climax perfect."

"I could threaten you that I would write to Conti, but as to doing it!—I am incapable of such a thing!" cried Camille. "You are miserable, so I forgive you."

"What will become of Calyste?" said the Marquise, with the exquisite artlessness of vanity.

"Then is Conti taking you away?" cried Camille.

"Ah! you expect to triumph?" retorted Béatrix.

The Marquise spoke the hideous words with rage, her beautiful features distorted, while Camille tried to conceal her gladness under an assumed expression of regret; but the light in her eyes gave the lie to the gravity of her face, and Béatrix could see through a mask! When they saw each other by candlelight, sitting on the divan where during the last three weeks so many comedies had been played out, where the secret tragedy of so many thwarted passions had had its beginning, the two women studied each other for the last time; they saw that they were divided by a deep gulf of hatred.

"I leave you Calyste," said Béatrix, seeing her rival's eyes. "But I am fixed in his heart, and no woman will oust me."

Camille retorted by quoting, in a tone of subtle irony which stung the Marquise to the quick, the famous speech of Mazarin's niece to Louis XIV.: "You reign, you love him, and you are going!"

Neither of them throughout this scene, which was a stormy one, noticed the absence of Calyste and Conti. The artist had remained at table with his rival, desiring him to keep him company, and finish a bottle of champagne.

"We have something to say to each other," said Conti, to anticipate any refusal.

In the position in which they stood to each other, the young Breton was obliged to obey the behest.

"My dear boy," said the singer in a soothing voice when Calyste had drunk two glasses of wine, "we are a couple of good fellows; we may be frank with each other. I did not come here because I was suspicious. Béatrix loves me." And he assumed a fatuous air. "For my part, I love her no longer; I have come, not to carry her off, but to break with her and leave her the credit of the rupture. You are young; you do not know how necessary it is to seem the victim when you feel that you are the executioner. Young men spout fire and flame, they make a parade of throwing over a woman, they often scorn her and make her hate them; but a wise man gets himself dismissed, and puts on a humiliated expression which leaves the lady some regrets and a sweet sense of superiority. The displeasure of the divinity is not irremediable, while abdication is past all reparation.

"You, happily for you, do not yet know how our lives may be hampered by the senseless promises which women are such fools as to accept, when gallantry requires us to tie such slip-knots to divert the idle hours of happiness. The pair then swear eternal fidelity. A man has some adventure with a woman—he does not fail to assure her politely that he hopes to live and die with her; he pretends to be impatiently awaiting the demise of a husband while earnestly wishing him perfect health. If the husband should die, there are women so provincial or so tenacious, so silly or so wily, as to rush on the man, crying, 'I am free—here I am!'

"Not one of us is free. The spent ball recoils and falls into the midst of our best-planned triumph or happiness.

"I foresaw that you would love Béatrix; I left her in a situation in which she must need flirt with you without abdicating her sacred majesty, were it only to annoy that angel,

Camille Maupin. Well, my dear fellow, love her; you will be doing me a service. I only want her to behave atrociously to me. I dread her pride and her virtue.—Perhaps, in spite of goodwill on my side, some time will be required for this maneuver. On such occasions the one who does not take the first step wins. Just now, as we walked round the lawn, I tried to tell her that I knew all, and wished her joy of her happiness. Well, she was very angry.

“I, at this moment, am in love with the youngest of our singers, Mlle. Falcon, of the Opera, and I want to marry her. Yes, I have got so far as that! But when you come to Paris, you will say I have exchanged a Marquise for a Queen!”

Joy shed its glory on Calyste's candid face; he confessed his love; this was all that Conti wanted.

There is not a man in the world, however *blasé*, however depraved, whose love does not revive as soon as it is threatened by a rival. We may wish to be rid of a woman; we do not wish that she should throw us over. When lovers have come to this extremity, men and women alike try to be first in the field, so cruel is the wound to their self-respect. Perhaps what is at stake is all that Society has thrown into that feeling; it is indeed less a matter of self-respect than of life itself, the whole future is in the balance; we feel as if we were losing not the interest, but the capital.

Calyste, cross-examined by the artist, related all that had happened during these three weeks at Les Touches, and was delighted with Conti, who concealed his rage under a semblance of delightful good-nature.

“Let us go upstairs,” said he. “Women are not trustful; they will not understand how we can have sat together for so long without clutching at each other's hair; they might come down to listen.—I will do all I can for you, my dear child. I will be odious, rude, and jealous with the Marquise; I will constantly suspect her of deceiving me—there is nothing more certain to lead a woman to a betrayal; you will be happy, and I shall be free. You, this evening, must assume the part of a disconcerted lover; I shall play the suspicious and jealous man. Pity the angel for her inthrallment to a man without fine feelings—weep! You can weep, you are

young. I, alas, can no longer weep; it is a great advantage lost."

Calyste and Conti went upstairs. The musician, requested to sing by his young rival, chose the greatest test known to musical executants, the famous "*Pria che spunti l'aurora*," which Rubini himself never attempts without a qualm, and in which Conti had often triumphed. Never had he been more wonderful than at this moment when so many feelings were seething in his breast. Calyste was in ecstasies. At the first note of the cavatina the singer fired a glance at the Marquise which gave cruel significance to the words, and which was understood. Camille, playing the accompaniment, guessed that it was a command that made Béatrix bow her head. She looked at Calyste, and suspected that the boy had fallen into some snare in spite of her warnings. She was certain of it when the youth went gleefully to bid Béatrix good-night, kissing her hand and pressing it with a little knowing and confident look.

By the time Calyste had reached Guérande the ladies' maid and servants were packing Conti's traveling carriage; and "before the dawn," as he had sung, he had carried off Béatrix, with Camille's horses, as far as the first posting-house.

Under cover of the darkness, Mme. de Rochefide was able to look back at Guérande, whose tower, white in the day-break, stood out in the gray light. She gave herself up to melancholy, for she was leaving there one of the fairest flowers of life—love such as the purest girls may dream of. Respect of persons was crushing the only true love this woman had ever known, or could ever know, in all her life. The woman of the world was obeying the laws of the world, sacrificing love to appearances, as some women sacrifice it to religion or to duty. From this point of view, this terrible story is that of many women.

Next day, at about noon, Calyste arrived at Les Touches. When he reached the turn in the road whence, yesterday, he had seen Béatrix at the window, he caught sight of Camille, who hurried out to meet him. At the bottom of the stairs she said this cruel word—

“Gone!”

“Béatrix?” cried Calyste, stunned.

“You were duped by Conti. You told me nothing; I could do nothing.”

She led the poor boy to her little drawing-room; he sank on the divan, in the place where he had so often seen the Marquise, and melted into tears. Félicité said nothing; she smoked her hookah, knowing that nothing can stem the first rush of such suffering, which is always deaf and speechless. Calyste, since there was nothing to be done, stayed there all day in a state of utter torpor. Just before dinner, Camille tried to say a few words to him, after begging that he would listen to her.

“My dear boy,” said she, “you have been the cause to me of intense suffering, and I have not, as you have, a fair future life in which to recover. To me the earth has no further springtime, the soul no further love. So I, to find comfort, must look higher.

“Here, the day before Béatrix came, I painted her portrait; I would not darken it, you would have thought that I was jealous. Now, listen to the truth. Mme. de Rochefide is as far as possible from being worthy of you. The display of her fall was not necessary, but she would have been nobody but for that scandal; she made it on purpose to have a part to play. She is one of those women who prefer the parade of wrongdoing to the calm peace of happiness; they affront Society to wring from it the evil gift of a slander; they must be talked about, at whatever cost. She was eaten up by vanity. Her fortune and wit had not availed to give her the feminine dominion which she had tried to conquer by presiding over a salon; she had fancied that she could achieve the celebrity of the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant; but the world is just, it bestows the honors of its interest only on genuine passion.

“Her flight was not justified by any obstacles. Damocles’ sword did not hang glittering over her festivities; and besides, in Paris, those who love truly and sincerely may easily be happy in a quiet way. In short, if she could be tender and loving, she would not have gone off last night with Conti.”

Camille talked for a long time, and very eloquently, but this last effort was in vain; she ceased on seeing a shrug, by which Calyste conveyed his entire belief in Béatrix, and she insisted on his coming down and sitting with her at dinner, for he found it impossible to eat.

It is only while we are very young that these spasmodic symptoms occur. At a later period the organs have formed habits, and are, as it were, hardened. The reaction of the moral system on the physical is never strong enough to induce mortal illness unless the constitution preserves its original delicacy. A man can resist a violent grief which kills a youth, less because his feelings are not so strong, than because his organs are stronger. Mlle. des Touches was indeed alarmed from the first by Calyste's calm and resigned attitude after the first flood of tears. Before leaving the house, he begged to see Béatrix's room once more, and hid his face in the pillow on which hers had rested.

"This is folly!" said he, shaking hands with Camille and leaving her, sunk in melancholy.

He returned home, found the usual party engaged in playing *mouche*, and sat by his mother all the evening. The Curé, the Chevalier du Halga, and Mlle. de Pen-Hoël all knew of Mme. de Rochefide's departure, and were all glad. Calyste would now come back to them, and they all watched, almost by stealth, seeing that he was silent. Nobody in that old house could conceive of all that this death of a first love must be to a heart as true and artless as Calyste's.

For some days Calyste went regularly to Les Touches; he would wander round the grass-plot where he had sometimes walked arm in arm with Béatrix. He often went as far as Le Croisic, and climbed the rock whence he had tried to throw her into the sea; he would sit for hours leaning on the box-shrub, for by examining the projections on the riven rock he had learnt to climb up and down the face of it. His solitary expeditions, his silence, and his lack of appetite at last made his mother uneasy. At the end of a fortnight, while these proceedings lasted—a good deal like those of an animal in its cage, and the despairing lover's cage was, to

adopt la Fontaine's phrase, "the spots honored by the footstep, illuminated by the eyes" of Béatrix—Calyste could no longer cross the little inlet; he had only strength enough to drag himself as far on the Guérande road as the spot whence he had seen Béatrix at the window.

The family, glad at the departing of "the Parisians," to use the provincial phrase, discerned nothing ominous or sickly in Calyste. The two old maids and the Curé, following up their plan, had kept Charlotte de Kergarouët, who, in the evening, made eyes at Calyste, and got nothing in return but advice as to her game of *mouche*. All through the evening Calyste would sit between his mother and his provincial fiancée, under the eye of the Curé and of Charlotte's aunt, who, on their way home, would comment on his greater or less dejection. They took the unhappy boy's indifference for acquiescence in their plans.

One evening, when Calyste, being tired, had gone early to bed, the players all left their cards on the table, and looked at each other as the young man shut his bedroom door. They had listened anxiously to his footsteps.

"Something ails Calyste," said the Baroness, wiping her eyes.

"There is nothing the matter with him," replied Mlle. de Pen-Hoël; "we must get him married as soon as may be."

"Do you think that will divert him?" said the Chevalier.

Charlotte looked sternly at M. du Halga, whom she thought in very bad taste this evening, immoral, depraved, irreligious, and quite ridiculous with his dog, in spite of her aunt, who always took the old sailor's part.

"To-morrow morning I will lecture Calyste," said the Baron, whom they had thought asleep; "I do not want to go out of this world without having seen my grandson, a little pink-and-white du Guénic, with a Breton hood on in his cradle."

"He never speaks a word," said old Zéphirine, "no one knows what ails him; he never ate less in his life; what does he live on? If he eats at Les Touches, the devil's cookery does him no good."

“He is in love,” said the Chevalier, proffering this opinion with extreme timidity.

“Now, then, old dotard, you have not put into the pool,” said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël. “When you are thinking of your young days, you forget everything else.”

“Come to breakfast with us to-morrow morning,” said old Zéphirine to Charlotte and Jacqueline; “my brother will talk to his son, and we will settle everything. One nail drives out another.”

“Not in a Breton,” said the Chevalier.

The next morning Calyste saw Charlotte arrive, dressed with unusual care though it was still early, just as his father had ended giving him, in the dining-room, a discourse on matrimony, to which the lad could find nothing to say. He knew how ignorant his aunt, his father, and his mother were, and all their friends; he was gathering the fruits of knowledge; he found himself isolated, no longer speaking the language of the household. So he only begged a few days’ respite, and his father rubbed his hands with joy, and gave new life to the Baroness by whispering the good news in her ear.

Breakfast was a cheerful meal. Charlotte, to whom the Baron had given a wink, was in high spirits. A rumor filtered through Gasselin, by which all the town knew that the du Guénics and the Kergarouëts had come to an understanding. After breakfast Calyste went out of the hall by the steps on the garden side, and was followed by Charlotte; he offered her his arm, and led her to the arbor at the bottom of the garden. The old folks, standing at the window, looked at them with a sort of pathos. Charlotte looked back at the pretty house, somewhat uneasy at her companion’s silence, and took advantage of their presence to begin the conversation by saying to Calyste, “They are watching us!”

“They cannot hear us,” he replied.

“No, but they can see us.”

“Let us sit down,” said Calyste gently, as he took her hand.

“Is it true that your banner once floated from that twisted



pillar?" asked Charlotte, looking at the house as if it were her own. "It would look well there!—How happy one might be here! You will make some alterations in the arrangement of your house, will you not, Calyste?"

"I shall have no time for it, my dear Charlotte," said the young man, taking her hands and kissing them. "I will tell you my secret. I love a woman whom you have seen, and who loves me—love her too well to make any other woman happy; and I know that from our infancy you and I have always been intended to marry."

"But she is married, Calyste," said Charlotte.

"I will wait," said the boy.

"And so will I," said Charlotte, her eyes full of tears. "You cannot love that woman for long; she has gone off with a singer, they say . . ."

"Marry someone else, my dear Charlotte," said Calyste. "With such a fortune as your aunt has to leave you, which is enormous in Brittany, you can find a better match than I. You will find a man with a title.—I have not brought you out here to tell you what you already know, but to entreat you in the name of our long friendship to take the matter upon yourself and to refuse me. Say that you can have nothing to say to a man whose heart is not free, and my passion will at least have been so far serviceable that I shall have done you no wrong. You cannot think how life weighs upon me! I cannot endure any struggle, I am as weak as a body deserted by its soul, by the very element of life. But for the grief that my death would be to my mother and my aunt, I should have thrown myself into the sea ere now, and I have never gone to the rocks of Le Croisic since the day when the temptation began to be irresistible.—Say nothing of this.—Charlotte, farewell."

He took the girl's head in his hands, kissed her hair, went out by the path under the gable, and made his escape to Camille's, where he remained till midnight.

On returning at about one in the morning, he found his mother busy with her tapestry, waiting for him. He crept in softly, took her hand, and asked—

"Is Charlotte gone?"

“She is going to-morrow with her aunt; they are both in despair.—Come to Ireland, my Calyste,” she added.

“How many times have I dreamed of flying thither!” said he.

“Really!” exclaimed the Baroness.

“With Béatrix,” he added.

Some days after Charlotte’s departure, Calyste was walking with the Chevalier du Halga on the Mall, and he sat down in the sun on a bench whence his eye could command the whole landscape, from the weather-cocks of Les Touches to the shoals marked out by the foaming breakers which dance above the reefs at high tide. Calyste was thin and pale, his strength was diminishing, he was beginning to have little periodical shivering fits, symptomatic of fever. His eyes, with dark marks round them, had the hard glitter which a fixed idea will give to lonely persons, or which the ardor of the struggle imparts to the bold leaders of the civilization of our age. The Chevalier was the only person with whom he sometimes exchanged his ideas; he had discerned in this old man an apostle of his religion, and found in him the traces of a never-dying love.

“Have you loved many women in your life?” he asked, the second time that he and the old navy man sailed in company, as the Captain called it, up and down the Mall.

“Only one,” said the Captain.

“Was she free?”

“No,” said the Chevalier. “Ah, I suffered much! She was my best friend’s wife—my patron’s, my chief’s; but we loved each other so much!”

“She loved you, then?”

“Passionately,” replied du Halga with unwonted vehemence.

“And you were happy?”

“Till her death. She died at the age of forty-nine, an *émigrée* at Saint Petersburg; the climate killed her. She must be very cold in her coffin! I have often thought of going to bring her away and lay her in our beloved Brittany, near me! But she rests in my heart!”

The Chevalier wiped his eyes; Calyste took his hands and pressed them.

"I cling to that dog more than to my life," said he, pointing to Thisbe. "That little creature is in every particular exactly like the dog she used to fondle with her beautiful hands, and to take on her knees. I never look at Thisbe without seeing Mme. de Kergarouët's hands."

"Have you seen Mme. de Rochefide?" asked Calyste.

"No," replied du Halga. "It is fifty-eight years now since I looked at a woman, excepting your mother; there is something in her coloring that is like the admiral's wife."

Three days later the Chevalier said to Calyste as they met on the Mall—

"My boy, all I have in the world is a hundred and eighty louis. When you know where to find Mme. de Rochefide, come and ask me for them, to go to see her."

Calyste thanked the old man, whose life he envied. But day by day he became more morose; he seemed to care for no one; he was gentle and kind only to his mother. The Baroness watched the progress of this mania with increasing anxiety; she alone, by much entreaty, could persuade Calyste to take some nourishment.

By the beginning of October the young fellow could no longer walk on the Mall with the Chevalier, who came in vain to ask him out with an old man's attempts at coaxing.

"We will talk about Mme. de Rochefide," said he. "I will tell you the history of my first adventure.—Your son is very ill," said he to the Baroness, on the day when his urgency proved useless.

Calyste replied to all who questioned him that he was perfectly well, and, like all melancholy youths, relished the notion of death; but he never left the house now; he sat in the garden on the seat, warming himself in the pale, mild autumn sunshine, alone with his thoughts, and avoiding all company.

After the day when Calyste no longer went to call on her, Félicité begged the Curé of Guérande to go to see her. The Abbé Grimont's regularity in going to Les Touches

almost every morning, and dining there from time to time, became the news of the moment; it was talked of in all the neighborhood, and even at Nantes. However, he never missed spending the evening at Guérande, where despair reigned. Masters and servants, all were grieved by Calyste's obstinacy, though they did not think him in any danger. It never occurred to any one of these good people that the poor youth could die of love. The Chevalier had no record of such a death in all his travels or reminiscences. Everybody ascribed Calyste's emaciation to want of nutrition. His mother would go on her knees to beseech him to eat. To please her, Calyste tried to overcome his repugnance, and the food thus taken against his will added to the low fever that was consuming the handsome boy.

At the end of October the beloved son no longer went up to his room on the second floor; he had his bed brought down into the sitting-room, and lay there generally, in the midst of the family, who at last sent for the Guérande doctor.

The medical man tried to check the fever by quinine, and for a few days it yielded to the treatment. The doctor also ordered Calyste to take exercise, and to amuse himself. The Baron rallied his strength, and shook off his torpor; he grew young as his son grew old. He took out Calyste, Gasselin, and the two fine sporting dogs. Calyste obeyed his father, and for a few days the three men went out together; they went through the forest and visited their friends in neighboring châteaux; but Calyste had no spirit, no one could beguile him of a smile, his pale rigid face revealed a perfectly passive creature.

The Baron, broken by fatigue, fell into a state of collapse, and was forced to come home, bringing Calyste with him in the same condition. Within a few days both father and son were so ill that, at the request of the Guérande doctor himself, the two first physicians of Nantes were called in. The Baron had been quite knocked over by the visible alteration in Calyste. With the terrible prescience that nature bestows on the dying, he trembled like a child at the thought that his family would be extinct; he said nothing, he only clasped his hands, praying as he sat in his chair, to

which he was tied by weakness. He sat facing the bed occupied by Calyste, and watched him constantly. At his child's slightest movement he was greatly agitated, as if the flame of his life were fluttered by it.

The Baroness never left the room, and old Zéphirine sat knitting by the fire in a state of agonizing anxiety. She was constantly being asked for wood, for the father and son both felt the cold, and her stores were invaded. She had made up her mind to give up her keys, for she was no longer brisk enough to go with Mariotte; but she insisted on knowing everything; every minute she questioned Mariotte or her sister-in-law, and would take them aside to hear about the state of her brother and nephew.

One evening, when Calyste and his father were dozing, old Mlle. de Pen-Hoël remarked that they would no doubt have to resign themselves to losing the Baron, whose face was quite white, and had assumed a waxen look. Mlle. du Guénic dropped her knitting, fumbled in her pocket, and pulled out an old rosary of black wooden beads, which she proceeded to tell with a fervency that gave such a glory of energy to her ancient parched features, that the other old maid followed her example; and then, at a sign from the Curé, they all united in the silent exaltation of the old blind lady.

"I was the first to pray to God," said the Baroness, remembering the fateful letter written by Calyste, "but He did not hear me!"

"Perhaps," said the Abbé Grimont, "we should be wise to beg Mlle. des Touches to come to see Calyste."

"She!" cried old Zéphirine, "the author of all our woes, she who lured him away from his family, who tore him from us, who made him read impious books, who taught him the language of heresy! Curse her, and may God never forgive her! She has crushed the du Guénics!"

"She may perhaps raise them up again," said the Curé in a mild voice. "She is a saintly and virtuous woman: I am her warranty. She has none but good intentions as regards Calyste. May she be able to realize them!"

"Give me notice the day she is to set foot here, and I will go out," cried the old lady. "She has killed both father

and son. Do you suppose I cannot hear how weak Calyste's voice is?—he hardly has strength to speak."

Just then the three physicians came in. They wearied Calyste with questions. As to his father, their examination was brief; they knew all in a moment; the only wonder was that he still lived. The Guérande doctor quietly explained to the Baroness that it would probably be necessary to take Calyste to Paris to consult the most eminent authorities, for it would cost more than a hundred louis to bring them to Guérande.

"A man must die of something, but love is nothing," said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

"Alas, whatever the cause may be, Calyste is dying," said his mother. "I recognize every symptom of consumption, the most horrible malady of my native land."

"Calyste is dying?" said the Baron, opening his eyes, whence trickled two large tears which, caught in the many furrows of his face, slowly fell to the bottom of his cheeks—the only tears, no doubt, that he had ever shed in his life.

He dragged himself on to his feet, shuffled to his son's bed, took his hands, and looked at him.

"What do you want, father?" said the boy.

"I want you to live!" cried the Baron.

"I cannot live without Béatrix," said Calyste to the old man, who sank back into his chair.

"Where can I find a hundred louis to fetch the doctors from Paris?" cried the Baroness. "We have yet time."

"A hundred louis!" exclaimed Zéphirine. "Will they save him?"

Without waiting for her sister-in-law's reply, the old woman put her hands into her pocket-holes and untied an under petticoat, which fell with a heavy sound. She knew so well where she had sewn in her louis, that she ripped them out with a rapidity that seemed magical. The gold pieces rang as they dropped one by one. Old Mlle. de Pen-Hoël looked on with stupefied amazement.

"They can see you!" she whispered in her friend's ear.

"Thirty-seven," said Zéphirine, counting the gold.

"Everyone will know how much you have."

“Forty-two.”

“Double louis, and all new! how did you get them, you who cannot see them?”

“I could feel them.—Here are a hundred and four louis,” cried Zéphirine. “Is that enough?”

“What are you doing?” asked the Chevalier du Halga, coming in, and unable to imagine what was the meaning of the old lady’s holding out her lap full of louis d’or.

Mlle. de Pen-Hoël explained the case in two words.

“I had heard of it,” said he, “and I came to bring you a hundred and forty louis I had kept at Calyste’s service, as he knows.”

The Chevalier took out of his pocket two rolls of coins, which he showed them. Mariotte, seeing all these riches, bid Gasselin lock the door.

“Gold will not restore him to health,” said the Baroness, in tears.

“But it may enable him to run after his Marquise,” said du Halga. “Come, Calyste!”

Calyste sat up in bed, and exclaimed gleefully—

“Let us be off!”

“Then he will live,” said the Baron, in a stricken voice, “and I may die.—Go and fetch the Curé.”

These words struck them all with terror. Calyste, seeing his father turn ghastly pale from the painful agitation of this scene, could not restrain his tears. The Curé, who knew the decision the doctors had come to, had gone off to fetch Mlle. des Touches; for at this moment he displayed as much admiration for her as he had not long since felt repugnance, and could defend her as a pastor defends one of the favorites of his flock.

On hearing of the Baron’s extremity, a crowd gathered in the little street; the peasants, the marshmen, and the town-folk all kneeling in the courtyard, while the priest administered the last sacrament to the old Breton warrior. Everybody was deeply touched to think of the father dying by the bed of his sick son. The extinction of the old family was regarded as a public calamity.

The ceremony struck Calyste; for a while his grief silenced

his passion. All through the death struggles of this heroic defender of the Monarchy he remained on his knees, watching the approach of death, and weeping.

The old man died in his chair, in the presence of the assembled family.

“I die faithful to the King and religion. Great God, as the reward of my efforts, let Calyste live!” he said.

“I will live, father, and obey you,” replied the young man.

“If you would make my death as easy as Fanny has made my life, swear that you will marry.”

“I promise it, father.”

It was touching to see Calyste, or rather his ghost, leaning on the old Chevalier, a specter leading a shade, following the Baron's bier as chief mourner. The church and the little square before the porch were full of people, who had come from ten leagues round.

The Baroness and Zéphirine were deeply grieved when they saw that, in spite of his efforts to obey his father, Calyste was still sunk in an ominous stupor. On the first day of their mourning the Baroness led her son to the seat at the bottom of the garden, and questioned him. Calyste replied with gentle submissiveness, but his answers were heart-breaking.

“Mother,” said he, “there is no life left in me; what I eat does not nourish me, the air I breathe into my lungs does not renew my blood; the sun seems cold to me, and when it shines for you on the front of the house as at this moment, where you see carvings bathed in light I see dim forms wrapped in mist. If Béatrix were here, all would be bright once more. There is but one thing in the world that has her color and form—this flower and these leaves,” and he drew out of his bosom the withered blossoms that the Marquise had given him.

The Baroness dared ask him no more; the madness betrayed by his replies seemed worse than the sorrow of his silence.

But Calyste was thrilled as he caught sight of Mlle. des Touches through the windows at opposite ends of the room. Félicité reminded him of Béatrix. Thus it was to her that



the two women owed the one gleam of joy that lightened their griefs.

"Well, Calyste," said Mlle. des Touches, when she saw him, "the carriage is ready; we will go together and find Béatrix. Come."

The pale, thin face of the boy, all in black, was brightened by a flush, and a smile dawned on his features.

"We will save him!" said Mlle. des Touches to the mother, who wrung her hand, shedding tears of joy.

A week after the Baron's death, Mlle. des Touches, the Baronne du Guénic, and Calyste set out for Paris, leaving the business matters in the hands of old mademoiselle.

Félicité's affection for Calyste had planned a brilliant future for the poor boy. She was connected with the Grandlieus, and the ducal branch was ending in a family of five daughters. She had written to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, telling her the whole story of Calyste, and announcing her intention of selling her house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, for which a company of speculators had offered two million five hundred thousand francs. Her business manager had already bought for her one of the finest houses in the Rue de Bourbon, at a cost of seven hundred thousand francs. Out of the surplus money from the sale of the house in the Rue Mont-Blanc she meant to devote one million to repurchasing the estates of the du Guénics, and would leave the rest of her fortune among the five de Grandlieu girls.

Félicité knew the plans made by the Duke and Duchess, who intended that their youngest daughter should marry the Vicomte de Grandlieu, the heir to their titles; Clotilde-Frédérique, the second, meant, she knew, to remain unmarried, without taking the veil, however, as her eldest sister had done; so the only one to be disposed of was Sabine, a pretty creature just twenty years of age, on whom she counted to cure Calyste of his passion for Mme. de Rochefide.

During their journey Félicité told Mme. du Guénic of all these plans. The house in the Rue de Bourbon was now being furnished, and in it Calyste was to live if these schemes should succeed.

They all three went straight to the Hôtel Grandlieu, where the Baroness was received with all the respect due to her name as a girl and as a wife. Mlle. des Touches, of course, advised Calyste to see all he could of Paris while she made inquiries as to where Béatrix might be, and she left him to the fascinations of every kind which awaited him there. The Duchess, her daughters, and their friends did the honors of the capital for Calyste just at the season when it was beginning to be gayest.

The bustle of Paris entirely diverted the young Breton's mind. He fancied there was some likeness in the minds of Mme. de Rochefide and Sabine de Grandlieu, who at that time was certainly one of the loveliest and most charming girls in Paris society, and he thenceforward paid an amount of attention to her advances which no other woman would have won from him. Sabine de Grandlieu played her part all the more successfully because she liked Calyste.

Matters were so skillfully managed that in the course of the winter of 1837 the young Baron, who had recovered his color and youthful beauty, could listen without disgust when his mother reminded him of his promise to his dying father, and spoke of his marrying Sabine de Grandlieu. Still, while keeping his promise, he concealed an indifference which the Baroness could discern, while she hoped it might be dispelled by the satisfactions of a happy home.

On the day when the Grandlieu family and the Baroness, supported on this occasion by her relations from England, held a sitting in the large drawing-room of the Duke's house, while Leopold Hannequin, the family notary, explained the conditions of the marriage contract before reading it through, Calyste, whose brow was clouded, as all could see, refused point-blank to accept the benefactions offered to him by Mlle. des Touches. He still trusted to Félicité's devotion, and believed that she was seeking Béatrix.

At this moment, in the midst of the dismay of both families, Sabine came in, dressed so as to remind Calyste of the Marquise de Rochefide, though her complexion was dark, and she placed in Calyste's hand the following letter:—

*Camille to Calyste.*

“ Calyste, before retiring into my cell as a novice, I may be allowed to glance back at the world I am quitting to enter the world of prayer. This glance is solely for you, who in these later days have been all the world to me. My voice will reach you, if I have calculated exactly, in the middle of a ceremony which I could not possibly witness. On the day when you stand before the altar, to give your hand to a young and lovely girl who is free to love before Heaven and the world, I shall be in a religious house at Nantes—before the altar too, but pledged forever to Him who can never deceive nor disappoint.

“ I write, not to sadden you, but to beseech you not to allow any false delicacy to hinder the good I have always wished to do you since our first meeting. Do not deny the right I have so hardily earned. If love is suffering, then I have loved you well, Calyste; but you need feel no remorse. The only pleasures I have known in my life I owe to you, and the pain has come from myself. Compensate me for all this past suffering by giving me one eternal joy. Let me, dear, be in some sort a perfume in the flowers of your life, and mingle with it always without being importunate. I shall certainly owe to you my happiness in life eternal; will you not let me pay my debt by the offering of some transient and perishable possessions? You will not fail in generosity? You will not regard this as the last subterfuge of scorned love?

“ Calyste, the world was nothing to me without you; you made it a fearful desert, and you have led the infidel Camille Maupin, the writer of books and dramas, which I shall solemnly disown—you have led that audacious and perverted woman, tied hand and foot, to the throne of God. I am now, what I ought always to have been, an innocent child. Yes, I have washed my robes in the tears of repentance, and I may go to the altar presented by an angel—by my dearly-loved Calyste! How sweet it is to call you so—now that my resolution has sanctified the word. I love you without self-interest, as a mother loves her son, as the Church loves her

children. I can pray for you and yours without the infusion of a single desire but that for your happiness.

“If you knew the supreme peace in which I live after having lifted myself by thought above the petty interests of the world, and how exquisite is the feeling of having done one’s duty, in accordance with your noble motto, you would enter on your happy life with a firm step, nor glance behind nor around you. So I am writing to beseech you to be true to yourself and to your family.

“My dear, the society in which you must live cannot exist without the religion of duty; and you will misunderstand life, as I have misunderstood it, if you give yourself up to passion and to fancy as I have done. Woman can only be equal with man by making her life a perpetual sacrifice, as man’s must be perpetual action. Now my life has been, as it were, one long outbreak of egoism. God perhaps brought you in its evening to my door, as a messenger charged with my punishment and pardon. Remember this confession from a woman to whom fame was a pharos whose light showed her the right way. Be great! sacrifice your fancy to your duties as the head of a house, as husband and father. Raise the downtrodden banner of the old du Guénics; show the present age, when principles and religion are denied, what a gentleman may be in all his glory and distinction.

“Dear child of my soul, let me play the mother a little: the angelic Fanny will not be jealous of a woman dead to the world, of whom you will henceforth know nothing but that her hands are always raised to heaven. In these days the nobility need fortune more than ever, so accept a part of mine, dear Calyste, and make a good use of it. It is not a gift; it is trust-money. I am thinking more of your children and your old Breton estate than of yourself when I offer you the interest which time has accumulated for me on my Paris property.”

“I am ready to sign,” said the young Baron, to the great delight of the assembly.



### PART III

#### RETROSPECTIVE ADULTERY

**T**HE week after this, when the marriage service had been celebrated at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, at seven in the morning—as was the custom in some families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—Calyste and Sabine got into a neat traveling-carriage in the midst of the embracing, congratulations, and tears of a score of persons gathered in groups under the awning of the Hôtel de Grandlieu. The congratulations were offered by the witnesses and the men; the tears were to be seen in the eyes of the Duchesse de Grandlieu and her daughter Clotilde—both tremulous, and from the same reflection.

“Poor Sabine! she is starting in life at the mercy of a man who is married not altogether willingly.”

Marriage does not consist solely of pleasures, which are as fugitive under those conditions as under any others; it involves a consonance of tempers and physical sympathies, a concord of character, which make this social necessity an ever new problem. Girls to be married know the conditions and dangers of this lottery fully as well as their mothers do; this is why women shed tears as they look on at a marriage, while men smile; the men think they risk nothing; the women know pretty well how much they risk.

In another carriage, which had started first, was the Baronne du Guénic, to whom the Duchess had said at parting—

“You are a mother though you have only a son. Try to fill my place to my darling Sabine.”

On the box of that carriage sat a groom serving as a courier, and behind it two ladies'-maids. The four postilions, in splendid liveries—each carriage having four horses—all had nosegays in their button-holes and favors in their hats. The Duc de Grandlieu, even by paying them, had

the greatest difficulty in persuading them to remove the ribbons. The French postilion is eminently intelligent, but he loves his joke; and these took the money, and replaced the favors outside the city walls.

“Well, well, good-by, Sabine!” said the Duchess. “Remember your promise, and write often.—Calyste, I say no more, but you understand me.”

Clotilde, leaning on the arm of her youngest sister Athénaïs, who was smiling at the Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu, gave the bride a keen glance through her tears, and watched the carriage till it disappeared amid the repeated salvo of four postilions' whips, noisier than pistol shots. In a very short time the gay procession reached the Esplanade of the Invalides, followed the Quay to the Pont d'Iéna, the Passy Gate, the Versailles avenue, and, finally, the highroad to Brittany.

Is it not strange, to say the least, that the artisan class of Switzerland and Germany, and the greatest families of France and England, obey the same custom, and start on a journey after the nuptial ceremony? The rich pack themselves into a box on wheels. The poor walk gayly along the roads, resting in the woods, feeding at every inn, so long as their glee, or rather their money, holds out. A moralist would find it difficult to decide which is the finest flower of modesty—that which hides from the public eye, inaugurating the domestic hearth and bed as the worthy citizen does, or that which flies from the family and displays itself in the fierce light of the highroad to the eyes of strangers? Refined natures must crave for solitude, and avoid the world and the family alike. The rush of love that begins a marriage is a diamond, a pearl, a gem cut by the highest of all arts, a treasure to be buried deep in the heart.

Who could tell the tale of a honeymoon excepting the bride? And how many women would here admit that this period of uncertain duration—sometimes of only a single night—is the preface to married life? Sabine's first three letters to her mother betrayed a state of things which, unfortunately, will not seem new to some young wives, nor to

many old women. All who have become sick-nurses, so to speak, to a man's heart have not found it out so quickly as Sabine did. But the girls of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, when they are keen-witted, are women already in mind. Before marriage, they have received the baptism of fine manners from the world and from their mothers. Duchesses, anxious to perpetuate the tradition, are often unaware of all the bearings of their lessons when they say to their daughters—"No one ever does that."—"Do not laugh at such things."—"You must never fling yourself on a sofa, you must sit down quietly."—"Never do such a thing again."—"It is most incorrect, my dear!" and so forth.

And critical middle-class folks refuse to recognize any innocence or virtue in young creatures who, like Sabine, are virgin souls, but perfected by cleverness, by the habits of good style, and good taste, knowing from the age of sixteen how to use an opera-glass. Sabine, to lend herself to Mlle. des Touches's schemes for her marriage, could not but be of the school of Mlle. de Chaulieu. This innate mother-wit, these gifts of birth, may perhaps make this young wife as interesting as the heroine of the *Mémoires de deux jeunes Mariées*, in which we see the vanity of such social advantages in the great crises of married life, where they are often crushed under the double weight of unhappiness and passion.

## I.

*To Mme. la Duchesse de Grandlieu.*

“GUÉRANDE, *April 1838.*”

“DEAR MOTHER,—You can easily understand why I did not write to you on the journey; one's mind turns like the wheels. So here I have been these two days in the depths of Brittany, at the Hôtel du Guénic, a house carved all over like a cocoanut box. Notwithstanding the affectionate attentions of Calyste's family, I feel an eager longing to fly away to you, and tell you a thousand things which I feel can only be told to a mother.



“ Dear mamma, Calyste married me cherishing a great sorrow in his soul; we all of us knew it, and you did not disguise the difficulties of my position; but, alas! they are greater than you imagined. Oh, dear mamma, how much experience we may acquire in a few days—why should I not say to you in a few hours? All your counsels proved useless, and you will understand why by this simple fact: I love Calyste as if he were not my husband. That is to say, if I were married to another man and were traveling with Calyste, I should love him and hate my husband. Consider him, then, as a man loved entirely, involuntarily, absolutely, and as many more adverbs as you choose to supply. So, in spite of your warnings, my slavery is an established fact.

“ You advised me to keep myself lofty, haughty, dignified, and proud, in order to bring Calyste to a state of feeling which should never undergo any change throughout life; in the esteem and respect which must sanctify the wife in the home and family. You spoke warmly, and with reason no doubt, against the young women of the day who, under the excuse of living on good terms with their husbands, begin by being docile, obliging, submissive, with a familiarity, a free-and-easiness which are, in your opinion, rather too *cheap*—a word I own to not understanding yet, but we shall see by and by—and which, if you are right, are only the early and rapid stages towards indifference and perhaps contempt.

“ ‘Remember that you are a Grandlieu,’ you said in my ear.

“ This advice, full of the maternal eloquence of Dædalus, has shared the fate of mythological things. Dear, darling mother, could you believe that I should begin by the catastrophe which, according to you, closes the honeymoon of the young wives of our day?

“ When Calyste and I were alone in the carriage, each thought the other as silly as himself, as we both perceived the importance of the first word, the first look; and each, bewildered by the marriage sacrament, sat looking out of a window. It was so preposterous that, as we got near the city gate, monsieur made me a little speech in a rather

broken voice—a speech prepared, no doubt, like all extempore efforts, to which I listened with a beating heart, and which I take the liberty of epitomizing for your benefit.

“My dear Sabine,” said he, ‘I wish you to be happy, and, above all, to be happy in your own way,’ said he. ‘In our position, instead of deceiving each other as to our characters and sentiments by magnanimous concessions, let us both be now what we should be a few years hence. Regard me as being your brother, as I would wish to find a sister in you.’

“Though this was most delicately meant, I did not find in this first speech of married love anything answering to the eagerness of my soul, and, after replying that I felt quite as he did, I remained pensive. After this declaration of rights to be equally cold, we talked of the weather, the dust, the houses, and the scenery with the most gracious politeness, I laughing a rather forced laugh, he lost in dreams.

“Finally, as we left Versailles, I asked Calyste point-blank—calling him ‘my dear Calyste,’ as he called me ‘my dear Sabine’—if he could tell me the history of the events which had brought him to death’s door, and to which I owed the honor of being his wife. He hesitated for a long time. In fact, it was the subject of a little discussion lasting through three stages; I trying to play the part of a willful girl determined to sulk; he debating with himself on the ominous question asked as a challenge to Charles X. by the public press: ‘Will the King give in?’ At last, when we had left Verneuil, and after swearing often enough to satisfy three dynasties that I would never remind him of his folly, never treat him coldly, and so on, he painted his passion for Mme. de Rochefide: ‘I do not wish,’ he said, in conclusion, ‘that there should be any secrets between us.’

“Poor dear Calyste did not know, I suppose, that his friend Mlle. des Touches and you had been obliged to tell me all; for a girl cannot be dressed as I was on the day of the contract without being taught her part.

“I cannot but tell everything to so good a mother as you are. Well, then, I was deeply hurt at seeing that he had yielded far less to my request than to his own wish to talk

about the unknown object of his passion. Will you blame me, dearest mother, for having wanted to know the extent of this sorrow, of the aching wound in his heart of which you had told me?

“ Thus, within eight hours of having been blessed by the Curé of Saint-Thomas d’Aquin, your Sabine found herself in the rather false position of a young wife hearing from her husband’s own lips his confidences as to a cheated passion and the misdeeds of a rival. Yes, I was playing a part in the drama of a young wife, officially informed that she owed her marriage to the disdain of an old beauty!

“ By this narrative I gained what I sought. ‘What?’ you will ask. Oh, my dear mother! on clocks and chimney-carvings I have often seen Loves leading each other on, hand in hand, to put the lesson into practice! Calyste ended the romance of his memories with the most vehement protestations that he had entirely got over what he called his madness. Every protest needs a signature. The happy hapless one took my hand, pressed it to his lips, and then held it for a long time. A declaration followed. This one seemed to me more suitable than the first to our position as man and wife, though our lips did not utter a single word. This happiness I owed to my spirited indignation against the bad taste of a woman so stupid as not to love my handsome and delightful Calyste.

“ I am called away to play a game of cards, which I have not yet mastered. I will continue my letter to-morrow. That I should have to leave you just now to make the fifth at a game of *mouche*! Such a thing is impossible anywhere but in the depths of Brittany.

“ *May.*

“ I resume the tale of my Odyssey. By the third day your children had dropped the ceremonial *vous* and adopted the loverlike *tu*. My mother-in-law, delighted to see us happy, tried to fill your place, dearest mother; and, as is always the case with those who take a part with the idea of effacing past impressions, she is so delightful that she has been almost as much to me as you could be. She, no doubt,

guessed how heroic my conduct was; at the beginning of our journey she hid her anxiety too carefully not to betray it by her excessive precaution.

“When I caught sight of the towers of Guérande I said in your son-in-law’s ear, ‘Have you quite forgotten her?’

“And my husband, now my angel, had perhaps never known the depth of an artless and genuine affection, for that little speech made him almost crazy with joy.

“Unluckily, my desire to make him forget Mme. de Rochefide led me too far. How could I help it! I love him, and I am almost Portuguese, for I am like you rather than my father. Calyste accepted everything, as spoilt children do; he is above everything an only son. Between you and me, I will never let my daughter—if I ever should have a daughter—marry an only son. It is quite enough to have to manage one tyrant, and in an only son there are several. And so we exchanged parts; I played the devoted wife. There are dangers in self-devotion to gain an end; it is loss of dignity. So I have to announce the wreck in me of that semi-virtue; dignity is really no more than a screen set up by pride, behind which we may fume at our ease. How could I help myself, mamma; you were not here, and I looked into a gulf. If I had maintained my dignity, I should have known the chill pangs of a sort of brotherliness, which would certainly have become simple indifference. And what future would have lain before me?

“As a result of my devotion, I am Calyste’s slave. Shall I get out of that position? We shall see; for the present I like it. I love Calyste—I love him entirely with the frenzy of a mother who thinks everything right that her son can do, even when he punishes her a little.

“*May 15.*

“So far, dear mother, marriage has come to me in a most attractive form. I lavish all my tenderest affection on the handsomest of men, who was thrown over by a fool for the sake of a wretched singer—for the woman is evidently a fool, and a fool in cold blood, the worst sort of fool. I am charitable in my lawful passion, and heal his scars while inflicting

eternal wounds on myself. Yes, for the more I love Calyste, the more I feel that I should die of grief if anything put an end to our present happiness. And I am worshiped, too, by all the family, and by the little company that meets at the Hôtel du Guénic, all of them born figures in some ancient tapestry, and having stepped out of it to show that the impossible can exist. One day when I am alone I will describe them to you—Aunt Zéphirine, Mlle. de Pen-Hoël, the Chevalier du Halga, the Demoiselles de Kergarouët, and the rest, down to the two servants, whom I shall be allowed, I hope, to take to Paris—Mariotte and Gasselin, who regard me as an angel alighted on earth from heaven, and who are still startled when I speak to them—they are all figures to put under glass shades.

“My mother-in-law solemnly installed us in the rooms she and her deceased husband had formerly inhabited. The scene was a touching one. ‘I lived all my married life here,’ said she, ‘quite happy. May that be a happy omen for you, my dear children!’

“And she has taken Calyste’s room. The saintly woman seemed to wish to divest herself of her memories and her admirable life as a wife to endow us with them.

“The Province of Brittany, this town, this family with its antique manners—the whole thing, in spite of the absurdities, which are invisible to any but a mocking Parisian woman, has something indescribably grandiose, even in its details, to be expressed only by the word sacred. The tenants of the vast estates of the du Guénics, repurchased, as you know, by Mlle. des Touches—whom we are to visit in the convent—all came out to receive us. These good folks in their holiday dresses, expressing the greatest joy at greeting Calyste as really their master once more, made me understand what Brittany is, and feudality, and old France. It was a festival I will not write about; I will tell you when we meet. The terms of all the leases have been proposed by the tenants themselves, and we are to sign after the tour of inspection we are to make round *our* lands that have been pledged this century and a half. Mlle. de Pen-Hoël tells us that these yeomen have assessed the returns with an accuracy that Paris

folks would not believe in. We are to start three days hence, and ride everywhere.

“On my return I will write again, dear mother; but what can I have to say to you, since my happiness is already complete? So I must write what you know already, namely, how much I love you.”

## II.

*From the same to the same.*

NANTES, *June.*

“After playing the part of the Lady of the Castle, worshipped by her vassals as though the revolutions of 1830 and 1789 had never torn down our banners; after riding through woods, halting at farms, dining at old tables spread with cloths a century old, and groaning under Homeric dishes served in antediluvian plate; after drinking delicious wine out of goblets like those we see in the hands of conjurors; after salvos fired at dessert, and deafening shouts of ‘Vive les du Guénics!’ and balls, where the orchestra is a bagpipe, which a man blows at for ten hours on end! and such bouquets! and brides who insist on having our blessing! and healthy fatigue, cured by such sleep as I had never known, and a delicious waking to love as radiant as the sun that shines above us, twinkling on a myriad insects that hum in genuine Breton! Finally, after a grotesque visit to the Castle of du Guénic, where the windows are open gates, and the cows might pasture on the grass grown in the halls; but we have vowed to restore it, and furnish it, so as to come here every year and be hailed by the vassals of the clan, one of whom carried our banner.—Ouf! here I am at Nantes.

“What a day we had when we went to Le Guénic! The priest and all the clergy came out to meet us, all crowned with flowers, mother, and blessed us with such joy! The tears come into my eyes as I write about it. And my lordly Calyste played his part as a liege like a figure of Walter Scott’s. Monsieur received homage as if we had stepped back into the thirteenth century. I heard girls and women

saying, 'What a handsome master we have!' just like the chorus of a comic opera.

"The old folks discussed Calyste's likeness to the du Guénics whom they had known. Oh! Brittany is a noble and sublime country, a land of faith and religion. But progress has an eye on it; bridges and roads are to be made, ideas will invade it, and farewell to the sublime. The peasants will certainly cease to be as free and proud as I saw them when it has been proved to them that they are Calyste's equals, if, indeed, they can be brought to believe it.

"So after the poetry of this pacific restoration, when we had signed the leases we left that delightful country, flowery and smiling, gloomy and barren by turns, and we came here to kneel before her to whom we owe our good fortune, and give her thanks. Calyste and I both felt the need to thank the novice of the Visitation. In memory of her he will bear on his shield quarterly the arms of des Touches: *party per pale engrailed or and vert*. He will assume one of the silver eagles as a supporter, and place in its beak the pretty womanly motto, '*Souviègne-vous*.'—So we went yesterday to the Convent of the Ladies of the Visitation, conducted by the Abbé Grimont, a friend of the Guénic family; he told us that your beloved Félicité, dear mamma, is a saint; indeed, she can be no less to him, since this illustrious conversion has led to his being made vicar-general of the diocese. Mlle. des Touches would not see Calyste; she received me alone; I found her a little altered, paler and thinner; she seemed extremely pleased by my visit.

"'Tell Calyste,' said she in a low voice, 'that my not seeing him is a matter of conscience and self-discipline, for I have permission; but I would rather not purchase the happiness of a few minutes with months of suffering! Oh, if you could only know how difficult I find it to answer when I am asked, "What are you thinking about?"' The mistress of the novices can never understand the vastness and multiplicity of the ideas which rush through my brain like a whirlwind. Sometimes I see Italy once more, or Paris, with all their display, always with Calyste, who,' she said with a poetic turn you know so well, 'is the sun of my memory.

I was too old to be admitted to the Carmelites, so I chose the Order of Saint Francis de Sales, solely because he said, "I will have you bareheaded instead of barefoot!" disapproving of such austerities as only mortify the body. In fact, the head is the sinner. The holy Bishop did well to make his rule stern to the brain and merciless to the will!—This was what I needed, for my mind is the real culprit; it deceived me as to my heart till the age of forty, when, though we are sometimes for a moment forty times happier than younger women, we are sometimes fifty times more wretched.—Well, my child, and are you happy?' she ended by asking me, evidently glad to say no more about herself.

"'You see me in a rapture of love and happiness,' I told her.

"'Calyste is as kind and genuine as he is noble and handsome,' she said gravely. 'You are my heiress; you have, besides my fortune, the twofold ideal of which I dreamed.—I am glad of what I have done,' she added after a pause. 'Now, my child, do not be blinded. You have easily grasped happiness, you had only to put out your hand; now try to keep it. If you had come here merely to carry away the advice of my experience, your journey would be well rewarded. Calyste at this moment is fired by an infection of passion; you did not inspire it. To make your happiness durable, dear child, strive to add this element to the former one. In your own interest and your husband's, try to be capricious, coy, a little severe if necessary. I do not advise a spirit of odious calculation, nor tyranny, but the science of conduct. Between usury and extravagance there is economy! Learn to acquire a certain decent control of your husband.

"'These are the last worldly words I shall ever speak; I have been waiting to say them to you, for my conscience quaked at the notion of having sacrificed you to save Calyste; attach him to you, give him children, let him respect you as their mother.—Finally,' she added in an agitated voice, 'manage that he shall never see Béatrix again!'

"This name was enough to produce a sort of torpor in us both; we remained looking into each other's eyes, exchanging our vague sentiments of uneasiness.



“ ‘Are you going home to Guérande?’ she asked.

“ ‘Yes,’ said I.

“ ‘Well, never go to Les Touches. I was wrong to give you the place.’

“ ‘Why?’

“ ‘Child, Les Touches is for you a Bluebeard’s cupboard, for there is nothing so dangerous as rousing a sleeping passion.’

“ I have given you the substance of our conversation, my dear mother. If Mlle. des Touches made me talk, on the other hand she gave me much to think about—all the more because in the excitement of our travels, and my happiness with my Calyste, I had forgotten the serious matter of which I spoke in my first letter.

“ After admiring Nantes, a delightful and splendid city; after going to see, in the Place de Bretagne, the spot where Charette so nobly fell, we arranged to return to Saint-Nazaire down the Loire, since we had already gone from Nantes to Guérande by the road. Public traveling is an invention of the modern monster the Monopole. Two rather pretty women belonging to Nantes were behaving rather noisily on deck, suffering evidently from Kergarouëtism—a jest you will understand when I shall have told you what the Kergarouëts are. Calyste behaved very well. Like a true gentleman, he did not parade me as his wife. Though pleased by his good taste, like a child with his first drum, I thought this an admirable opportunity for practicing the system recommended by Camille Maupin—for it was certainly not the novice that had spoken to me. I put on a little sulky face, and Calyste was very flatteringly distressed. In reply to his question, whispered in my ear, ‘What is the matter?’ I answered the truth—

“ ‘Nothing whatever.’”

“ And I could judge at once how little effect the truth has in the first instance. Falsehood is a decisive weapon in cases where rapidity is the only salvation for a woman or an empire. Calyste became very urgent, very anxious. I led him to the forepart of the boat, among a mass of ropes, and there, in a voice full of alarms, if not of tears, I told him

all the woes and fears of a woman whose husband happens to be the handsomest of men.

“ ‘ Oh, Calyste ! ’ said I, ‘ there is one dreadful blot on our marriage. You did not love me ; you did not choose me ! You did not stand fixed like a statue when you saw me for the first time. My heart, my attachment, my tenderness cry out to you for affection, and some day you will punish me for having been the first to offer the treasure of my pure and involuntary girlish love. I ought to be grudging and capricious, but I have no strength for it against you.—If that odious woman who scorned you had been in my place now, you would not even have seen those two hideous provincial creatures who would be classed with cattle by the Paris *octroi*. ’

“ Calyste, my dear mother, had tears in his eyes, and turned away to hide them ; he saw La Basse Indre, and ran to desire the captain to put us on shore. No one can hold out against such a response, especially as it was followed by a stay of three hours in a little country inn, where we breakfasted off fresh fish, in a little room such as *genre* painters love, while through the windows came the roar of the iron-works of Indret across the broad waters of the Loire. Seeing the happy result of the experiments of experience, I exclaimed, ‘ Oh, sweet Félicité ! ’

“ Calyste, who of course knew nothing of the advice I had received, or of the artfulness of my behavior, fell into a delightful punning blunder by replying, ‘ Never let us forget it !—We will send an artist here to sketch the scene. ’

“ I laughed, dear mamma !—well, I laughed till Calyste was quite disconcerted and on the point of being angry.

“ ‘ Yes, ’ said I, ‘ but there is in my heart a picture of this landscape, of this scene, which nothing can ever efface, and inimitable in its color. ’

“ Indeed, mother, I find it impossible to give my love the appearance of warfare or hostility. Calyste can do what he likes with me. That tear is, I believe, the first he ever bestowed on me ; is it not worth more than a second declaration of a wife’s rights ? A heartless woman, after the scene on the boat, would have been mistress of the situation ; I lost

all I had gained. By your system, the more I am a wife, the more I become a sort of prostitute, for I am a coward in happiness; I cannot hold out against a glance from my lord. I do not abandon myself to love; I hug it as a mother clasps her child to her breast for fear of some harm."

### III.

*From the same to the same.*

"*July, GUÉRANDE.*

"Oh! my dear mother, to be jealous after three months of married life! My heart is indeed full. I feel the deepest hatred and the deepest love.—I am worse than deserted, I am not loved!—Happy am I to have a mother, another heart to which I may cry at my ease.

"To us wives who are still to some extent girls, it is quite enough to be told—'Here, among the keys of your palace, is one all rusty with remembrance; go where you will, enjoy everything, but beware of visiting Les Touches'—to make us rush in hot-foot, our eyes full of Eve's curiosity. What a provoking element Mlle. des Touches had infused into my love! And why was I forbidden Les Touches? What! does such happiness as mine hang on an excursion, on a visit to an old house in Brittany? What have I to fear?—In short, add to Mrs. Bluebeard's reasons the craving that gnaws at every woman's heart to know whether her power is precarious or durable, and you will understand why one day I asked, with an air of indifference—

"'What sort of place is Les Touches?'

"'Les Touches is your own,' said my adorable mother-in-law.

"'Ah! If only Calyste had never set his foot there!——' said Aunt Zéphirine, shaking her head.

"'He would not now be my husband,' said I.

"'Then you know what happened there?' said my mother-in-law sharply.

"'It is a place of perdition,' said Mlle. de Pen-Hoël.

‘Mlle. des Touches committed many sins there, for which she now begs forgiveness of God.’

“‘And has it not saved that noble creature’s soul, besides making the fortune of the Convent?’ cried the Chevalier du Halga. ‘The Abbé Grimont tells me she has given a hundred thousand francs to the Ladies of the Visitation.’

“‘Would you like to go to Les Touches?’ said the Baroness. ‘It is worth seeing.’

“‘No, no!’ cried I eagerly.

“Now, does not this little scene strike you as taken from some diabolical drama? And it was repeated under a hundred pretenses. At last my mother-in-law said—

“‘I understand why you should not wish to go to Les Touches. You are quite right.’

“Confess, dear mamma, that such a stab, so unintentionally given, would have made you determine that you must know whether your happiness really rested on so frail a basis that it must perish under one particular roof? I must do this justice to Calyste, he had never proposed to visit this retreat which is now his property. Certainly when we love, we become bereft of our senses, for his silence and reserve nettled me, till I said one day, ‘What are you afraid of seeing at Les Touches that you never mention it even?’

“‘Let us go there,’ said he.

“I was caught, as every woman is who wishes to be caught, and who trusts to chance to cut the Gordian knot of her hesitancy. So we went to Les Touches.

“It is a delightful spot, most artistically tasteful, and I revel in the abyss whither Mlle. des Touches had warned me never to go. All poison-flowers are beautiful. The Devil sows them—for there are flowers of Satan’s and flowers from God! We have only to look into our own hearts to see that they went halves in the work of creation.—What bitter-sweet joys I found in this place where I played, not with fire, but with ashes. I watched Calyste; I wanted to know if every spark was dead, and looked out for every chance draught of air, believe me! I noted his face as we went from room to room, from one piece of furniture to another, exactly like children seeking some hidden object. He seemed thoughtful;

still, at first I fancied I had conquered. I felt brave enough to speak of Mme. de Rochefide, who, since the adventure of her fall at Le Croisic, is called Rocheperfide. Finally, we went to look at the famous box-shrub on which Béatrix was caught when Calyste pushed her into the sea that she might never belong to any man.

“She must be very light to have rested there!” said I, laughing.

“Calyste said nothing. ‘Peace to the dead,’ I added.

“Still he was silent. ‘Have I vexed you?’ I asked.

“No. But do not galvanize that passion,” he replied.

“What a speech!—Calyste, seeing it had saddened me, was doubly kind and tender to me.

“*August.*

“Alas! I was at the bottom of the pit and amusing myself, like the innocents in a melodrama, with plucking the flowers. Suddenly a horrible idea came galloping across my happiness like the horse in the German ballad. I fancied I could discern that Calyste’s love was fed by his reminiscences, that he was wreaking on me the storms I could revive in him, by reminding him of that horrible coquette Béatrix.—That unwholesome, cold, limp, tenacious nature—akin to the mollusk and the coral insect—dares to be called Béatrix!

“So already, dear mother, I am forced to have an eye on a suspicion when my heart is wholly Calyste’s, and is it not a terrible misfortune that the eye should get the better of the heart; that the suspicion, in short, has been justified?—And in this way—

“‘I love this place,’ I said to Calyste one morning, ‘for I owe my happiness to it—so I forgive you for sometimes mistaking me for another woman—’

“My loyal Breton colored, and I threw my arms round his neck; but I came away from Les Touches, and shall never go back there.

“The depth of my hatred, which makes me long for the death of Mme. de Rochefide—oh dear, a natural death, of course, from a cold or some accident—revealed to me the

extent and vehemence of my love for Calyste. This woman has haunted my slumbers; I have seen her in my dreams.—Am I fated to meet her?—Yes, the novice in the Convent was right; Les Touches is a fatal spot. Calyste renewed his impressions there, and they are stronger than the pleasures of our love.

“Find out, my dear mother, whether Mme. de Rochefide is in Paris; for if so, I shall remain on our estates in Brittany. Poor Mlle. des Touches, who is now sorry that she dressed me like Béatrix on the day when our marriage-contract was signed, to carry out her scheme—if she could now know how completely I am a substitute for our odious rival! What would she say? Why, it is prostitution! I am no longer myself! I am put to shame.—I am suffering from a mad desire to flee from Guérande and the sands of Le Croisic.

“*August 25.*

“I am quite resolved to return to the ruins of Le Guénic. Calyste, uneasy at seeing me so uneasy, is taking me thither. Either he does not know much of the world, or he guesses nothing; or, if he knows the reason of my flight, he does not love me. I am so afraid of discovering the hideous certainty if I seek it, that, like the children, I cover my eyes with my hands not to hear the explosion. Oh, mother! I am not loved with such love as I feel in my own heart. Calyste, to be sure, is charming; but what man short of a monster would not be, like Calyste, amiable and gracious, when he is given all the opening blossoms of the soul of a girl of twenty, brought up by you, pure as I am, and loving, and—as many women have told you—very pretty—”

“*LE GUÉNIC, September 18th.*

“Has he forgotten her? This is the one thought which echoes like remorse in my soul. Dear mother, has every wife, like me, some such memory to contend with? Pure girls ought to marry none but innocent youths! And yet, that is an illusory Utopia; and it is better to have a rival in the past than in the future. Pity me, mamma, though at this moment I am happy; happy as a woman is who fears to

lose her happiness and clings to it!—a way of killing it sometimes, says wise Clotilde.

“I perceive that for the last five months I have thought only of myself; that is, of Calyste. Tell my sister Clotilde that the dicta of her melancholy wisdom recur to me sometimes. She is happy in being faithful to the dead; she need fear no rival.

“A kiss to my dear Athénaïs; I see that Juste is madly in love with her. From what you say in your last letter, all he fears is that he may not win her. Cultivate that fear as a precious flower. Athénaïs will be mistress; I, who dreaded lest I should not win Calyste from himself, shall be the handmaid. A thousand loves, dearest mother. Indeed, if my fears should not prove vain, I shall have paid very dear for Camille Maupin’s fortune. Affectionate respects to my father.”

These letters fully explain the secret attitude of this husband and wife. Where Sabine saw a love-match, Calyste saw a *mariage de convenance*. And the joys of the honeymoon had not altogether fulfilled the requirements of the law as to community of goods.

During their stay in Brittany the work of restoring, arranging, and decorating the Hôtel du Guénic in Paris had been carried on by the famous architect Grindot, under the eye of Clotilde and the Duchesse and Duc de Grandlieu. Every step was taken to enable the young couple to return to Paris in December 1838; and Sabine was glad to settle in the Rue de Bourbon, less for the pleasure of being mistress of the house than to discover what her family thought of her married life. Calyste, handsome and indifferent, readily allowed himself to be guided in matters of fashion by Clotilde and his mother-in-law, who were gratified by his docility. He filled the place in the world to which his name, his fortune, and his connection entitled him. His wife’s success, regarded as she was as one of the most charming women of the year, the amusements of the best society, duties to be done, and the dissipations of a Paris season, somewhat recruited the happiness of the young couple by supplying excitement and

interludes. The Duchess and Clotilde believed in Sabine's happiness, ascribing Calyste's cold manners to his English blood, and the young wife got over her gloomy notions; she heard herself envied by so many less happy wives, that she banished her terrors to the limbo of bad dreams. Finally, Sabine's prospect of motherhood was the crowning guarantee for the future of this neutral-tinted union, a good augury which women of experience rely on.

In October 1839 the young Baronne du Guénic had a son, and was so foolish as to nurse him herself, like almost every woman under similar circumstances. How can she help being wholly a mother when her child is the child of a husband so truly idolized? Thus by the end of the following summer Sabine was preparing to wean her first child.

In the course of a two years' residence in Paris, Calyste had entirely shed the innocence which had cast the light of its prestige on his first experience in the world of passion. Calyste, as the comrade of the young Duc de Maufrigneuse—like himself, lately married to an heiress, Berthe de Cinq-Cygne—of the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, of the Duc and Duchesse de Rhétoré, the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and all the company that met in his mother-in-law's drawing-room, learnt to see the differences that divide provincial from Paris life. Wealth has its dark hours, its tracts of idleness, for which Paris, better than any other capital, can provide amusement, diversion, and interest. Hence, under the influence of these young husbands, who would leave the noblest and most beautiful creatures for the delights of the cigar or of whist, for the sublime conversation at a club or the absorbing interests of the turf, many of the domestic virtues were undermined in the young Breton husband. The maternal instinct in a woman who cannot endure to bore her husband is always ready to support young married men in their dissipations. A woman is so proud of seeing the man she leaves perfectly free come back to her side.

One evening, in October this year, to escape the cries of a weaned child, Calyste—on whose brow Sabine could not bear to see a cloud—was advised by her to go to the Théâtre



des Variétés, where a new piece was being acted. The servant sent to secure a stall had taken one quite near to the stage-boxes. Between the first and second acts, Calyste, looking about him, saw in one of these boxes on the ground tier, not four yards away, Mme. de Rochefide.

Béatrix in Paris! Béatrix in public! The two ideas pierced Calyste's brain like two arrows. He could see her again after nearly three years!—Who can describe the commotion in the soul of this lover who, far from forgetting, had sometimes so completely identified Béatrix with his wife that Sabine had been conscious of it? Who can understand how this poem of a lost and misprized love, ever living in the heart of Sabine's husband, overshadowed the young wife's dutiful charms and ineffable tenderness? Béatrix became light, the day-star, excitement, life, the unknown; while Sabine was duty, darkness, the familiar! In that instant one was pleasure, the other satiety. It was a thunderbolt.

Sabine's husband in a loyal impulse felt a noble prompting to leave the house. As he went out from the stalls, the door of the box was open, and in spite of himself his feet carried him in. He found Béatrix between two very distinguished men, Canalis and Nathan—a politician and a literary celebrity. During nearly three years, since Calyste had last seen Mme. de Rochefide, she had altered very much; but though the metamorphosis had changed the woman's nature, she seemed all the more poetical and attractive in Calyste's eyes. Up to the age of thirty, clothing is all a pretty Parisian demands of dress; but when she has crossed the threshold of the thirties, she looks to finery for armor, fascinations, and embellishment; she composes it to lend her graces; she finds a purpose in it, assumes a character, makes herself young again, studies the smallest accessories,—in short, abandons nature for art.

Mme. de Rochefide had just gone through the changing scenes of the drama which, in this history of the manners of the French in the nineteenth century, is called "The Deserted Woman." Conti having thrown her over, she had naturally become a great artist in dress, in flirtation, and in artificial bloom of every description.

"How is it that Conti is not here?" asked Calyste of Canalis in a whisper, after the commonplace greetings which begin the most momentous meeting when it takes place in public.

The erewhile poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, twice minister, and now for the fourth time a speaker hoping for fresh promotion, laid his finger with meaning on his lips. This explained all.

"I am so glad to see you," said Béatrix, in a kittenish way. "I said to myself as soon as I saw you, before you saw me, that you, at any rate, would not disown me! Oh, my Calyste," she murmured in his ear, "why are you married?—and to such a little fool, too!"

As soon as a woman whispers to a newcomer in her box, and makes him sit down by her, men of breeding always find some excuse for leaving them together.

"Are you coming, Nathan?" said Canalis; "Mme. la Marquise will excuse me if I go to speak a word to d'Arthez, whom I see with the Princesse de Cadignan. I must talk about a combination of speakers for to-morrow's sitting."

This retreat, effected with good taste, gave Calyste a chance of recovering from the shock he had sustained; but he lost all his remaining strength and presence of mind as he inhaled the, to him, intoxicating and poisonous fragrance of the poem called Béatrix.

Mme. de Rochefide, who had grown bony and stringy, whose complexion was almost ruined, thin, faded, with dark circles round her eyes, had that evening wreathed the untimely ruin with the most ingenious devices of Parisian frippery. Like all deserted women, she had tried to give herself a virgin grace, and by the effect of various white draperies to recall the maidens of Ossian, with names ending in *a*, so poetically represented by Girodet. Her fair hair fell about her long face in bunches of curls, reflecting the flare of the footlights in the sheen of scented oil. Her pale forehead shone; she had applied an imperceptible touch of rouge over the dull whiteness of her skin, bathed in bran-water, and its brilliancy cheated the eye. A scarf, so fine that it was hard to believe that man could have woven it

of silk, was wound about her neck so as to diminish its length by hiding it, and barely revealing the treasures enticingly displayed by her stays. The bodice was a masterpiece of art. As to her attitude, it is enough to say that it was well worth the pains she had taken to elaborate it. Her arms, lean and hard, were scarcely visible through the carefully arranged puffs of her wide sleeves. She presented that mixture of false glitter and sheeny silk, of flowing gauze and frizzled hair, of liveliness, coolness, and movement which has been called *je ne sais quoi*. Everyone knows what is meant by this *je ne sais quoi*. It is a compound of cleverness, taste, and temperament. Béatrix was, in fact, a drama, a *spectacle*, all scenery, and transformations, and marvelous machinery.

The performance of these fairy pieces, which are no less brilliant in dialogue, turns the head of a man blessed with honesty; for, by the law of contrast, he feels a frenzied desire to play with the artificial thing. It is false and seductive, elaborate, but pleasing, and there are men who adore these women who play at being charming as one plays a game of cards. This is the reason—man's desire is a syllogism, and argues from this external skill to the secret theorems of voluptuous enjoyment. The mind concludes, though not in words, "A woman who can make herself so attractive must have other resources of passion." And it is true. The women who are deserted are the women who love; the women who keep their lovers are those who know how to love. Now, though this lesson in Italian had been a hard one for Béatrix's vanity, her nature was too thoroughly artificial not to profit by it.

"It is not a matter of loving you men," she had been saying some minutes before Calyste went in; "we have to worry you when we have got you; that is the secret of keeping you. Dragons who guard treasures are armed with talons and wings!"

"Your idea might be put into a sonnet," Canalis was saying just as Calyste entered the box.

At one glance Béatrix read Calyste's condition; she saw, still fresh and raw, the marks of the collar she had put on

him at Les Touches. Calyste, offended by her phrase about his wife, hesitated between his dignity as a husband, defending Sabine, and finding a sharp word to cast on the heart whence, for him, rose such fragrant reminiscences—a heart he believed to be yet bleeding. The Marquise discerned this hesitancy; she had spoken thus solely to gauge the extent of her power over Calyste, and, seeing him so weak, she came to his assistance to get him out of his difficulty.

“Well, my friend,” said she, when the two courtiers had left, “you see me alone—yes, alone in the world!”

“And you never thought of me?” said Calyste.

“You!” she replied; “are not you married?—It has been one of my great griefs among the many I have endured since we last met. ‘Not merely have I lost love,’ I said to myself, ‘but friendship too, a friendship I believed to be wholly Breton.’ We get used to anything. I now suffer less, but I am broken. This is the first time for a long while that I have unburdened my heart. Compelled to be reserved in the presence of indifferent persons, and as arrogant to those who court me as though I had never fallen, and having lost my dear Félicité, I have no ear into which to breathe the words, ‘I am wretched!’ And even now, can I tell you what my anguish was when I saw you a few yards away from me, not recognizing me; or what my joy is at seeing you close to me.—Yes,” said she, at a movement on Calyste’s part, “it is almost fidelity! In this you see what misfortune means! A nothing, a visit, is everything.

“Yes, you really loved me, as I deserved to be loved by the man who has chosen to trample on all the treasures I cast at his feet. And, alas! to my woe, I cannot forget; I love, and I mean to be true to the past, which can never return.”

As she poured out this speech, a hundred times rehearsed, she used her eyes in such a way as to double the effect of words which seemed to surge up from her soul with the violence of a long restrained torrent. Calyste, instead of speaking, let fall the tears that had been gathering in his

eyes. Béatrix took his hand and pressed it, making him turn pale.

“Thank you, Calyste; thank you, my poor boy; that is the way a true friend should respond to a friend’s sorrow. We understand each other. There, do not add another word!—Go now; if we were seen, you might cause your wife grief if by chance anyone told her that we had met—though innocently enough, in the face of a thousand people.—Good-by, I am brave, you see——” And she wiped her eyes by what should be called in feminine rhetoric the antithesis of action.

“Leave me to laugh the laugh of the damned with the people I do not care for, but who amuse me,” she went on. “I see artists and writers, the circle I knew at our poor Camille’s—she was right, no doubt! Enrich the man you love, and then disappear, saying, ‘I am too old for him!’ It is to die a martyr. And that is best when one cannot die a virgin.”

She laughed, as if to efface the melancholy impression she might have made on her adorer.

“But where can I call on you?” asked Calyste.

“I have hidden myself in the Rue de Courcelles, close to the Parc Monceaux, in a tiny house suited to my fortune, and I cram my brain with literature—but for my own satisfaction only, to amuse myself. Heaven preserve me from the mania of writing!—Go, leave me; I do not want to be talked about, and what will not people say if they see us together? And besides, Calyste, I tell you, if you stay a minute longer I shall cry, for I can’t help it.”

Calyste withdrew, after giving his hand to Béatrix, and feeling a second time the deep strange sensation of a pressure on both sides full of suggestive incitement.

“My God! Sabine never stirred my heart like this,” was the thought that assailed him in the corridor.

Throughout the rest of the evening the Marquise de Rochefide did not look three times straight at Calyste; but she sent him side glances which rent the soul of the man who had given himself up wholly to his first and rejected love.

When the Baron du Guénic was at home again, the mag-

nificance of his rooms reminded him of the sort of mediocrity to which Béatrix had alluded, and he felt a hatred for the fortune that did not belong to that fallen angel. On hearing that Sabine had been in bed some time, he was happy in having a night to himself to live in his emotions.

He now cursed the perspicacity given to Sabine by her affection. When it happens that a man is adored by his wife, she can read his face like a book, she knows the slightest quiver of his muscles, she divines the reason when he is calm, she questions herself when he is in the least sad, wondering if she is in fault, she watches his eyes; to her those eyes are colored by his ruling thought—they love or they love not. Calyste knew himself to be the object of a worship so complete, so artless, so jealous, that he doubted whether he could assume a countenance that would preserve the secret of the change that had come over him.

“What shall I do to-morrow morning?” said he to himself as he fell asleep, fearing Sabine’s scrutiny.

For when they first met, or even in the course of the day, Sabine would ask him, “Do you love me as much as ever?” or, “I don’t bore you?” Gracious questionings, varying according to the wife’s wit or mood, and covering real or imaginary terrors.

A storm will stir up mud and bring it to the top of the noblest and purest hearts. And so, next morning, Calyste, who was genuinely fond of his child, felt a thrill of joy at hearing that Sabine was anxious as to the cause of some symptoms, and, fearing croup, could not leave the infant Calyste. The Baron excused himself on the score of business from breakfasting at home, and went out. He fled as a prisoner escapes, happy in the mere act of walking, in going across the Pont Louis XVI. and the Champs-Élysées to a café on the Boulevard, where he breakfasted alone.

What is there in love? Does Nature turn restive under the social yoke? Does Nature insist that the spring of a devoted life shall be spontaneous and free, its flow that of a wild torrent tossed by the rocks of contradiction and caprice, instead of a tranquil stream trickling between two

banks—the mairie on one side, and the church on the other? Has she schemes of her own when she is hatching those volcanic eruptions to which perhaps we owe our great men?

It would have been difficult to find a young man more piously brought up than Calyste, of purer life, or less tainted by infidelity; and he was rushing towards a woman quite unworthy of him, when a merciful and glorious chance brought to him, in Sabine, a girl of really aristocratic beauty, with a refined and delicate mind, pious, loving, and wholly attached to him; her angelic sweetness still touched with the pathos of love, passionate love in spite of marriage—such love as his for Béatrix.

The greatest men perhaps have still some clay in their composition; the mire still has charms. So, in spite of folly and frailty, the woman would then be the less imperfect creature. Mme. de Rochefide in the midst of the crowd of artistic pretenders who surrounded her, and in spite of her fall, belonged to the highest nobility all the same; her nature was ethereal rather than earth-born, and she hid the courtesan she meant to be under the most aristocratic exterior. So this explanation cannot account for Calyste's strange passion.

The reason may perhaps be found in a vanity so deeply buried that moralists have not yet discerned that side of vice. There are men, truly noble as Calyste was, and as handsome, rich, elegant, and well bred, who weary—unconsciously perhaps—of wedded life with a nature like their own; beings whose loftiness is not amazed by loftiness, who are left cold by a dignity and refinement on a constant level with their own, but who crave to find in inferior or fallen natures a corroboration of their own superiority though they would not ask their praises. The contrast of moral degradation and magnanimity fascinates their sight. What is pure shines so vividly by the side of what is impure! This comparison is pleasing. Calyste found nothing in Sabine to protect; she was irreproachable; all the wasted energies of his heart went forth to Béatrix. And if we have seen great men playing the part of Jesus, raising up the woman taken in adultery, how should commonplace folks be any wiser?

Calyste lived till two o'clock on the thought, "I shall see her again!"—a poem which ere now has proved sustaining during a journey of seven hundred leagues. Then he went with a light step to the Rue de Courcelles; he recognized the house though he had never seen it; and he, the Duc de Grandlieu's son-in-law, he, as rich, as noble as the Bourbons, stood at the foot of the stairs, stopped by the question from an old butler, "Your name, if you please, sir?"

Calyste understood that he must leave Mme. de Rochefide free to act, and he looked out on the garden and the walls streaked with black and yellow lines left by the rain on the stucco of Paris.

Mme. de Rochefide, like most fine ladies when they break their chain, had fled, leaving her fortune in her husband's hands, and she would not appeal for help to her tyrant. Conti and Mlle. des Touches had spared Béatrix all the cares of material life, and her mother from time to time sent her a sum of money. Now that she was alone, she was reduced to economy of a rather severe kind to a woman used to luxury. So she had taken herself to the top of the hill on which lies the Parc Monceaux, sheltering herself in a little old house of some departed magnate, facing the street, but with a charming little garden behind it, at a rent of not more than eighteen hundred francs. And still, with an old man-servant, a maid and a cook from Alençon, who had clung to her in her reverses, her poverty would have seemed opulence to many an ambitious middle-class housewife.

Calyste went up a flight of well-whitened stone stairs, the landings gay with flowers. On the first floor the old butler showed Calyste into the rooms through a double door of red velvet paneled with red silk and gilt nails. The rooms he went through were also hung with red silk and velvet. Dark-toned carpets, hangings across the windows and doors, the whole interior was in contrast with the outside, which the owner was at no pains to keep up.

Calyste stood waiting for Béatrix in a drawing-room, quiet in style, where luxury affected simplicity. It was hung with bright crimson velvet set off by cording of dull yellow silk; the carpet was a darker red, the windows looked



like conservatories, they were so crowded with flowers, and there was so little daylight, that he could scarcely see two vases of fine old red porcelain, and between them a silver cup attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, and brought from Italy by Béatrix. The furniture of gilt wood upholstered with velvet, the handsome consoles, on one of which stood a curious clock, the table covered with a Persian cloth, all bore witness to past wealth, of which the remains were carefully arranged. On a small table Calyste saw some trinkets, and a book half read, in which the place was marked by a dagger—symbolical of criticism—its handle sparkling with jewels. On the walls ten water-color drawings, handsomely framed, all representing bedrooms in the various houses where Béatrix had lived in the course of her wandering life, gave an idea of her supreme impertinence.

The rustle of a silk dress announced the unfortunate lady, who appeared in a studied toilet, which, if Calyste had been an older hand, would certainly have shown him that he was expected. The dress, made like a dressing-gown to show a triangle of the white throat, was of pearl-gray watered silk with open hanging sleeves, showing the arms covered with an under sleeve made with puffs divided by straps, and with lace ruffles. Her fine hair, loosely fastened with a comb, escaped from under a cap of lace and flowers.

“So soon,” said she with a smile. “A lover would not have been so eager. So you have some secrets to tell me, I suppose?” And she seated herself on a sofa, signing to Calyste to take a place by her.

By some chance—not perhaps unintentional, for women have two kinds of memory, that of the angels and that of the devils—Béatrix carried about her the same perfume that she had used at Les Touches when she had first met Calyste. The breath of this scent, the touch of that dress, the look of those eyes, which in the twilight seemed to focus and reflect light, all went to Calyste’s brain. The unhappy fellow felt the same surge of violence as had already so nearly killed Béatrix; but now the Marquise was on the edge of a divan, not of the ocean; she rose to ring the bell, putting her finger to her lips. At this Calyste, called to

order, controlled himself; he understood that Béatrix had no hostile intentions.

“Antoine, I am not at home,” said she to the old servant. “Put some wood on the fire.—You see, Calyste, I treat you as a friend,” she added with dignity when the old man was gone. “Do not treat me as your mistress.—I have two remarks to make. First, that I should not make any foolish stipulations with a man I loved; next, that I will never belong again to any man in the world. For I believed myself loved, Calyste, by a sort of Rizzio whom no pledges could bind, a man absolutely free, and you see whither that fatal infatuation has brought me.—As for you, you are tied to the most sacred duties; you have a young, amiable, delightful wife; and you are a father. I should be as inexcusable as you are, and we should both be mad——”

“My dear Béatrix, all your logic falls before one word. I have never loved anyone on earth but you, and I married in spite of myself.”

“A little trick played us by Mlle. des Touches,” said she with a smile.

For three hours Mme. de Rochefide kept Calyste faithful to his conjugal duties by pressing on him the horrible ultimatum of a complete breach with Sabine. Nothing less, she declared, could reassure her in the dreadful position in which she would be placed by Calyste’s passion. And, indeed, she thought little of sacrificing Sabine; she knew her so well.

“Why, my dear boy, she is a woman who fulfills all the promise of her girlhood. She is a thorough Grandlieu, as brown as her Portuguese mother, not to say orange-colored, and as dry as her father. To speak the truth, your wife will never be lost to you; she is just a great boy, and can walk alone. Poor Calyste! is this the wife to suit you? She has fine eyes, but such eyes are common in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Can a woman so lean be really tender? Eve was fair; dark women are descended from Adam, fair women from God, whose hand left a last touch on Eve when all creation was complete.”

At about six o’clock Calyste in desperation took up his hat to go.

“Yes, go, my poor friend; do not let her have the disappointment of dining without you.”

Calyste stayed. He was so young, so easy to take on the wrong side.

“You would really dare to dine with me?” said Béatrix, affecting the most provoking surprise. “My humble fare does not frighten you away, and you have enough independence of spirit to crown my joy by this little proof of affection?”

“Only let me write a line to Sabine,” said he, “for she would wait for me till nine o’clock.”

“There is my writing-table,” said Béatrix.

She herself lighted the candles, and brought one to the table to see what Calyste would write.

“My dear Sabine.”

“My DEAR! Is your wife still dear to you?” said she, looking at him so coldly that it froze the marrow in his bones. “Go, then, go to dine with her.”

“I am dining at an eating-house with some friends——”

“That is a lie. For shame! You are unworthy of her love or mine. All men are cowards with us.—That will do, monsieur; go and dine with your dear Sabine!”

Calyste threw himself back in his armchair and turned paler than death. Bretons have a sort of obstinate courage which makes them hold their own under difficulties. The young Baron sat up again with his elbow firmly set on the table, his chin in his hand, and his sparkling eyes fixed on Béatrix, who was relentless. He looked so fine that a true northern or southern woman would have fallen on her knees, saying, “Take me!” But in Béatrix, born on the border between Normandy and Brittany, of the race of Casteran, desertion had brought out the ferocity of the Frank and the malignity of the Norman; she craved a tremendous and terrible revenge; she did not yield to his noble impulse.

“Dictate what I am to write, and I will obey,” said the poor boy. “But then——”

“Then, yes,” she replied, “for you will love me then as you loved me at Guérande.—Write, ‘I am dining in town; do not wait.’”

“And——?” said Calyste, expecting something more.

“Nothing.—Sign it. Good,” she said, seizing this note with covert joy. “I will send it by a messenger.”

“Now!” cried Calyste, starting up like a happy man.

“I have preserved my liberty of action, I believe,” said she, looking round, and pausing half-way between the table and the fire-place, where she was about to ring.

“Here, Antoine, have this note taken to the address.—Monsieur will dine with me.”

Calyste went home at about two in the morning.

After sitting up till half-past twelve, Sabine had gone to bed tired out. She slept, though she had been cruelly startled by the brevity of her husband's note; still, she accounted for it. True love in a woman can always explain everything to the advantage of the man she loves.

“Calyste was in a hurry!” thought she.

Next day the child had recovered, the mother's alarms were past. Sabine came in smiling with little Calyste in her arms to show him to his father just before breakfast, full of the pretty nonsense, and saying the silly things that all young mothers are full of. This little domestic scene enabled Calyste to put a good face on matters, and he was charming to his wife while feeling that he was a wretch. He played like a boy himself with M. le Chevalier; indeed, he overdid it, overacting his part; but Sabine had not reached that pitch of distrust in which a wife notes so subtle a shade.

At last, during breakfast, Sabine asked—

“And what were you doing yesterday?”

“Portenduère,” said he, “kept me to dinner, and we went to the club to play a few rubbers of whist.”

“It is a foolish life, my Calyste,” replied Sabine. “The young men of our day ought rather to think of recovering all the estates in the country that their fathers lost. They cannot live by smoking cigars, playing whist, and dissipating their idleness by being content with making impertinent speeches to the parvenus who are ousting them from all their dignities, by cutting themselves off from the masses, whose soul and brain they ought to be, and to whom they should appear as Providence. Instead of being a party, you will only

be an opinion, as de Marsay said. Oh! if you could only know how my views have expanded since I have rocked and suckled your child. I want to see the old name of du Guénic figure in history."

Then, suddenly looking straight into Calyste's eyes, which were pensively fixed on her, she said—

"You must admit that the first note you ever wrote me was a little abrupt?"

"I never thought of writing till I reached the club."

"But you wrote on a woman's paper; it had some womanly scent."

"The club managers do such queer things——"

The Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife, a charming young couple, had become so intimate with the du Guénics that they shared a box at the Italian opera. The two young women, Sabine and Ursule, had been drawn into this friendship by a delightful exchange of advice, anxieties, and confidences about their babies. While Calyste, a novice in falsehood, was thinking to himself, "I must go to warn Savinien," Sabine was reflecting, "I fancied that the paper was stamped with a coronet!"

The suspicion flashed like lightning through her consciousness, and she blamed herself for it; but she made up her mind to look for the note, which, in the midst of her alarms on the previous day, she had tossed into her letter-box.

After breakfast Calyste went out, telling his wife he should soon return; he got into one of the little low one-horse carriages which were just beginning to take the place of the inconvenient cabriolet of our grandfathers. In a few minutes he reached the Rue des Saints-Pères, where the Vicomte lived, and begged him to do him the little kindness of lying in case Sabine should question the Vicomtesse—he would do as much for him next time. Then, when once out of the house, Calyste, having first bidden the coachman to hurry as much as possible, went in a few minutes from the Rue des Saints-Pères to the Rue de Courcelles. He was anxious to know how Béatrix had spent the rest of the night.

He found the happy victim of fate just out of her bath, fresh, beautified, and breakfasting with a good appetite. He admired the grace with which his angel ate boiled eggs, and was delighted with the service of gold, a present from a music-mad lord for whom Conti had written some songs, on *ideas* supplied by his lordship, who had published them as his own. Calyste listened to a few piquant anecdotes related by his idol, whose chief aim was to amuse him, though she got angry and cried when he left her. He fancied he had been with her half an hour, and did not get home till three o'clock. His horse, a fine least given him by the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, looked as if it had come out of the river, it was so streaming with sweat.

By such a chance as a jealous woman always plans, Sabine was on guard at a window looking out into the courtyard, out of patience at Calyste's late return, and uneasy without knowing why. She was struck by the condition of the horse, its mouth full of foam.

"Where has he been?"

The question was whispered in her ear by the power which is not conscience—nor the Devil, nor an angel—the power which sees, feels, knows, and shows us the unknown; which makes us believe in the existence of spiritual beings, creatures of our own brain, going and coming, and living in the invisible sphere of ideas.

"Where have you come from, my darling?" said she, going down to the first landing to meet Calyste. "Abd-el-Kader is half dead; you said you would be out but a few minutes, and I have been expecting you these three hours . . ."

"Well, well," said Calyste to himself, improving in the art of dissimulation, "I must get out the scrape by a present.—Dear little nurse," he said, putting his arm round his wife's waist with a more coaxing pressure than he would have given it if he had not felt guilty, "it is impossible, I see, to keep a secret, however innocent, from a loving wife . . ."

"We don't tell secrets on the stairs," she replied, laughing. "Come along!"

In the middle of the drawing-room that led to the bedroom, she saw, reflected in a mirror, Calyste's face, in which, not knowing that it could be seen, his fatigue and his real feelings showed; he had ceased to smile.

"That secret?" said she, turning round.

"You have been such a heroic nurse that the heir-presumptive of the du Guénics is dearer to me than ever; I wanted to surprise you—just like a worthy citizen of the Rue Saint-Denis. A dressing table is being fitted for you which is a work of art—my mother and Aunt Zéphirine have helped . . ."

Sabine threw her arms round Calyste, and held him clasped to her heart, her head on his neck, trembling with the weight of happiness, not on account of the dressing-table, but because her suspicions were blown to the winds. It was one of those glorious gushes of joy which can be counted in a lifetime, and of which even the most excessive love cannot be prodigal, for life would be too quickly burnt out. Men ought, in such moments, to kneel at the woman's feet in adoration, for the impulse is sublime; all the powers of the heart and intellect overflow as water gushes from the urn of fountain-nymphs. Sabine melted into tears.

Suddenly, as if stung by a viper, she pushed Calyste from her, dropped on to a divan, and fainted away; the sudden chill on her glowing heart had almost killed her. As she held Calyste, her nose in his necktie, given up to happiness, she had smelt the same perfume as that on the notepaper!—Another woman's head had lain there, her face and hair had left the very scent of adultery. She had just kissed the spot where her rival's kisses were still warm.

"What is the matter?" said Calyste, after bringing Sabine back to her senses by bathing her face with a wet handkerchief.

"Go and fetch the doctor, and the accoucheur—both. Yes, I feel the milk has turned to fever. . . . They will not come at once unless you go yourself——" *Vous*, she said, not *tu*, and the *vous* startled Calyste, who flew off in alarm. As soon as Sabine heard the outer gate shut, she sprang to her feet like a frightened deer, and walked round

and round the room like a crazy thing, exclaiming, "My God! my God! my God!"

The two words took the place of thought. The crisis she had used as a pretext really came on. The hair on her head felt like so many eels, made redhot in the fire of nervous torment. Her heated blood seemed to her to have mingled with her nerves, and to be bursting from every pore. For a moment she was blind. "I am dying!" she shrieked.

At this fearful cry of an insulted wife and mother, her maid came in; and when she had been carried to her bed and had recovered her sight and senses, her first gleam of intelligence made her send the woman to fetch her friend Mme. de Portenduère. Sabine felt her thoughts swirling in her brain like straws in a whirlwind.

"I saw myriads of them at once," she said afterwards.

Then she rang for the man-servant, and in the transport of fever found strength enough to write the following note, for she was possessed by a mania, she must be sure of the truth:—

*To Mme. la Baronne du Guénic.*

"DEAR MAMMA,—When you come to Paris, as you have led us to hope you may, I will thank you in person for the beautiful present by which you and Aunt Zéphirine and Calyste propose to thank me for having done my duty. I have been amply paid by my own happiness.—I cannot attempt to express my pleasure in this beautiful dressing-table; when you are here I will try to tell you. Believe me, when I dress before this glass, I shall always think, like the Roman lady, that my choicest jewel is our darling angel," and so on.

She had this letter posted by her own maid.

When the Vicomtesse de Portenduère came in, the shivering fit of a violent fever had succeeded the first paroxysm of madness.

"Ursule, I believe I am going to die," said she.



“What ails you, my dear?”

“Tell me, what did Calyste and Savinien do yesterday evening after dinner at your house?”

“What dinner?” replied Ursule, to whom her husband had as yet said nothing, not expecting an immediate inquiry. “Savinien and I dined alone last evening, and went to the Opera without Calyste.”

“Ursule, dear child, in the name of your love for Savinien, I adjure you, keep the secret of what I have asked you, and what I will tell you. You alone will know what I am dying of—I am betrayed, at the end of three years—when I am not yet three-and-twenty——”

Her teeth chattered, her eyes were lifeless and dull; her face had the greenish hue and surface of old Venetian glass.

“You—so handsome!—But for whom!”

“I do not know. But Calyste has lied to me—twice. Not a word! Do not pity me, do not be indignant, affect ignorance; you will hear *who*, perhaps, through Savinien.—Oh! yesterday’s note——”

And shivering in her shift, she flew to a little cabinet and took out the letter.

“A Marquise’s coronet!” she said, getting into bed again. “Find out whether Mme. de Rochefide is in Paris. Have I a heart left to weep or groan?—Oh, my dear, to see my beliefs, my poem, my idol, my virtue, my happiness, all, all destroyed, crushed, lost!—There is no God in heaven now, no love on earth, no more life in my heart—nothing!—I do not feel sure of the daylight, I doubt if there is a sun.—In short, my heart is suffering so cruelly, that I hardly feel the horrible pain in my breast and my face. Happily the child is weaned. My milk would have poisoned him!” And at this thought, a torrent of tears relieved her eyes, hitherto dry.

Pretty Mme. de Portenduère, holding the fatal note which Sabine had smelt at for certainty, stood speechless at this desperate woe, amazed by this death of love, and unable to say anything in spite of the incoherent fragments in which Sabine strove to tell her all. Suddenly Ursule was enlightened by one of those flashes which come only to sincere souls.

“I must save her!” thought she. “Wait till I return, Sabine,” cried she. “I will know the truth.”

“Oh, and I shall love you in my grave!” cried Sabiné.

Mme. de Portenduère went to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, insisted on absolute secrecy, and informed her as to the state Sabine was in.

“Madame,” said she, in conclusion, “are you not of opinion that, to save her from some dreadful illness, or perhaps even madness—who can tell?—we ought to tell the doctor everything, and invent some fables about that abominable Calyste, so as to make him seem innocent, at any rate for the present?”

“My dear child,” said the Duchess, who had felt a chill at this revelation, “friendship has lent you for the nonce the experience of a woman of my age. I know how Sabine worships her husband; you are right, she may go mad.”

“And she might lose her beauty, which would be worse,” said the Vicomtesse.

“Let us go at once!” cried the Duchess.

They, happily, were a few minutes in advance of the famous accoucheur Dommange, the only one of the two doctors whom Calyste had succeeded in finding.

“Ursule has told me all,” said the Duchess to her daughter. “You are mistaken. In the first place, Béatrix is not in Paris. As to what your husband was doing yesterday, my darling, he lost a great deal of money, and does not know where to find enough to pay for your dressing-table——”

“And this?” interrupted Sabine, holding out the note.

“This!” said the Duchess, laughing, “is Jockey Club paper. Everyone writes on coroneted paper—the grocers will have titles soon——”

The prudent mother tossed the ill-starred document into the fire.

When Calyste and Dommange arrived, the Duchess, who had given her orders, was informed; she left Sabine with Mme. de Portenduère, and met the doctor and Calyste in the drawing-room.

“Sabine’s life is in danger, monsieur,” said she to Calyste. “You have been false to her with Mme. de Rochefide”—Calyste blushed like a still decent girl caught tripping—

“and as you do not know how to deceive,” the Duchess went on, “you were so clumsy that Sabine guessed everything. You do not wish my daughter’s death, I suppose?—All this, M. Dommanget, gives you a clew to my daughter’s illness and its cause.—As for you, Calyste, an old woman like me can understand your error, but I do not forgive you. Such forgiveness can only be purchased by a life of happiness. If you desire my esteem, first save my child’s life. Then forget Mme. de Rochefide—she is good for nothing after the first time!—Learn to lie, have the courage and impudence of a criminal. I have lied, God knows! I, who shall be compelled to do cruel penance for such mortal sin.”

She explained to him the fictions she had just invented. The skillful doctor, sitting by the bed, was studying the patient’s symptoms, and the means of staving off the mischief. While he was prescribing measures, of which the success must depend on their immediate execution, Calyste, at the foot of the bed, kept his eyes fixed on Sabine, trying to give them an expression of tender anxiety.

“Then it is gambling that has given you those dark marks round your eyes?” she said in a feeble voice.

The words startled the doctor, the mother, and Ursule, who looked at each other; Calyste turned as red as a cherry.

“That comes of suckling your child,” said Dommanget, cleverly but roughly. “Then husbands are dull, being so much separated from their wives, they go to the club and play high. But do not lament over the thirty thousand francs that M. le Baron lost last night——”

“Thirty thousand francs!” said Ursule like a simpleton.

“Yes, I know it for certain,” replied Dommanget. “I heard this morning at the house of the Duchesse Berthe de Maufrigneuse that you lost the money to M. de Trailles,” he added to Calyste. “How can you play with such a man? Honestly, M. le Baron, I understand your being ashamed of yourself.”

Calyste, a kind and generous soul, when he saw his mother-in-law—the pious Duchess, the young Viscountess—a happy wife, and a selfish old doctor all lying like curiosity dealers,

understood the greatness of the danger; he shed two large tears, which deceived Sabine.

“Monsieur,” said she, sitting up in bed, and looking wrathfully at Dommanget, “M. du Guénic may lose thirty, fifty, a hundred thousand francs if he chooses without giving anyone a right to find fault with him or lecture him. It is better that M. de Trailles should have won the money from him than that we, *we*, should have won from M. de Trailles!”

Calyste rose and put his arm round his wife’s neck. Kissing her on both cheeks, he said in her ear, “Sabine, you are an angel!”

Two days later the young Baroness was considered out of danger. On the following day Calyste went to Mme. de Rochefide, and making a virtue of his infamy—

“Béatrix,” said he, “you owe me much happiness. I sacrificed my poor wife to you, and she discovered everything. The fatal notepaper on which you made me write, with your initial and coronet on it, which I did not happen to see—I saw nothing but you! The letter B, happily, was worn away; but the scent you left clinging to me, the lies in which I entangled myself like a fool, have ruined my happiness. Sabine has been at death’s-door; the milk went to her brain, she has erysipelas, and will perhaps be disfigured for life . . .”

Béatrix, while listening to this harangue, had a face of Arctic coldness, enough to freeze the Seine if she had looked at it.

“Well, so much the better; it may bleach her a little, perhaps.” And Béatrix, as dry as her own bones, as variable as her complexion, as sharp as her voice, went on in this tone, a tirade of cruel epigrams.

There can be no greater blunder than for a husband to talk to his mistress of his wife if she is virtuous, unless it be to talk to his wife of his mistress if she is handsome. But Calyste had not yet had the sort of Parisian education which may be called the good manners of the passions. He could neither tell his wife a lie nor tell his mistress the truth—an

indispensable training to enable a man to manage women. So he was obliged to appeal to all the powers of passion for two long hours, to wring from Béatrix the forgiveness he begged, denied him by an angel who raised her eyes to heaven not to see the culprit, and who uttered the reasons peculiar to Marquises in a voice choked with well-feigned tears, that she furtively wiped away with the lace edge of her handkerchief.

“You can talk to me of your wife the very day after I have yielded!—Why not say at once that she is a pearl of virtue? I know, she admires your beauty! That is what I call depravity! I—I love your soul! For I assure you, my dear boy, you are hideous compared with some shepherds of the Roman Campagna——” etc., etc.

This tone may seem strange, but it was a part of a system deliberately planned by Béatrix. In her third incarnation—for a woman completely changes with each fresh passion—she is far advanced in fraud—that is the only word that can describe the result of the experience gained in such adventures. The Marquise de Rochefide had sat in judgment on herself in front of her mirror. Clever women have no delusions about themselves; they count their wrinkles; they watch the beginnings of crows’-feet; they note the appearance of every speck in their skin; they know themselves by heart, and show it too plainly by the immense pains they take to preserve their beauty. And so, to contend against a beautiful young wife, to triumph over her six days a week, Béatrix sought to win by the weapons of the courtesan. Without confessing to herself the baseness of her conduct, and carried away to use such means by a Turk-like passion for the handsome young man, she resolved to make him believe that he was clumsy, ugly, ill made, and to behave as if she hated him.

There is no more successful method with men of a domineering nature. To them the conquest of such disdain is the triumph of the first day renewed on every morrow. It is more; it is flattery hidden under the mask of aversion, and owing to it the charm and truth which underlie all the metamorphoses invented by the great nameless poets. Does not

a man then say to himself, "I am irresistible!" or "I must love her well, since I conquer her repugnance!" If you deny this principle, which flirts and courtesans of every social grade discovered long ago, you must discredit the pursuers of science, the inquirers into secrets, who have long been repulsed in their duel with hidden causes.

Béatrix seconded her use of contempt as a moral incitement by a constant comparison between her comfortable, poetic home and the Hôtel du Guénic. Every deserted wife neglects her home out of deep discouragement. Foreseeing this, Mme. de Rochefide began covert innuendoes as to the luxury of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which she stigmatized as absurd. The reconciliation scene, when Béatrix made Calyste swear to hate the wife who, as she said, was playing the farce of spilt milk, took place in a perfect bower, where she put herself into attitudes in the midst of beautiful flowers and jardinières of lavish costliness. She carried the art of trifles, of fashionable toys, to an extreme. Béatrix, sunk into contempt since Conti's desertion, was bent on gaining such fame as may be had by sheer perversity. The woes of a young wife, a Grandlieu, rich and lovely, were to build her a pedestal.

When a woman reappears in society after nursing her first child, she comes out again improved in charm and beauty. If this phase of maternity can rejuvenate even women no longer in their first youth, it gives young wives a splendid freshness, a cheerful activity, a *brio* of life—if we may apply to the body a word which the Italians have invented for the mind. But while trying to resume the pleasant habits of the honeymoon, Sabine did not find the same Calyste. The unhappy girl watched him instead of abandoning herself to happiness. She expected the fatal perfume, and she smelt it; and she no longer confided in Ursule, nor in her mother, who had so charitably deceived her. She wanted certainty, and she had not long to wait for it. Certainty is never coy; it is like the sun, we soon need to pull down the blinds before it. In love it is a repetition of the fable of the Woodman calling on Death. We wish that certainty would blind us.

One morning, a fortnight after the first catastrophe, Sabine received this dreadful letter:—

*To Mme. la Baronne du Guénic.*

“GUÉRANDE.

“MY DEAR DAUGHTER,—My sister Zéphirine and I are lost in conjecture as to the dressing-table mentioned in your letter; I am writing about it to Calyste, and beg your forgiveness for my ignorance. You cannot doubt our affection. We are saving treasure for you. Thanks to Mlle. de Pen-Hoël’s advice as to the management of your land, you will in a few years find yourself possessed of a considerable capital without having to diminish your expenditure.

“Your letter, dearest daughter—whom I love as much as if I had borne you and fed you at my own breast—surprised me by its brevity, and especially by your making no mention of my dear little Calyste; you had nothing to tell me about the elder Calyste; he, I know, is happy,” etc.

Sabine wrote across this letter, “*Brittany is too noble to lie with one accord!*” and laid it on Calyste’s writing-table. He found it and read it. After recognizing Sabine’s writing in the line across it, he threw it into the fire, determined never to have seen it. Sabine spent a whole week in misery, of which the secret may be understood by those celestial or hermit souls that have never been touched by the wing of the fallen angel. Calyste’s silence terrified Sabine.

“I, who ought to be all sweetness, all joy to him—I have vexed him, hurt him. My virtue is become hateful; I have perhaps humiliated my idol,” said she to herself.

These thoughts plowed furrows in her soul. She thought of asking forgiveness for this fault, but certainty brought her fresh proofs.

Béatrix, insolently bold, wrote to Calyste one day at his own house. The letter was put into Mme. du Guénic’s hands; she gave it to her husband unopened, but she said, with death in her soul, and in a broken voice—

“My dear, this note is from the Jockey Club; I know the scent and the paper.”

Calyste blushed and put the letter in his pocket.

“Why do you not read it?”

“I know what they want.”

The young wife sat down. She did not get an attack of fever, she did not cry, but she felt one of those surges of rage which in such feeble creatures bring forth monsters of crime, which arm them with arsenic for themselves or for their rivals. Little Calyste was presently brought to her, and she took him on her lap; the child, but just weaned, turned to find the breast under her dress.

“He remembers!” said she in a whisper.

Calyste went to his room to read the letter. When he was gone the poor young creature burst into tears, such tears as women shed when they are alone. Pain, like pleasure, has its initiatory stage; the first anguish, like that of which Sabine had so nearly died, can never recur, any more than a first experience of any kind. It is the first wedge of the torture of the heart; the others are expected, the wringing of the nerves is a known thing, the capital of strength has accumulated a deposit for firm resistance. And Sabine, sure now of the worst, sat by the fire for three hours with her boy on her knee, and was quite startled when Gasselín, now their house-servant, came to announce that dinner was on the table.

“Let monsieur know.”

“Monsieur is not dining at home, Mme. la Baronne.”

Who can tell all the misery for a young woman of three-and-twenty, the torture of finding herself alone in the midst of a vast dining-room, in an ancient house, served by silent men, and in such circumstances?

“Order the carriage,” she said suddenly; “I am going to the Opera.”

She dressed splendidly; she meant to show herself alone, and smiling like a happy woman. In the midst of her remorse for the indorsement on that letter she was determined to triumph, to bring Calyste back to her by the greatest gentleness, by wifely virtues, by the meekness of a Paschal lamb. She would lie to all Paris. She loved him, she loved



him as courtesans love, or angels, with pride and with humility.

But the Opera was *Othello*. When Rubini sang *Il mio cor si divide*, she fled. Music is often more powerful than the poet and the actor, the two most formidable natures combined. Savinien de Portenduère accompanied Sabine to the portico and put her into her carriage, unable to account for her precipitate escape.

Mme. du Guénic now entered on a period of sufferings such as only the highest classes can know. You who are poor, envious, wretched, when you see on ladies' arms those snakes with diamond heads, those necklaces and pins, tell yourselves that those vipers sting, that those necklaces have poisoned teeth, that those light bonds cut into the tender flesh to the very quick. All this luxury must be paid for. In Sabine's position women can curse the pleasures of wealth; they cease to see the gilding of their rooms, the silk of sofas is as tow, exotic flowers as nettles, perfumes stink, miracles of cookery scrape the throat like barley-bread, and life has the bitterness of the Dead Sea.

Two or three instances will so plainly show the reaction of a room or of a woman on happiness, that everyone who has experienced it will be reminded of their home-life.

Sabine, warned of the dreadful truth, studied her husband when he was going out, to guess at the day's prospects. With what a surge of suppressed fury does a woman fling herself on to the red-hot pikes of such torture!—What joy for Sabine when he did not go to the Rue de Courcelles! When he came in she would look at his brow, his hair, his eyes, his expression and attitude, with a horrible interest in trifles, and the studious observation of the most recondite details of his dress, by which a woman loses her self-respect and dignity. These sinister investigations, buried in her heart, turned sour there and corroded the slender roots, whence grow the blue flowers of holy confidence, the golden stars of saintly love, all the blossoms of memory.

One day Calyste looked round at everything with ill-humor, but he stayed at home! Sabine was coaxing and humble, cheerful and amusing.

“ You are cross with me, Calyste; am I not a good wife?— What is there here that you do not like? ”

“ All the rooms are so cold and bare,” said he “ You do not understand this kind of thing.”

“ What is wanting? ”

“ Flowers——”

“ Very good,” said Sabine to herself; “ Mme. de Rochefide is fond of flowers, it would seem.”

Two days later the rooms at the Hôtel du Guénic were completely altered. No house in Paris could pride itself on finer flowers than those that decorated it.

Some time after this Calyste, one evening after dinner, complained of the cold. He shivered in his chair, looking about him to see whence the draught came, and evidently seeking something close about him. It was some time before Sabine could guess the meaning of this new whim, for the house was fitted with a hot-air furnace to warm the staircase, anterooms, and passages. Finally, after three days' meditation, it struck her that her rival had a screen, no doubt, so as to produce the subdued light that was favorable to the deterioration of her face; so Sabine purchased a screen made of glass and of Jewish magnificence.

“ Which way will the wind blow now? ” she wondered.

This was not the end of the mistress's indirect criticism. Calyste ate so little at home as to drive Sabine crazy; he sent away his plate after nibbling two or three mouthfuls.

“ Is it not nice? ” asked Sabine, in despair, seeing all the pains wasted which she devoted to her conferences with the cook.

“ I do not say so, my darling,” replied Calyste, without annoyance. “ I am not hungry, that is all.”

A wife given up to a legitimate passion and to such a contest as this, feels a sort of fury in her desire to triumph over her rival, and often outruns the mark even in the most secret regions of married life. This cruel struggle, fierce and ceaseless, over the visible and outward facts of home life was carried on with equal frenzy over the feelings of the heart. Sabine studied her attitudes and dress, and watched herself in the smallest trivialities of love.

This matter of the cookery went on for nearly a month. Sabine, with the help of Mariotte and Gasselin, invented stage tricks to discover what dishes Mme. de Rochefide served up for Calyste. Gasselin took the place of the coachman, who fell ill to order, and was thus enabled to make friends with Béatrix's cook; so at last Sabine could give Calyste the same fare, only better; but again she saw him give himself airs over it.

"What is wanting?" said she.

"Nothing," he answered, looking round the table for something that was not there.

"Ah!" cried Sabine to herself, as she woke next morning, "Calyste is pining for powdered cockroaches<sup>1</sup> and all the English condiments which are sold by the druggist in cruets; Mme. de Rochefide has accustomed him to all sorts of spices."

She bought an English cruet-stand and its scorching contents; but she could not pursue her discoveries down to every dainty devised by her rival.

This phase lasted for several months; nor need we wonder when we remember all the attractions of such a contest. It is life; with all its wounds and pangs it is preferable to the blank gloom of disgust, to the poison of contempt, to the blankness of abdication, to the death of the heart that we call indifference. Still, all Sabine's courage oozed out one evening when she appeared dressed, as women only dress by a sort of inspiration, in the hope of winning the victory over another, and when Calyste said with a laugh—

"Do what you will, Sabine, you will never be anything but a lovely Andalusian!"

"Alas!" said she, sinking on to her sofa, "I can never be fair. But if this goes on, I know that I shall soon be five-and thirty."

She refused to go to the Italian opera; she meant to stay in her room all the evening. When she was alone she tore the flowers from her hair and stamped upon them, she undressed, trampled her gown, her sash, all her finery under foot, exactly like a goat caught in a loop of its tether,

<sup>1</sup> Balzac has *hannetons*, cockchafers. It was an old joke that Soy was made of cockroaches.—*Translator*.

which never ceases struggling till death. Then she went to bed. The maid presently came in. Imagine her surprise!

"It is nothing," said Sabine. "It is monsieur."

Unhappy wives know this superb vanity, these falsehoods, where, of two kinds of shame both in arms, the more womanly wins the day.

Sabine was growing thin under these terrible agitations, grief ate into her soul; but she never forgot the part she had forced on herself. A sort of fever kept her up, her life sent back to her throat the bitter words suggested to her by grief; she sheathed the lightnings of her fine black eyes, and made them soft, even humble.

Her fading health was soon perceptible. The Duchess, an admirable mother, though her piety had become more and more Portuguese, thought there was some mortal disease in the really sickly condition which Sabine evidently encouraged. She knew of the acknowledged intimacy of Calyste and Béatrix. She took care to have her daughter with her to try to heal her wounded feelings, and, above all, to save her from her daily martyrdom; but Sabine for a long time remained persistently silent as to her woes, fearing some intervention between herself and Calyste. She declared she was happy! Having exhausted sorrow, she fell back on her pride, on all her virtues.

At the end of a month, however, of being petted by her sister Clotilde and her mother, she confessed her griefs, told them all her sufferings, and cursed life, saying that she looked forward to death with delirious joy. She desired Clotilde, who meant never to marry, to be a mother to little Calyste, the loveliest child any royal race need wish for as its heir-presumptive.

One evening, sitting with her youngest sister Athénaïs—who was to be married to the Vicomte de Grandlieu after Lent—with Clotilde, and the Duchess, Sabine uttered the last cry of her anguish of heart, wrung from her by the extremity of her last humiliation.

"Athénaïs," said she, when at about eleven o'clock the young Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu took his leave, "you are

going to be married; profit by my example! Keep your best qualities to yourself as if they were a crime, resist the temptation to display them in order to please Juste. Be calm, dignified, cold; measure out the happiness you give in proportion to what you receive! It is mean, but it is necessary.—You see, I am ruined by my merits. All I feel within me that is the best of me, that is fine, holy, noble,—all my virtues have been rocks on which my happiness is shipwrecked. I have ceased to be attractive because I am not six-and-thirty!—In some men's eyes youth is a defect! There is no guesswork in a guileless face.

“I laugh honestly, and that is quite wrong when, to be fascinating, you ought to be able to elaborate the melancholy, suppressed smile of the fallen angels who are obliged to hide their long yellow teeth. A fresh complexion is so monotonous; far preferable is a doll's waxen surface, compounded of rouge, spermaceti, and cold-cream. I am straightforward, and double dealing is more pleasing! I am frankly in love like an honest woman, and I ought to be trained to tricks and maneuvers like a country actress. I am intoxicated with the delight of having one of the most charming men in France for my husband, and I tell him sincerely how fine a gentleman he is, how gracefully he moves, how handsome I think him; to win him I ought to look away with affected aversion, to hate love-making, to tell him that his air of distinction is simply an unhealthy pallor and the figure of a consumptive patient, to cry up the shoulders of the Farnese Hercules, to make him angry, keep him at a distance as though a struggle were needed to hide from him at the moment of happiness some imperfection which might destroy love. I am so unlucky as to be able to admire a fine thing without striving to give myself importance by bitter and envious criticism of everything glorious in poetry or beauty. I do not want to be told in verse and in prose by Canalis and Nathan that I have a superior intellect! I am a mere simple girl; I see no one but Calyste!

“If I had only run all over the world as she has; if, like her, I had said, ‘I love you’ in every European tongue, I should be made much of, and pitied, and adored, and could

serve him up a Macedonian banquet of cosmopolitan loves! A man does not thank you for your tenderness till you have set it off by contrast with malignity. So I, a well-born wife, must learn all impurity, the interested charms of a prostitute! . . . And Calyste, the dupe of this grimacing! . . . Oh, mother! oh, my dear Clotilde! I am stricken to death. My pride is a deceptive ægis; I am defenseless against sorrow; I still love my husband like a fool, and to bring him back to me I need to borrow the keen wit of indifference."

"Silly child," whispered Clotilde, "pretend that you are bent on vengeance."

"I mean to die blameless, without even the appearance of wrong-doing," replied Sabine. "Our vengeance should be worthy of our love."

"My child," said the Duchess, "a mother should look on life with colder eyes than yours. Love is not the end but the means of family life. Do not imitate that poor little Baronne de Macumer. Excessive passion is barren and fatal. And God sends us our afflictions for reasons of His own. . . ."

"Now that Athénaïs's marriage is a settled thing, I shall have time to attend to you. I have already discussed the delicate position in which you are placed with your father and the Duc de Chaulieu and d'Ajuda. We shall find means to bring Calyste back to you."

"With the Marquise de Rochefide there is no cause for despair," said Clotilde, smiling at her sister. "She does not keep her adorers long."

"D'Ajuda, my darling, was M. de Rochefide's brother-in-law. If our good Confessor approves of the little maneuvers we must achieve to insure the success of the plan I have submitted to your father, I will guarantee Calyste's return. My conscience loathes the use of such methods, and I will lay them before the Abbé Brossette. We need not wait, my child, till you are *in extremis* to come to your assistance. Keep up your hopes. Your grief this evening is so great that I have let out my secret; I cannot bear not to give you a little encouragement."

“ Will it cause Calyste any grief? ” asked Sabine, looking anxiously at the Duchess.

“ Bless me, shall I be such another fool? ” asked Athénaïs simply.

“ Oh! child, you cannot know the straits into which Virtue can plunge us when she allows herself to be overruled by Love! ” replied Sabine, so bewildered with grief that she fell into a vein of poetry.

The words were spoken with such intense bitterness that the Duchess, enlightened by her daughter’s tone, accent, and look, understood that there was some unconfessed trouble.

“ Girls, it is midnight; go to bed, ” said she to the two others, whose eyes were sparkling.

“ And am I in the way too, in spite of my six-and-thirty years? ” asked Clotilde ironically. And while Athénaïs was kissing her mother, she whispered in Sabine’s ear—

“ You shall tell me all about it. I will dine with you to-morrow. If mamma is afraid of compromising her conscience, I myself will rescue Calyste from the hands of the infidels. ”

“ Well, Sabine, ” said the Duchess, leading her daughter into her bedroom, “ tell me, my child, what is the new trouble. ”

“ Oh, mother, I am done for! ”

“ Why? ”

“ I wanted to triumph over that horrible woman; I succeeded, I have another child coming, and Calyste loves her so vehemently that I foresee being absolutely deserted. When she has proof of this infidelity to her she will be furious!— Oh, I am suffering such torments that I must die. I know when he is going to her, know it by his glee; then his surliness shows me when he has left her. In short, he makes no secret of it; he cannot endure me. Her influence over him is as unwholesome as she is herself, body and soul. You will see; as her reward for making up some quarrel, she will insist on a public rupture with me, a breach like her own; she will carry him off to Switzerland perhaps, or to Italy. He has been saying that it is ridiculous to know nothing of Europe, and I can guess what these hints mean, thrown out as a warning. If Calyste is not cured within the next

three months, I do not know what will come of it—I shall kill myself, I know!”

“Unhappy child! And your son? Suicide is a mortal sin.”

“But do not you understand,—she might bear him a child; and if Calyste loved that woman’s more than mine—Oh! this is the end of my patience and resignation.”

She dropped on a chair; she had poured out the inmost thoughts of her heart; she had no hidden pang left; and sorrow is like the iron prop that sculptors place inside a clay figure, it is supporting, it is a power.

“Well, well, go home now, poor little thing! Face to face with so much suffering, perhaps the Abbé will give me absolution for the venial sins we are forced to commit by the trickery of the world. Leave me, daughter,” she said, going to her prie-Dieu; “I will beseech the Lord and the Blessed Virgin more especially for you. Above all, do not neglect your religious duties if you hope for success.”

“Succeed as we may, mother, we can only save the family honor. Calyste has killed the sacred fervor of love in me by exhausting all my powers, even of suffering. What a honeymoon was that in which from the first day I was bitterly conscious of his retrospective adultery!”

At about one in the afternoon of the following day one of the priests of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—a man distinguished among the clergy of Paris, designate as a Bishop in 1840, but who had three times refused a see—the Abbé Brossette, was crossing the courtyard of the Hôtel Grandlieu with the peculiar gait one must call the ecclesiastical gait, so expressive is it of prudence, mystery, calmness, gravity, and dignity itself. He was a small, lean man, about fifty years of age, with a face as white as an old woman’s, chilled by priestly fasting, furrowed by all the sufferings he made his own. Black eyes, alight with faith, but softened by an expression that was mysterious rather than mystical, gave life to this apostolic countenance. He almost smiled as he went up the steps, so little did he believe in the enormity of the case for which his penitent had sent for him; but as



the Duchess's hand was a sieve for alms, she was well worth the time her guileless confessions stole from the serious trouble of his parish. On hearing him announced, the Duchess rose and went forward a few steps to meet him, an honor she did to none but cardinals, bishops, priests of every grade, duchesses older than herself, and personages of the blood royal.

"My dear Abbé," said she, pointing to an armchair, and speaking in a low tone, "I require the authority of your experience before I embark on a rather nasty intrigue, from which, however, I hope for a good result; I wish to learn from you whether I shall find the way of salvation very thorny in consequence."

"Mme. la Duchesse," said the Abbé Brossette, "do not mix up spiritual and worldly matters; they are often irconcilable.—In the first place, what is this business?"

"My daughter Sabine, you know, is dying of grief. M. du Guénic neglects her for Mme. de Rochefide."

"It is terrible—a very serious matter; but you know what the beloved Saint-François de Sales says of such a case. And remember Mme. de Guyon, who bewailed the lack of mysticism in the proofs of conjugal love; she would have been only too glad to find a Mme. de Rochefide for her husband."

"Sabine is only too meek, she is only too completely the Christian wife; but she has not the smallest taste for mysticism."

"Poor young thing!" said the Curé slyly. "And what is your plan for remedying the mischief?"

"I have been so sinful, my dear Director, as to think that I might let loose at her a smart little gentleman, willful, and stocked with evil characteristics, who will certainly get my son-in-law out of the way."

"Daughter," said he, stroking his chin, "we are not in the tribunal of the repentant; I need not speak as your judge.—From a worldly point of view, I confess it would be final——"

"Such a proceeding strikes me as truly odious!" she put in.

“And why? It is, no doubt, far more the part of a Christian to snatch a woman from her evil ways than to push her forward in them; still, when she has already gone so far as Mme. de Rochefide, it is not the hand of man, but the hand of God, that can rescue the sinner. She needs a special sign from heaven.”

“Thank you, Father, for your indulgence,” said the Duchess. “But we must remember that my son-in-law is brave, and a Breton; he was heroic at the time of that poor MADAME’S attempted rising. Now, if the young scapegrace who should undertake to charm Mme. de Rochefide were to fall out with Calyste, and a duel should ensue——”

“There, Mme. la Duchesse, you show your wisdom; this proves that in such devious courses we always find some stumbling-block.”

“But I hit upon a means, my dear Abbé, of doing good, of rescuing Mme. de Rochefide from the fatal path she is following, of bringing Calyste back to his wife, and of saving a poor wandering soul perhaps from hell——”

“But, then, why consult me?” said the Curé, smiling.

“Well,” said the Duchess, “I should have to do some ugly things——”

“You do not mean to rob anyone?”

“On the contrary, I shall probably spend a good deal of money.”

“You will not slander anybody, nor——”

“Oh!”

“Nor do any injury to your neighbor?”

“Well, well, I cannot answer for that.”

“Let us hear this new plan,” said the Curé, really curious.

“If, instead of driving one nail out by another, thought I, as I knelt on my prie-Dieu, after beseeching the Blessed Virgin to guide me, I were to get M. de Rochefide to take back his wife and pack off Calyste—then, instead of abetting evil to do good, I should be doing a good action through another by means of a no less good deed of my own——” The priest looked at the lady, and seemed thoughtful.

“The idea has evidently come to you from so far that——”

“Yes,” said the simple and humble-minded woman, “and I have thanked the Virgin.—And I vowed that besides paying for a *neuvaine*, I would give twelve hundred francs to some poor family if I should succeed. But when I spoke of the matter to M. de Grandlieu, he burst out laughing, and said—‘I really believe that at your time of life you women have a special devil all to yourselves.’”

“M. le Duc said, in a husband’s fashion, just what I was about to observe when you interrupted me,” replied the Abbé, who could not help smiling.

“Oh, Father, if you approve of the plan, will you approve of the method of execution? The point will be to do with a certain Mme. Schontz—a Béatrix of the Saint-Georges quarter—what I had intended to do with Béatrix; the Marquis will then return to his wife.”

“I am sure you will do no wrong,” said the Abbé dexterously, not choosing to know more, as he thought the result necessary. “And you can consult me if your conscience makes itself heard,” he added. “Supposing that instead of affording the lady in the Rue Saint-Georges some fresh occasion of misconduct, you were to find her a husband?—”

“Ah, my dear Director, you have set right the only bad feature of my scheme. You are worthy to be an archbishop, and I hope to live to address you as your Eminence.”

“In all this, I see but one hitch,” the priest went on.

“And what is that?”

“Mme. de Rochefide might keep your son-in-law if she returned to her husband?”

“That is my affair,” said the Duchess. “We, who so rarely intrigue, when we do——”

“Do it badly, very badly,” said the Abbé. “Practice is needed for everything. Try to annex one of the rascally race who live on intrigue, and employ him without betraying yourself.”

“Oh! M. le Curé, but if we have recourse to hell, will Heaven be on our side?”

“You are not in the confessional,” replied the Abbé; “save your child.”

The good Duchess, delighted with the keeper of her conscience, escorted him as far as the drawing-room door.

A storm, it will be seen, was gathering over M. de Rochefide, who, at this time, was enjoying the greatest share of happiness that a Parisian need desire, finding himself quite as much the master in Mme. Schontz's house as in his wife's; as the Duke had very shrewdly remarked to his wife, it would seem impossible to upset so delightful and perfect a plan of life. This theory of the matter necessitates a few details as to the life led by M. de Rochefide since his wife had placed him in the position of a deserted husband. We shall thus understand the enormous difference in the view taken by law and by custom of the two sexes in the same circumstances. Everything that works woe to a deserted wife becomes happiness to the deserted husband. This striking antithesis may perhaps induce more than one young wife to remain in her home and fight it out, like Sabine du Guénic, by practicing the most cruel or the most inoffensive virtues, whichever she may prefer.

A few days after Béatrix's flight, Arthur de Rochefide—an only child after the death of his sister, the first wife of the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, who left him no children—found himself master of the family mansion of the Rochefides, Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré, and of two hundred thousand francs a year, left to him by his father. This fine fortune, added to that which he had when he married, raised his income, including his wife's portion, to a thousand francs a day. To a gentleman of such a character as Mlle. des Touches had sketched to Calyste, such a fortune was happiness. While his wife was occupied with lovemaking and motherhood, Rochefide was enjoying his vast possessions, but he did not waste the money any more than he would waste his intelligence. His burly, good-natured conceit, amply satisfied with the reputation for being a fine man, to which he owed some success, entitling him, as he believed, to condemn women as a class, gave itself full play in the sphere of intellect. He was gifted with the sort of wit which may be termed refracting, by the way he repeated other persons'

jests and witticisms from plays or the newspapers; he appropriated them as his own; he affected to ridicule them, caricaturing them in repetition, and using them as a formula of criticism; then his military high spirits—for he had served in the King's Guard—lent spice to his conversation, so that dull women called him witty, and the rest dared not contradict them.

Arthur carried this system out in everything; he owed to Nature the useful trick of being an imitator without being an ape; he could imitate quite seriously. And so, though he had no taste, he was always the first to take up and to drop a fashion. He was accused of giving too much time to his toilet, and of wearing stays; but he was a typical example of those men who, by accepting the notions and the follies of others, never offend anyone, who, always being up to date, never grow any older. They are the heroes of the second-rate.

This husband was pitied; Béatrix was held inexcusable for having run away from the best fellow in the world; ridicule fell only on the wife. This worthy, loyal, and very silly gentleman, a member of every club, a subscriber to every absurdity to which blundering patriotism and party-spirit gave rise, with a facile good-nature which brought him to the front on every occasion, was, of course, bent on glorifying himself by some fashionable hobby. His chief pride was to be the sultan of a four-footed seraglio, managed by an old English groom, and this kennel cost him from four to five thousand francs a month. His favorite fad was running horses; he patronized breeders, and paid the expenses of a paper in the racing interest; but he knew little about horses, and from the bridle to the shoes trusted to his groom. This is enough to show that this "grass-husband" had nothing of his own—neither wit, nor taste, nor position, nor even absurdities; and his fortune had come to him from his forefathers.

After having tasted all the annoyances of married life, he was so happy to find himself a bachelor again, that he would say among friends, "I was born to good luck!" He rejoiced especially in being able to live free of the expenses

to which married folks are compelled; and his house, in which nothing had been altered since his father's death, was in the state of a man's home when he is traveling; he rarely went there, never fed there, and scarcely ever slept there.

This was the history of this neglect. After many love affairs, tired of women of fashion, who are indeed weariful enough, and who set too many dry thorn-hedges round the happiness they have to give, he had practically married Mme. Schontz, a woman notorious in the world of Fanny Beaupré and Suzanne du Val-Noble, of Mariettes, Florentines, Jenny Cadines, and the like. This world—of which one of our draughtsmen wittily remarked, as he pointed to the whirl of an Opera hall, "When you think that all that mob is well housed, and dressed, and fed, you can form a good idea of what men are!"—this dangerous world has already been seen in the History of Manners in the typical figures of Florine and the famous Malaga (of *A Daughter of Eve* and *The Imaginary Mistress*); but to paint it faithfully, the historian would have to represent such persons in some numerical proportion to the variety of their strange individual lives, ending in poverty of the most hideous kind, in early death, in ease, in happy marriages, or sometimes in great wealth.

Mme. Schontz, at first known as La Petite Aurélie, to distinguish her from a rival far less clever than herself, belonged to the higher class of these women on whose social uses no doubt can be thrown either by the Préfet of the Seine or by those who take an interest in the prosperity of the city of Paris. Certainly the "rats" accused of devouring fortunes, which are often imaginary, in some respects are more like a beaver. Without the Aspasiases of the Notre-Dame de Lorette quarter, fewer houses would be built in Paris. Pioneers of fresh stucco, in tow of speculation, pitch their outlying tents along the hillsides of Montmartre, beyond those deserts of masonry which are to be seen in the streets round the Place de l'Europe—Amsterdam, Milan, Stockholm, London, and Moscow—architectural steppes betraying their emptiness by endless placards announcing *Apartments to let*.

The position of these ladies is commensurate with that of their lodgings in these innominate regions. If the house is near the line marked by the Rue de Provence, the woman has money in the Funds, her income is assured; but if she lives out near the exterior boulevards, or on the height towards the horrible suburb of Batignolles, she is certainly poor.

Now when M. de Rochefide first met Mme. Schontz, she was lodging on the third floor of the only house then standing in the Rue de Berlin. The name of this unmarried wife, as you will have understood, was neither Aurélie nor Schontz. She concealed her father's name—that of an old soldier of the Empire, the perennial colonel who always adorns the origin of these existences, as the father or the seducer. Mme. Schontz had enjoyed the benefits of a gratuitous education at Saint-Denis, where the young persons are admirably taught, but where the young persons are not provided on leaving with husbands or a living—an admirable foundation of the Emperor's, the only thing lacking being the Emperor himself! “I shall be there to provide for the daughters of my legionaries,” said he, in answer to one of his Ministers who looked forward to the future. And in the same way Napoleon said, “I shall be there,” to the members of the Institute, to whom it would be better to give no honorarium at all than to pay them eighty-three francs a month, less than the wages of many an office clerk.

Aurélie was very certainly the daughter of the valiant Colonel Schlitz, a leader of those daring Alsatian partisans who so nearly succeeded in saving the Emperor in the French campaign; he died at Metz, robbed, neglected, and ruined. In 1814 Napoleon sent little Joséphine Schlitz, then nine years old, to school at Saint-Denis. Without father or mother, home or money, the poor child was not driven out of the Institution on the second return of the Bourbons. She remained there as under-teacher till 1827; but then her patience failed, and her beauty led her astray. When she was of age, Joséphine Schlitz, the Empress's goddaughter, embarked on the adventurous life of the courtesan, tempted to this doubtful career by the fatal example of some of her

schoolfellows as destitute as she was, and who rejoiced in their decision. She substituted *on* for *il* in her father's name, and placed herself under the protection of Saint Aurelia.

Clever, witty, and well informed, she made more mistakes than her more stupid companions, whose wrongdoing was always based on self-interest. After various connections with writers, some poor but unmannerly, some clever but in debt; after trying her fortune with some rich men as close-fisted as they were silly; after sacrificing ease to a true passion, and learning in every school where experience may be gained, one day, when, in the depths of poverty, she was dancing at Valentino's—the first stage to Musard's—dressed in a borrowed gown, hat, and cape, she attracted Rochefide's attention; he had come to see the famous galop! Her cleverness bewitched the gentleman, who had exhausted every sensation; and when, two years after, being deserted by Béatrix, whose wit had often disconcerted him, he allied himself with a second-hand Béatrix “of the Thirteenth Arrondissement,” no one thought of blaming him.

We may here give a sketch of the four seasons of such a happy home. It is desirable to show how the theory of “a marriage in the Thirteenth Arrondissement” includes all the whole connection. Whether a marquis of forty or a retired shopkeeper of sixty, a millionaire six times over or a man of narrow private means, a fine gentleman or a middle-class citizen, the tactics of passion, barring the differences inseparable from dissimilar social spheres, never vary. Heart and banking account maintain an exact and definite relation. And you will be able to form an idea of the obstacles the Duchess must meet with to her charitable scheme.

Few persons understand the power of words over ordinary folks in France, or the mischief done by the wits who invent them. For instance, no bookkeeper could add up the figures of the sums of money which have lain unproductive and rusty at the bottom of generous hearts and full coffers in consequence of the mean phrase, *Tirer une carotte*—to fleece or bleed a victim. The words have become so common that they must be allowed to deface this page. Besides, if we venture



into the "Thirteenth Arrondissement," we must needs adopt its picturesque language.

M. de Rochefide, like all small minds, was constantly in fear of being bled. From the beginning of his attachment to Mme. Schontz, Arthur was on his guard, and was at that time a dreadful screw, *très rat*, to use another slang word of the studio and the brothel. This word *rat* (which in French has many slang uses) when applied to a young girl means the person entertained, but applied to a man means the stingy entertainer. Mme. Schontz had too much intelligence, and knew men too thoroughly, not to found high hopes on such a beginning. M. de Rochefide allowed Mme. Schontz five hundred francs a month, furnished, meagerly enough, a set of rooms at twelve hundred francs a year on the second floor of a house in the Rue Coquenard, and set himself to study Aurélie's character; and she, finding herself spied upon, gave him character to study.

Rochefide was delighted to have come across a woman of such a noble nature, but it did not astonish him; her mother was a Barnheim of Baden, quite a lady! And then Aurélie had been so well brought up! Speaking English, German, and Italian, she was versed in foreign literature; she could pit herself, without discomfiture, against pianists of the second class. And, note the point! she behaved as regarded her talents like a woman of breeding; she never talked about them. In a painter's studio she would take up a brush in fun, and sketch a head with so much *go* as to amaze the company. As a pastime, when she was pining as a school-teacher, she had dabbled in some sciences, but her life as a kept mistress had sown salt over all this good seed, and, of course, she laid the flower of these precious growths, revived for him, at Arthur's feet. Thus did Aurélie at first make a display of disinterestedness to match the pleasures she could give, which enabled this light corvette to cast her grappling-irons firmly on board the statelier craft. Still, even at the end of the first year, she made a vulgar noise in the ante-room, managing to come in just when the Marquis was waiting for her, and tried to hide the disgracefully muddy hem of her gown in such a way as to make it more conspicuous.

In short, she so cleverly contrived to persuade her *Gros Papa* that her utmost ambition, after so many vicissitudes, was to enjoy a simple, middle-class existence, that by the end of ten months the second phase of their connection began.

Then Mme. Schontz had a fine apartment in the Rue Saint-Georges. Arthur, who could no longer conceal from her the fact of his wealth, gave her handsome furniture, a service of plate, twelve hundred francs a month, and a little low carriage, with a single horse, by the week, and he granted her a little groom with a fairly good grace. She knew what this munificence was worth; she detected the motives of her Arthur's conduct, and saw in them the calculations of a close-fisted man. Tired of living at restaurants, where the food is generally execrable, where the simplest dinner of any refinement costs sixty francs, and two hundred for a party of four friends, Rochefide offered Mme. Schontz forty francs a day for his dinner and a friend's, wine included. Aurélie had no mind to refuse. After getting all her moral bills of exchange accepted, drawn on M. de Rochefide's habits at a year's date, she was favorably heard when she asked for five hundred francs a year more for dress, on the plea that her *Gros Papa*, whose friends all belonged to the Jockey Club, might not be ashamed of her.

"A pretty thing, indeed," said she, "if Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, la Roche-Hugon, Ronquerolles, Laginski, Lenoncourt, and the rest should see you with a Mme. Éverard! Put your trust in me, *Gros Père*, and you will be the gainer."

And Aurélie did, in fact, lay herself out for a fresh display of virtues in these new circumstances. She sketched a part for herself as the housewife, in which she won ample credit. She made both ends meet, said she, at the end of the month, and had no debts, on two thousand five hundred francs, such a thing as had never been seen in the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the Thirteenth Arrondissement—the upper ten of the demireps world; and she gave dinners infinitely better than Nucingen's, with first-class wines at ten and twelve francs a bottle. So that Rochefide, amazed and delighted to be able to ask his friends pretty often to his

mistress's house as a matter of economy, would say to her, with his arm round her waist, "You are a perfect treasure!"

Before long he took a third share in an opera box for her, and at last went with her to first-night performances. He began to take counsel of his Aurélie, acknowledging the soundness of her advice; she allowed him to appropriate the wit she was always ready with; and her sallies, being new, won him the reputation for being an amusing man. At last he felt perfectly sure that she loved him truly, and for himself. Aurélie refused to make a Russian prince happy at the rate of five thousand francs a month.

"You are a happy man, my dear Marquis," cried old Prince Galathionne as they ended a rubber of whist at the club. "Yesterday, when you left us together, I tried to get her away from you; but 'Mon Prince,' said she, 'you are not handsomer than Rochefide though you are older; you would beat me, and he is like a father to me; show me then the quarter of a good reason for leaving him! I do not love Arthur with the crazy passion I had for the young rogues with patent leather boots, whose bills I used to pay; but I love him as a wife loves her husband when she is a decent woman.'—And she showed me to the door."

This speech, which had no appearance of exaggeration, had the effect of adding considerably to the state of neglect and shabbiness that disfigured the home of the Rochefides. Ere long Arthur had transplanted his existence and his pleasures to Mme. Schontz's lodgings, and found it answer; for by the end of three years he had four hundred thousand francs to invest.

Then began the third phase. Mme. Schontz became the kindest of mothers to Arthur's son; she fetched him from school and took him back herself; she loaded him with presents, sweetmeats, and pocket-money; and the child, who adored her, called her his "little mamma." She advised her Arthur in the management of his money-matters, making him buy consols at the fall before the famous treaty of London, which led to the overthrow of the Ministry on the 1st of March. Arthur made two hundred thousand francs, and Aurélie did not ask for a sou. Rochefide, being a

gentleman, invested his six hundred thousand francs in Bank bills, half of them in the name of Mlle. Joséphine Schlitz.

A small house, rented in the Rue de la Bruyère, was placed in the hands of Grindot, that great architect on a small scale, with instructions to make it a delicious jewel case. Thenceforth Rochefide left everything in the hands of Mme. Schontz, who received the dividends and paid the bills. Thus installed in his wife's place, she justified him by making her *Gros Papa* happier than ever. She understood his whims, and satisfied them, as Mme. de Pompadour humored the fancies of Louis XV. She was, in fact, *maîtresse en titre*—absolute mistress.

She now allowed herself to patronize certain charming young men, artists and literary youths newly born to glory, who disowned the ancients and the moderns alike, and tried to achieve a great reputation by achieving nothing else. Mme. Schontz's conduct, a masterwork of tactics, shows her superior intelligence. In the first place, a party of ten or twelve young men amused Arthur, supplied him with witty sayings and shrewd opinions on every subject, and never cast any doubt on the fidelity of the mistress of the house; in the second place, they looked up to her as a highly intellectual woman. These living advertisements, these walking "puffs," reported that Mme. Schontz was the most charming woman to be found on the border-land dividing the Thirteenth Arrondissement from the other twelve.

Her rivals, Suzanne Gaillard, who since 1838 had the advantage over her of being a legitimately married wife, Fanny Beaupré, Mariette, and Antonia, spread more than scandalous reports as to the beauty of these youths and the kindness with which M. de Rochefide welcomed them. Mme. Schontz, who could, she declared, give these ladies a start of three bad jokes and beat them, exclaimed one evening, at a supper given by Florine after an opera, when she had set forth to them her good fortune and her success, "Do thou likewise!" a retort which had been remembered against her. At this stage of her career Mme. Schontz got the racers sold, in deference to certain considerations, which she owed no doubt to the critical acumen of Claude Vignon, a frequent visitor.

“I could quite understand,” said she one day, after lashing the horses with her tongue, “that princes and rich men should take horse-breeding to heart, but for the good of the country, and not for the childish satisfaction of a gambler’s vanity. If you had stud stables on your estates and could breed a thousand or twelve hundred horses, if each owner sent the best horse in his stable, and if every breeder in France and Navarre should compete every time, it would be a great and fine thing; but you buy a single horse, as the manager of a theater engages his artists, you reduce an institution to the level of a game, you have a Bourse for legs as you have a Bourse for shares. It is degrading. Would you spend sixty thousand francs to see in the papers—‘M. de Rochefide’s *Lélia* beat M. le Duc de Rhétoré’s *Fleur-de-Genêt* by a length——’ Why, you had better give the money to a poet who will hand you down to immortality in verse or in prose, like the late lamented Montyon!”

By dint of such goading the Marquis was brought to see the hollowness of the turf; he saved his sixty thousand francs; and next year Mme. Schontz could say to him: “I cost you nothing now, Arthur.”

Many rich men envied the Marquis his Aurélie, and tried to win her from him; but, like the Russian prince, they wasted their old age.

“Listen to me, my dear fellow,” she had said a fortnight ago to Finot, now a very rich man, “I know that Rochefide would forgive me for a little flirtation if I really fell in love with another man, but no woman would give up a marquis who is such a thorough good fellow to take up with a parvenu like you. You would never keep me in such a position as Arthur has placed me in. He has made me all but his wife, and half a lady, and you could never do as much for me even if you married me.”

This was the last rivet that held the fortunate slave. The speech reached those absent ears for which it was intended.

Thus began the fourth phase, that of habit, the crowning victory of the plan of campaign which enables a woman of this stamp to say of the man, “I have him safe!” Roche-

fide, who had just bought a pretty house in the name of Mlle. Joséphine Schlitz, a mere trifle of eighty thousand francs, had, at the time when the Duchess was laying her plans, come to the point when he was vain of his mistress, calling her Ninon II., and boasting of her strict honesty, her excellent manners, her information, and wit. He had concentrated his good and bad qualities, his tastes and pleasures all in Mme. Schontz, and had reached that stage of life when from weariness, indifference, or philosophy a man changes no more, but is faithful to his wife or his mistress.

The importance to which Mme. Schontz had risen in five years may be understood when it is said that to be introduced to her a man had to be mentioned to her some time in advance. She had refused to make the acquaintance of certain tiresome rich men, and others of fly-blown reputations; she made no exceptions to this strict rule but in the case of certain great aristocratic names.

"They have a right to be stupid," she would say, "because they are swells."

Ostensibly she possessed the three hundred thousand francs that Rochefide had given her, and that a thorough good fellow, a stockbroker named Gobenheim—the only stockbroker she allowed in her house—managed for her; but she also managed for herself a little private fortune of two hundred thousand francs, formed of her savings on her house allowance for three years, by constantly buying and selling with the three hundred thousand francs, which were all she would ever confess to.

"The more you make, the less you seem to have," Gobenheim remarked one day.

"Water is so dear!" said she.

This unrevealed store was increased by the jewelry and diamonds which Aurélie would wear for a month and then sell, and by money given her for fancies she had forgotten. When she heard herself called rich, Mme. Schontz would reply that, at present rates, three hundred thousand francs brought in twelve thousand francs, and that she had spent it all in the hard times of her life when Lousteau had been her lover.

Such method showed a plan; and Mme. Schontz, you may be sure, had a plan. For the last two years she had been jealous of Mme. du Bruel, and the desire to be married at the Mairie and in church gnawed at her heart. Every social grade has its forbidden fruit, some little thing exaggerated by desire, till it seems as weighty as the globe. This ambition had, of course, its duplicate in the ambition of a second Arthur, whom watchfulness had entirely failed to discover. Bixiou would have it that the favorite was Léon de Lora; the painter believed that it was Bixiou, who was now past forty, and should be thinking of settling. Suspicion also fell on Victor de Vernisset, a young poet of the Canalis school, whose passion for Mme. Schontz was a perfect madness; while the poet accused Stidmann, a sculptor, of being his favored rival. This artist, a very good-looking young man, worked for goldsmiths, for bronze dealers, and jewelers; he dreamed of being a Benvenuto Cellini. Claude Vignon, the young Comte de la Palférine, Gobenheim, Vermanton, a cynic philosopher, and other frequenters of this lively salon were suspected by turns, but all acquitted. No one was a match for Mme. Schontz, not even Rochefide, who fancied she had a weakness for la Palférine, a clever youth; she was, in fact, virtuous in her own interests, and thought only of making a good match.

Only one man of equivocal repute was ever to be seen at Mme. Schontz's, and that was Couture, who had more than once been howled at on the Bourse; but Couture was one of Mme. Schontz's oldest friends, and she alone remained faithful to him. The false alarm of 1840 swept away this speculator's last capital; he had trusted to the 1st of March Ministry; Aurélie, seeing that luck was against him, made Rochefide play for the other side. It was she who spoke of the last overthrow of the inventor of premiums and joint-stock companies as a *Découture* (unripping a rip).

Couture, delighted to find a knife and fork laid for him at Aurélie's, and getting from Finot—the cleverest, or perhaps the luckiest of parvenus—a few thousand-franc notes now and then, was the only man shrewd enough to offer his name to Mme. Schontz, who studied him to ascertain whether

this bold speculator would have strength enough to make a political career for himself, and gratitude enough not to desert his wife. A man of about forty-three years old, and worn for his age, Couture did not redeem the ill-repute of his name by his birth; he had little to say of his progenitors. Mme. Schontz was lamenting the rarity of men of business capacity, when one day Couture himself introduced to her a provincial gentleman who happened to be provided with the two handles by which women hold this sort of pitcher when they mean not to drop it.

A sketch of this personage will be a portrait of a certain type of young man of the day. A digression will, in this case, be history.

In 1838 Fabien du Ronceret, the son of a President of the Chamber at the King's Court of Caen, having lost his father about a year before, came from Alençon, throwing up his appointment as magistrate, in which, as he said, his father had made him waste his time, and settled in Paris. His intention now was to get on in the world by cutting a dash, a Norman scheme somewhat difficult of accomplishment, since he had scarcely eight thousand francs a year, his mother still being alive, and enjoying the life-interest of some fine house property in the heart of Alençon. This youth had already, in the course of various visits to Paris, tried his foot on the tight rope; he had discerned the weak point of the social stucco restoration of 1830, and meant to work on it for his own profit, following the lead of the sharpers of the middle class. To explain this, we must glance at one of the results of the new state of things.

Modern notions of equality, which in our day have assumed such extravagant proportions, have inevitably developed in private life—in a parallel line with political life—pride, conceit, and vanity, the three grand divisions of the social *I*. Fools wish to pass for clever men, clever men want to be men of talent, men of talent expect to be treated as geniuses: as to the geniuses, they are more reasonable; they consent to be regarded as no more than demi-gods. This tendency of the spirit of the time, which in the Chamber of Deputies makes the manufacturer jealous of the states-



man, and the administrator jealous of the poet, prompts fools to run down clever men, clever men to run down men of talent, men of talent to run down those who are a few inches higher than themselves, and the demi-gods to threaten institutions, the throne itself, in short, everything and everybody that does not worship them unconditionally.

As soon as a nation is so impolitic as to overthrow recognized social superiority, it opens the sluice-gates, through which rushes forthwith a torrent of second-rate ambitions, the least of which would fain be first. According to the democrats, its aristocracy was a disease, but a definite and circumscribed disease; it has exchanged this for ten armed and contending aristocracies, the worst possible state of things. To proclaim the equality of all is to declare the rights of the envious. We are enjoying now the Saturnalia of the Revolution transferred to the apparently peaceful sphere of intelligence, industry, and politics; it seems as though the reputations earned by hard work, good service, and talent were a privilege granted at the expense of the masses. The agrarian law will ere long be extended to the field of glory.

Thus, at no time have men demanded public recognition on more puerile grounds. They must be remarked at any cost for an affectation of devotion to the cause of Poland, to the penitential system, to the future prospects of released convicts, to that of small rogues under or over the age of twelve, to any kind of social quackery. These various manias give rise to spurious dignities—presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries of societies, which, in Paris, outnumber the social questions to be solved. Society on a grand scale has been demolished to make way for a thousand small ones in the image of the dead one.

Do not all these parasitical organisms point to decomposition? Are they not the worms swarming in the carcass? All these social bodies are the daughters of one mother—Vanity. Not thus does Catholic charity act, or true benevolence; these study disease while healing its sores, and do not speechify in public on morbid symptoms for the mere pleasure of talking.

Fabien du Ronceret, without being a superior man, had divined, by the exercise of that acquisitive spirit peculiar to the Norman race, all the advantage he might take of this public distemper. Each age has its characteristic, which clever men trade on. Fabien's only aim was to get himself talked about.

"My dear fellow, a man must make his name known if he wants to get on," said he as he left, to du Bousquier, a friend of his father's, and the King of Alençon. "In six months I shall be better known than you."

This was how Fabien interpreted the spirit of his time; he did not rule it, he obeyed it.

He had first appeared in *bohemia*, a district of the moral topography of Paris (see *A Prince of Bohemia*), and was known as "The Heir," in consequence of a certain premeditated parade of extravagance. Du Ronceret had taken advantage of Couture's follies in behalf of pretty Mme. Cadine—one of the newer actresses, who was considered extremely clever at the second-class theaters—for whom he had furnished a charming ground-floor apartment with a garden, in the Rue Blanche.

This was the way in which the men made acquaintance. The Norman, in search of ready-made luxury, bought the furniture from Couture, with all the decorative fixtures he could not remove from the rooms, a garden room for smoking in, with a veranda built of rustic woodwork, hung with Indian matting, and decorated with pottery, to get to the smoking-room in rainy weather. When the Heir was complimented on his rooms, he called them his den. The provincial took care not to mention that Grindot the architect had lavished all his art there, as had Stidmann on the carvings, and Léon de Lora on the paintings; for his greatest fault was that form of conceit which goes so far as lying with a view to self-glorification.

The Heir put the finishing touch to this splendor by building a conservatory against a south wall, not because he loved flowers, but because he meant to attack public repute by means of horticulture. At this moment he had almost attained his end. As vice-president of some gardening so-

ciety, under the presidency of the Duc de Vissembourg, brother of the Prince de Chiavari, the younger son of the late Maréchal Vernon, he had been able to decorate the vice-presidential coat with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor after an exhibition of horticultural produce, which he opened by an address given out as his own, but purchased of Lousseau for five hundred francs. He was conspicuous by wearing a flower given to him by old Blondet of Alençon, Émile Blondet's father, which he said had bloomed in his conservatory.

But this triumph was nothing. Du Ronceret, who was anxious to pass as a man of superior intelligence, had schemed to ally himself with a set of famous men, to shine by a reflected light, a plan very difficult to carry out on the basis of an income of eight thousand francs. And, in fact, he had looked by turns, but in vain, to Bixiou, Stidmann, and Léon de Lora to introduce him to Mme. Schontz, so as to become a member of that menagerie of lions of every degree. Then he dined Couture so often, that Couture proved categorically to Mme. Schontz that she had to admit such an eccentric specimen, were it only to secure him as one of those graceful unpaid messengers whom house-mistresses are glad to employ on the errands for which servants are unsuited.

By the end of the third evening Mme. Schontz knew Fabien through and through, and said to herself, "If Couture does not serve my turn, I am perfectly certain of this man. My future life runs on wheels."

So this simpleton, laughed at by everyone, was the man of her choice; but with a deliberate purpose which made the preference an insult, and the choice was never suspected from its utter improbability. Mme. Schontz turned Fabien's brain by stolen smiles, by little scenes on the threshold when she saw him out the last, if M. de Rochefide spent the evening there. She constantly invited Fabien to be the third with Arthur in her box at the Italiens, or at first-night performances; excusing herself by saying that he had done her this or that service, and that she had no other way of returning it.

Men have a rivalry of conceit among themselves—in common indeed with women—in their desire to be loved for them-

selves. Hence of all flattering attachments, none is more highly valued than that of a Mme. Schontz for the man she makes the object of her heart's affections in contrast with the other kind of love. Such a woman as Mme. Schontz, who played at being a fine lady, and who was in truth a very superior woman, was, as she could not fail to be, a subject of pride to Fabien, who fell so desperately in love with her that he never appeared in her presence but in full dress, patent leather boots, lemon-colored gloves, an embroidered and frilled shirt, an endless variety of waistcoats, in short, every external symptom of the sincerest adoration.

A month before the conference between the Duchess and the Abbé, Mme. Schontz had confided the secret of her birth and her real name to Fabien, who could not understand the object of this disclosure. A fortnight later Mme. Schontz, puzzled by the Norman's lack of comprehension, exclaimed to herself—

“Good Heavens, what an idiot I am! Why, he believes that I am in love with him!”

So then she took him out for a drive in the Bois, in her carriage, for she had had a low phaeton with a pair of horses for a year past.

In the course of this public tête-à-tête she discussed the question of her ultimate fate, and explained that she wished to get married.

“I have seven hundred thousand francs,” said she; “and I may confess to you that if I could meet with a man of great ambition, who could understand me thoroughly, I would change my condition; for, do you know, the dream of my life is to be a good citizen's wife, connected with a respectable family, and to make my husband and children all very happy.”

The Norman was content to be a favorite with Mme. Schontz; but to marry her seemed madness beyond discussion to a bachelor of eight-and-thirty, of whom the revolution of July had made a Judge. Seeing his hesitation, Mme. Schontz made the Heir a butt for the arrows of her wit, her irony, and her scorn, and turned to Couture. Within a week the speculator, tempted by a hint of her savings, offered

her his hand, his heart, and his future prospects—all three of equal value.

Mme. Schontz's maneuvers had reached this stage when Mme. de Grandlieu began to inquire as to the manners and customs of this Béatrix of the Rue Saint-Georges.

Following the Abbé Brossette's advice, the Duchess begged the Marquis d'Ajuda to bring to her house that prince of political jugglers, the famous Comte de Trailles, the archduke of bohemia, and the youngest of the young, though he was now fifty. M. d'Ajuda arranged to dine with Maxime at the club in the Rue de Beaune, and proposed that they should go on together to play dummy whist with the Duc de Grandlieu, who, having had an attack of the gout before dinner, would be alone. Though the Duke's son-in-law, the Duchess's cousin, had every right to introduce him into a house where he had never yet set foot, Maxime de Trailles was under no misapprehension as to the invitation thus conveyed; he concluded that either the Duke or the Duchess wanted to make use of him. A not unimportant feature of the time is the club life, where men gamble with others whom they would never receive in their own houses.

The Duke so far honored Maxime as to confess that he was ill; after fifteen games of whist he went to bed, leaving his wife with Maxime and d'Ajuda. The Duchess, supported by the Marquis, explained her plans to M. de Trailles, and asked his assistance, while seeming only to ask his advice. Maxime listened to the end without saying anything decisive, and would not speak till the Duchess had asked him point-blank to help her.

"I quite understand the matter, madame," said he, after giving her one of those looks—keen, astute, and comprehensive—by which these old hands can compromise their allies. "D'Ajuda will tell you that I, if anyone in Paris, can manage this double business, without your appearing in it, without its being known even that I have been here this evening. But, first of all, we must settle the Preliminaries of Léoben. What do you propose to sacrifice for this end?"

"Everything that is required."

“Very good, Mme. la Duchesse. Then as the reward of my services you will do me the honor of receiving here and giving your countenance to Mme. la Comtesse de Trailles?”

“Are you married?” exclaimed d’Ajuda.

“I am going to be married in a fortnight to the only daughter of a wealthy family, but to the last degree middle class! It is a sacrifice to opinion; I am adopting the strictest principles of my government. I am casting my old skin.

“So you will understand, Mme. la Duchesse, how important for me it would be that you and your family should take up my wife. I am quite certain to be elected deputy when my father-in-law retires from his post, as he intends doing, and I have been promised a diplomatic appointment that befits my new fortune.—I cannot see why my wife should not be as well received as Mme. de Portenduère in a society of young wives where such stars are to be seen as Mesdames de la Bastie, Georges de Maufrigneuse, de l’Estorade, du Guénic, d’Ajuda, de Restaud, de Rastignac, and de Vandenesse. My wife is pretty, and I will undertake to wake her up.

“Does this meet your views, Mme. la Duchesse?”

“You are a religious woman; and if you say yes, your promise, which I know will be sacred, will help me immensely in my changed life. And it will be another good action!—Alas, I have long been the chief of a rascally crew; but I want to be quit of all that. After all, our arms are good: Azure, a chimera or, spouting fire, armed gules, scaled vert; a chief counter erminé; granted by Francis I., who thought it desirable to give a patent of nobility to Louis XI.’s groom of the chambers—and we have been counts since the time of Catherine de Medicis.”

“I will receive and introduce your wife,” said the Duchess solemnly, “and my family shall never turn their back on her, I give you my word.”

“Oh, Mme. la Duchesse,” exclaimed Maxime, visibly touched, “if M. le Duc will also condescend to treat me kindly, I promise you on my part to make your plan succeed with no great loss to yourself.—But,” he went on, after a pause, “you must pledge yourself to obey my instructions.

. . . This is the last intrigue of my bachelor life; it must be carried through with all the more care because it is a good action," he said, smiling.

"Obey?" said the Duchess. "But must I appear in all this?"

"Indeed, madame, I will not compromise you," cried Maxime, "and I respect you too implicitly to ask for security. You have only to follow my advice. Thus, for instance, du Guénic must be carried off by his wife like a sacred object, and kept away for two years; she must take him to see Switzerland, Italy, Germany, the more strange lands the better——"

"Ah, that answers a fear expressed by my director," exclaimed the Duchess guilelessly, as she remembered the Abbé Brossette's judicious observation. Maxime and d'Ajuda could not help smiling at the idea of this coincidence of heaven and hell.

"To prevent Mme. de Rochefide from ever seeing Calyste again," she added, "we will all travel: Juste and his wife, Calyste and Sabine, and I. I will leave Clotilde with her father——"

"Do not let us shout 'Victory' just yet, madame," said Maxime. "I foresee immense difficulties; I shall conquer them, no doubt. Your esteem and favor are a prize for which I will plunge through much dirt; but it will be——"

"Dirt!" said the Duchess, interrupting the modern *condottiere* with a face equally expressive of disgust and surprise.

"Ay, and you will have to step in it, madame, since I act for you. Are you really so ignorant of the pitch of blindness to which Mme. de Rochefide has brought your son-in-law? I know it, through Nathan and Canalis, between whom she was hesitating when Calyste threw himself into that lioness's maw. Béatrix has made the noble Breton believe that she never loved anyone but him, that she is virtuous, that her attachment to Conti was of the head only, and that her heart and the rest had very little to do with it—a musical passion, in short. As to Rochefide, that was a matter of duty.

"So, you understand, she is virginal. And she proves it

by forgetting her son; for a year past she has not made the smallest attempt to see him. The little Count is, in point of fact, nearly twelve years old, and he has found a mother in Mme. Schontz; motherhood is the mania, as you know, of women of that stamp.

“Du Guénic would be cut in pieces, and let his wife be cut in pieces, for Béatrix. And do you suppose that it is easy to drag a man back from the depths of the abyss of credulity? Why, madame, Shakespeare’s Iago would waste all his handkerchiefs in such a task. It is generally imagined that Othello, his younger brother Orosmane, and Saint-Preux, and René, and Werther, and other lovers who are famous, typify love! Their icy-hearted creators never knew what was meant by an absorbing passion, Molière alone had a suspicion of it. Love, Mme. la Duchesse, is not an attachment to a noble woman, to a Clarissa; a great achievement that, on my word!—Love is to say to one’s self: ‘The woman I worship is a wretch; she is deceiving me, she will deceive me again, she is an old hand, she smells of the burning pit!’—and to fly to her, to find the blue of heaven, the flowers of Paradise. That is how Molière loved, and how we love, we scamps and rips; for I can cry at the great scene in *Arnolphe!* That is how your son-in-law loves Béatrix!

“I shall have some difficulty in getting Rochefide from Mme. Schontz; however, Mme. Schontz can, no doubt, be got to abet us; I will study her household. As to Calyste and Béatrix, it will need an ax to divide them, treachery of the best quality, infamy so base that your virtuous imagination could not go so low unless your director held your hand.—You have asked for the impossible, you shall have it. Still, in spite of my determination to employ the sword and fire, I cannot absolutely pledge myself to success. I know lovers who do not shrink under the most entire disenchantment. You are too virtuous to understand the power of women who have no virtue.”

“Do not attempt these infamies till I shall have consulted the Abbé Brossette, to know how far I am involved in them,” cried the Duchess, with an artlessness that revealed how selfish religion can be.



“You know nothing about it, my dear mother,” said the Marquis d’Ajuda.

On the steps, while waiting for Ajuda’s carriage to come up, the Marquis said to Maxime—

“You have frightened our good Duchess.”

“But she has no idea of the difficulty of the thing she wants done!—Are we going to the Jockey Club? Rochefide must ask me to dine to-morrow at Schontz’s rooms; in the course of to-night my plans will be laid, and I shall have chosen the pawns in my chessboard that are to move in the game I mean to play. In the days of her splendor Béatrix would have nothing to say to me; I will settle accounts with her, and avenge your sister-in-law so cruelly, that perhaps she will think I have overdone it.”

On the following day Rochefide told Mme. Schontz that Maxime de Trailles was coming to dinner. This was to warn her to display the utmost luxury, and prepare the very best fare for this distinguished connoisseur, who was the terror of every woman of Mme. Schontz’s class; and she gave as much care to her toilet as to arranging her house in a fitting way to receive the great man.

In Paris there are almost as many royal heads as there are different arts or special sciences, faculties, or professions; the best of those who exercise each has a royal dignity proper to himself; he is revered and respected by his peers, who know the difficulties of his work, and admire unreservedly the man who can defy them. In the eyes of the corps de ballet and courtesans Maxime was an extremely powerful and capable man, for he had succeeded in being immensely loved. He was admired by everybody who knew how hard it is to live in Paris on decent terms with your creditors; and he had never had any rival in elegance, demeanor, and wit but the famous de Marsay, who had employed him on political missions. This is enough to account for his interview with the Duchess, his influence over Mme. Schontz, and the authority of his tone in a conference he intended to hold on the Boulevard des Italiens with a young man, who was

already famous though recently introduced to the bohemia of Paris.

As he rose next morning, Maxime de Trailles heard Finot announced, to whom he had sent the night before; he begged him to arrange a fortuitous meeting at breakfast at the Café Anglais between Couture, Lousteau, and himself, where they would chat in his hearing. Finot, who was to Maxime de Trailles as a lieutenant in the presence of a Marshal of France, could refuse him nothing; it was indeed too dangerous to provoke this lion. So when Maxime came in to breakfast, he found Finot and his two friends at a table; the conversation had already been directed towards the subject of Mme. Schontz. Couture, cleverly steered by Finot and Lousteau, who, unknown to himself, was Finot's abettor, let out everything that the Comte de Trailles wanted to know about M<sup>me</sup>. Schontz.

By one o'clock, Maxime, chewing his toothpick, was talking to du Tillet on the steps of Tortoni's, where speculators form a little Bourse preliminary to real dealings on 'Change. He seemed to be absorbed in business, but he was waiting to see the young Comte de la Palférine, who must pass that way sooner or later. The Boulevard des Italiens is now what the Pont Neuf was in 1650; everybody who is anybody crosses it at least once a day.

In fact, within ten minutes, Maxime took his hand from du Tillet's arm, and nodding to the young prince of bohemia, said with a smile, "Two words with you, Count!"

The rivals, one a setting star, the other a rising sun, took their seat on four chairs outside the Café de Paris. Maxime was careful to place himself at a sufficient distance from certain old fogies who, from sheer habit, plant themselves in a row against the wall after one in the afternoon, to dry out their rheumatic pains. He had ample reasons for distrusting these old men. (See *A Man of Business*.)

"Have you any debts?" asked Maxime of the young man.

"If I had not, should I be worthy to succeed you?" replied la Palférine.

"When I ask you such a question, it is not to cast any

doubt on the matter," said de Trailles. "I only want to know if they amount to a respectable sum-total, running into five or six."

"Five or six what?" said la Palférine.

"Six figures! Do you owe 50,000, 100,000?—My debts ran up to 600,000 francs."

La Palférine took off his hat with an air of mocking respect.

"If I had credit enough to borrow a hundred thousand francs," replied he, "I would cut my creditors and go to live at Venice in the midst of its masterpieces of painting, spending the evening at the theater, the night with pretty women, and——"

"And at my age where would you be?"

"I should not last so long," replied the young Count.

Maxime returned his rival's civility by just raising his hat with an expression of comical gravity.

"That is another view of life," he replied, as a connoisseur answering a connoisseur. "Then you owe——?"

"Oh, a mere trifle, not worth confessing to an uncle, if I had one. He would disinherit me for such a contemptible sum; six thousand francs."

"Six thousand give one more trouble than a hundred thousand," said Maxime sententiously. "La Palférine, you have a bold wit, you have even more wit than boldness; you may go far and become a political personage. Look here—of all the men who have rushed into the career which I have run, and who have been pitted against me, you are the only one I ever liked."

La Palférine colored, so greatly was he flattered by this confession, made with gracious bluntness, by the greatest of Parisian adventurers. This instinct of vanity was a confession of inferiority which annoyed him; but Maxime understood the reaction easy to foresee in so clever a man, and did his best to correct it at once by placing himself at the young man's discretion.

"Will you do something for me now that I am retiring from the Olympian course by marrying, and marrying well?—I would do a good deal for you," he added.

“You make me very proud,” said la Palférine; “this is to put the fable of the lion and the mouse into practice.”

“In the first place, I will lend you twenty thousand francs,” Maxime went on.

“Twenty thousand francs?—I knew that if I walked this boulevard long enough——!” said la Palférine in a parenthesis.

“My dear boy, you must set yourself up in some sort of style,” said Maxime, smiling. “Do not trot about on your two feet; set up six. Do as I have done; I never got lower than a tilbury——”

“But then you must want me to do something quite beyond my powers.”

“No. Only to make a woman fall in love with you within a fortnight.”

“A woman of the town?”

“Why?”

“That would be out of the question; but if she is a lady, quite a lady, and very clever——”

“She is a Marquise of the first water.”

“You want her letters?” said the young Count.

“Ah, you are a man after my own heart!” cried Maxime.

“No. That is not what is wanted.”

“I am really to love her?”

“Yes, really and truly.”

“If I am to go beyond esthetics, it is quite impossible,” said la Palférine. “With regard to women, you see, I have a kind of honesty; we may trick them, but not——”

“Then I have not been mistaken,” exclaimed Maxime. “Do you suppose I am the man to scheme for some little tu’penny meanness? . . . No, you must go, you must dazzle and conquer. . . . I give you twenty thousand, and ten days to win in.—Till this evening at Mme. Schontz’s.”

“I am dining there.”

“Good,” said Maxime. “By and by, when you want me, you will find me, M. le Comte,” he added, with the air of a king pledging his word rather than promising.

“The poor woman has done you some terrible mischief then?” asked la Palférine.

“Do not try to sound the depth of my waters, my son; but let me tell you that, if you succeed, you will secure such powerful interest, that when you are tired of your bohemian life you may, like me, retire on the strength of a rich marriage.”

“Does a time come, then, when we are tired of amusing ourselves,” said la Palférine, “of being nothing, of living as the birds live, of hunting in Paris like wild men, and laughing at all that turns up?”

“We tire of everything, even of hell!” said Maxime with a laugh.—“Till this evening.”

The two scamps, the old one and the young one, rose. As Maxime got into his one-horse cab, he said to himself—

“Mme. d’Espard cannot endure Béatrix; she will help me.—To the Hôtel Grandlieu,” he cried to the coachman, seeing Rastignac pass. Find a great man without a weakness.

Maxime found the Duchess, Mme. du Guénic, and Clotilde in tears.

“What has happened?” he asked the Duchess.

“Calyste did not come in—it is the first time, and my poor Sabine is in despair.”

“Mme. la Duchesse,” said Maxime, drawing the pious lady into a window-bay, “in the name of God, who will judge us, do not breathe a word as to my devotion; pledge d’Ajuda to secrecy; never let Calyste know anything of our plots, or we shall fight a duel to the death. When I told you this would not cost you much, I meant that you would not have to spend any monstrous sum. I want about twenty thousand francs, but everything else is my business; you may have to find some good appointments—one Receiver-General’s, perhaps.”

The Duchess and Maxime left the room. When Mme. de Grandlieu came back to her two daughters, she heard a fresh lament from Sabine, full of domestic details, even more heartbreaking than those which had put an end to the young wife’s happiness.

“Be calm, my child,” said the Duchess to her daughter; “Béatrix will pay dearly for all your tears and misery; she will endure ten humiliations for each one of yours.”

Mme. Schontz had sent word to Claude Vignon, who had frequently expressed a wish to make the acquaintance of Maxime de Trailles; she invited Couture, Fabien, Bixiou, Léon de Lora, la Palférine, and Nathan, whom Rochefide begged to have for Maxime's benefit. Thus she had a party of nine, all of the first water, excepting du Ronceret; but the Heir's Norman vanity and brutality were a match for Claude Vignon's literary force, for Nathan's poetry, la Palférine's acumen, Couture's keen eye to the main chance, Bixiou's wit, Finot's foresight, Maxime's depth, and Léon de Lora's genius.

Mme. Schontz, who aimed at appearing young and handsome, fortified herself in such a toilet as women of that class alone can achieve—a point-lace cape of spider-web fineness, a blue velvet dress, of which the elegant bodice was buttoned with opals, her hair in smooth bands, and shining like ebony. Mme. Schontz owed her fame as a beauty to the brilliancy and color of a warm, creamy complexion like a Creole's, a face full of original details, with the clean-cut, firm features—of which the Comtesse de Merlin was the most famous example and the most perennially young—peculiar perhaps to southern faces. Unluckily, since her life had been so calm, so easy, little Mme. Schontz had grown decidedly fat. Her neck and shoulders, bewitchingly round, were getting coarse. Still, in France a woman's face is thought all-important, and a fine head will secure a long life to an ungraceful shape.

"My dear child," said Maxime as he came in and kissed Aurélie on the forehead, "Rochefide wanted me to see your home, where I have not yet been; it is almost worthy of his income of four hundred thousand francs. Well, he had less by fifty thousand a year when he first knew you; in less than five years you have gained for him as much as any other woman—Antonia, Malaga, Cadine, or Florentine—would have devoured."

"I am not a baggage—I am an artist!" said Mme. Schontz, with some dignity. "I hope to end by founding a family of respectable folks, as they say in the play."

"It is dreadful, we all getting married," said Maxime,

dropping into a chair by the fire. "Here am I within a few days of making a Comtesse Maxime."

"Oh! how I should like to see her!" cried Mme. Schontz.—"But allow me," she went on, "to introduce M. Claude Vignon—M. Claude Vignon, M. de Trailles."

"Ah, it was you who let Camille Maupin—mine hostess of literature—go into a convent?" cried Maxime. "After you, God!—No one ever did me so much honor. Mlle. des Touches made a Louis XIV. of you, monsieur."

"And this is how history is written!" said Claude Vignon. "Did you not know that her fortune was spent in releasing M. du Guénic's estates? If she knew that Calyste had fallen into the arms of her ex-friend——!" Maxime kicked the critic's foot, looking at M. de Rochefide, "on my word, I believe she would come out of her nunnery to snatch him from her."

"I declare, my dear Rochefide," said Maxime, finding that his warning had failed to check Claude Vignon, "in your place I would give my wife her fortune, that the world might not suppose that she had taken up Calyste for want of money."

"Maxime is right!" said Mme. Schontz, looking at Arthur, who colored violently. "If I have saved you some thousand francs to invest, you could not spend them better. I should have secured the happiness of both husband and wife.—What a good-conduct stripe!"

"I never thought of it," replied the Marquis. "But it is true; one is a gentleman first, and a husband after."

"Let me advise you of the appropriate moment for your generosity," said Maxime.

"Arthur," said Aurélie, "Maxime is right. Our generous actions, you see, old boy, must be done as Couture's shares must be sold," and she looked in the glass to see who was coming in, "in the nick of time."

Couture was followed by Finot, and in a few minutes all the guests were assembled in the handsome blue-and-gold drawing-room of the "Hôtel Schontz," as the men called their place of meeting since Rochefide had bought it for his Ninon II. On seeing la Palférine come in the last, Maxime

went up to him, drew him into a recess, and gave him the twenty bank-notes.

"Above all, do not be stingy with them," said he, with the native grace of a spendthrift.

"No one knows so well as you how to double the value of what appears to be a gift," replied la Palférine.

"Then you agree?"

"Well, since I take the money!" replied the youth, with some pride and irony.

"Very well. Nathan, who is here, will take you within two days to call on the Marquise de Lochefide," said Maxime in his ear.

La Palférine jumped as he heard the name.

"Do not fail to declare yourself madly in love with her; and, to rouse no suspicions, drink—wine, liqueurs no end! I will tell Aurélie to put you next to Nathan. Only, my son, we must now meet every night on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, at one in the morning; you to report progress, and I to give you instructions."

"I will be there, master," said the young Count, with a bow.

"What makes you ask a fellow to dine with us who comes dressed like a waiter?" said Maxime to Mme. Schontz in a whisper, and looking at du Ronceret.

"Have you never seen 'The Heir'? Du Ronceret, from Alençon."

"Monsieur," said Maxime to Fabien, "you must know my friend d'Esgrignon?"

"Victorien dropped the acquaintance long since," replied Fabien; "but we were very intimate as boys."

The dinner was such as can only be given in Paris, and in the houses of these perfectly reckless women, for their refined luxury amazes the most fastidious. It was at a supper of this kind, given by a rich and handsome courtesan like Mme. Schontz, that Paganini declared that he had never eaten such food at the table of any sovereign, nor drunk such wine in any prince's house, nor heard such witty conversation, nor seen such attractive and tasteful magnificence.

Maxime and Mme. Schontz were the first to return to the



drawing-room, at about ten o'clock, leaving the other guests, who had ceased to veil their anecdotes, and who boasted of their powers, with sticky lips glued to liqueur-glasses that they could not empty.

"Well, pretty one," said Maxime, "you are quite right. Yes, I came to get something out of you. It is a serious matter; you must give up Arthur. But I will see that he gives you two hundred thousand francs."

"And why am I to give him up, poor old boy?"

"To marry that noodle, who came from Alençon on purpose. He has already been a Judge; I will get him made President of the Court in the place of old Blondet, who is nearly eighty-two, and if you know how to catch the wind, your husband will be elected deputy. You will be people of importance, and crush Mme. la Comtesse du Bruel——"

"Never!" cried Mme. Schontz; "she is a Countess."

"Is he of the stuff they make counts of?"

"Well, he has a coat-of-arms," said Aurélie, seeking a letter in a handsome bag that hung by the fireplace, and handing it to Maxime. "What does it all mean? There are combs on it."

"He bears: Quarterly, the first argent three combs gules, second and third three bunches of grapes with stems and leaves all proper, fourth azure four pens or, laid in fret. Motto, *Servir*, and a squire's helmet.—No great things! They were granted by Louis XV.—They must have had some haberdasher grandfather, the maternal ancestry made money in wine, and the du Ronceret who got the arms must have been a registrar.—But if you succeed in throwing off Arthur, the du Roncerets shall be Barons at least, I promise you, my pretty pigeon. You see, child, you must lie in pickle for five or six years in the country if want to bury La Schontz in Mme. la Présidente. The rascal cast eyes at you, of which the meaning was quite clear; you have hooked him."

"No," said Aurélie. "When I offered him my hand, he was as quiet as brandy is in the market."

"I will make up his mind for him if he is tipsy. Go and see how they are all getting on."

“It is not worth the trouble of going. I hear no one but Bixiou giving one of his caricatures, to which nobody is listening; but I know my Arthur; he thinks it necessary to be polite to Bixiou, and he is staring at him still, even if his eyes are shut.”

“Let us go back then.”

“By the by, for whose benefit am I doing all this, Maxime?” said Mme. Schontz suddenly.

“For Mme. de Rochefide,” replied Maxime bluntly. “It is impossible to patch up matters between her and Arthur so long as you keep hold of him. To her it is a matter of being at the head of her house and having four hundred thousand francs a year.”

“And she only offers me two hundred thousand francs down? I will have three hundred thousand if she is at the bottom of it. What, I have taken every care of her brat and her husband, I have filled her place in every way, and she is to beat me down? Look here, my dear fellow, I shall then have just a million. And besides that, you promise me the Presidency of the Court at Alençon if only I can make up for Mme. du Ronceret——”

“Right you are!” said Maxime.

“How I shall be bored in that little town!” said Aurélie philosophically. “I have heard so much about that part of the country from d’Esgrignon and Mme. Val-Noble, that it is as though I had lived there already.”

“But if I could promise you the help of the title?”

“Oh, Maxime, if you can really do that.—Ay, but the pigeon refuses to fly——”

“And he is very ugly, with his skin like a plum; he has bristles instead of whiskers, and looks like a wild boar, though he has eyes like a bird of prey. He will be the finest President ever seen.—Be easy! In ten minutes he will be singing you Isabelle’s song in the fourth act of *Robert le Diable*, ‘*Je suis à tes genoux.*’—But you must undertake to send Arthur back to fall at Béatrix’s feet.”

“It is difficult, but among us we may manage it.”

At about half-past ten the gentlemen came into the drawing-room to take coffee. In the position in which Mme.

Schontz, Couture, and du Ronceret found themselves, it is easy to imagine the effect that was produced on the ambitious Norman by the following conversation between Couture and Maxime in a corner, carried on indeed in an undertone that they might not be overheard, but which Fabien contrived to hear.

“My dear fellow, if you were wise, you would accept the place of Receiver-General in some out-of-the-way place; Mme. de Rochefide would get it for you. Aurélie’s million francs would enable you to deposit the security, and you would settle everything on her as your wife. Then, if you steered your boat cleverly, you would be made deputy, and the only premium I ask for having saved you will be your vote in the Chamber.”

“I shall always be proud to serve under you.”

“Oh, my boy, you have had a very close shave! Just fancy, Aurélie thought herself in love with that Norman from Alençon; she wanted to have him made a Baron, President of the Court in his native town, and officer of the Legion of Honor. The noodle never guessed what Mme. Schontz was worth, and you owe your good fortune to her disgust; so do not give such a clever woman time to change her mind. For my part, I will go and put the irons in the fire.”

So Maxime left Couture in the seventh heaven of happiness, and said to la Palférine, “Shall I take you with me, my son?”

By eleven o’clock Aurélie found herself left with Couture, Fabien, and Rochefide. Arthur was asleep in an armchair; Couture and Fabien were trying to outstay each other, but without success. Mme. Schontz put an end to this contest by saying to Couture, “Till to-morrow, dear boy!” which he took in good part.

“Mademoiselle,” said Fabien, in a low voice, “when you saw me so unready to respond to the proposal you made me indirectly, do not imagine that there was the smallest hesitation on my part; but you do not know my mother; she would never consent to my happiness . . .”

“You are of age to address her with a *sommation re-*

*spectueuse*,<sup>1</sup> my dear fellow," retorted Aurélie insolently. "However, if you are afraid of mamma, you are not the man for my money."

"Joséphine!" said the Heir affectionately, as he boldly put his arm round Mme. Schontz's waist, "if I believed that you loved me——"

"And what then?"

"I might perhaps pacify my mother, and gain more than her consent."

"How?"

"If you would use your influence——"

"To get you created Baron, officer of the Legion of Honor, and President of the Court, my boy—is that it?—Listen to me, I have done so many things in the course of my life, that I am capable of being virtuous! I could be an honest woman, a loyal wife, and take my husband in tow to upper regions; but I insist on being so loved by him that not a glance, not a thought, shall ever be given to any heart but mine, not even in a wish. . . . How does that do for you? Do not bind yourself rashly; it is for life, my boy."

"With a woman like you, done, without looking twice!" cried Fabien, as much intoxicated by a look as he was by the West Indian liqueurs.

"You shall never repent of that word, my brave boy; you shall be a peer of France.—As to that poor old chap," she went on, looking at Rochefide asleep, "it is a, double l, all, o-v-e-r, ver—all over!"

She said it so cleverly, so prettily, that Fabien seized Mme. Shontz and kissed her with an impulse of passion and joy, in which the intoxication of love and wine was second to that of happiness and ambition.

"But now, my dear child," said she, "you must remember henceforth to behave respectfully to your wife, not to play the lover, and to leave me to get out of my slough as decently as may be.—And Couture, who believed himself a rich man and Receiver-General——!"

<sup>1</sup> A legal form by which French sons can reduce the obstinacy of recalcitrant parents when they refuse their consent to a marriage.

“I have a horror of the man,” said Fabien. “I wish I might never see him again!”

“I will have him here no more,” said the courtesan with a little prudish air. “Now that we understand each other, my Fabien, go; it is one o’clock.”

This little scene gave rise in the Schontz household, hitherto so perfectly happy, to a phase of domestic warfare between Arthur and Aurélie, such as any covert interest on the part of one of the partners is certain to give rise to.

The very next day Arthur woke to find himself alone; Mme. Schontz was cold, as women of that sort know how to be.

“What happened last night?” asked he at breakfast, looking at Aurélie.

“That is the way of it, in Paris,” said she. “You go to bed on a wet night, next morning the pavement is dry, and everything so frozen that the dust flies; would you like a brush?”

“But what ails you, dear little woman?”

“Go, go to your great gawk of a wife!”

“My wife?” cried the unhappy Marquis.

“Couldn’t I guess why you brought Maxime here? You wanted to make it up with Mme. de Rochefide, who wants you perhaps for some tell-tale baby.—And I, whom you think so cunning, was advising you to give her back her money!—Oh, I know your tricks. After five years my gentleman is tired of me. I am fat, Béatrix is bony; it will be a change. You are not the first man I have known with a taste for skeletons. Your Béatrix dresses well too, and you are one of the men who like a clothes-horse. Besides, you want to send M. du Guénic packing. That would be a triumph! How well it will look! Won’t it be talked about! You will be quite a hero!”

At two o’clock Mme. Schontz had not come to an end of her ironical banter, in spite of Arthur’s protestations. She said she was engaged to dine out. She desired the “faithless one” to go without her to the Italiens; she was going to a first-night performance at the Ambigu-Comique, and to

make the acquaintance of a charming woman, Lousteau's mistress, Mme. de la Baudraye.

To prove his eternal attachment to his little Aurélie, and his aversion for his wife, Arthur offered to set out the very next day for Italy, and to live as her husband in Rome, Naples, or Florence, whichever Aurélie might prefer, giving her sixty thousand francs a year.

"All that is pure whims," said she. "That will not hinder your making it up with your wife, and you will be wise to do so."

At the end of this formidable discussion, Arthur and Aurélie parted, he to play and dine at the club, she to dress and spend the evening tête-à-tête with Fabien.

Monsieur de Rochefide found Maxime at the club, and poured out his complaints, as a man who felt happiness being torn from his heart by the roots that clung by every fiber. Maxime listened to the Marquis's lament as polite people can listen while thinking of something else.

"I am a capital counselor in such cases, my dear fellow," said he. "Well, you make a great mistake in letting Aurélie see how much you care for her. Let me introduce you to Mme. Antonia—a heart to let. You will see La Schontz sing very small. Why, she is seven-and-thirty, is your Schontz, and Antonia is but twenty-six! And such a woman! Her wits are not all in her brains, I can tell you. Indeed, she is my pupil. If Mme. Schontz still struts out her pride, do you know what it means?"

"On my honor, no."

"That she means to get married; and then nothing can hinder her from throwing you over. After a six years' lease the woman has a right to do it.—But if you will listen to me, you can do better than that. At the present time your wife is worth a thousand Schontzes and Antonias of the Saint-Georges quarter. She will be hard to win, but not impossible; and she will make you as happy as Orgon! At any rate, if you do not wish to look like a fool, come to supper to-night at Antonia's."

"No, I love Aurélie too well; I will not allow her to have any cause for blaming me."

“Oh, my dear fellow! what a life you are making for yourself!” cried Maxime.

“It is eleven o'clock. She will have returned from the Ambigu,” said Rochefide, going off. And he roared at the coachman to drive as fast as he could to the Rue de la Bruyère.

Mme. Schontz had given distinct orders, and monsieur was admitted exactly as though he and madame were the best of friends; but madame, informed of monsieur's return, took care to let monsieur hear the slam of her dressing-room door, shut as doors shut when a lady is taken by surprise. Then, on the corner of the piano, was Fabien's hat, intentionally forgotten, and conspicuously fetched away by the maid as soon as monsieur and madame were engaged in conversation.

“So you did not go to the play, little woman?”

“No, I changed my mind.”

“And who has been here?” he asked quite simply, seeing the maid carry away the hat.

“Nobody.”

To this audacious falsehood Arthur could only bow his head; this was passing under the Caudine forks of submission. True love has this magnanimous cowardice. Arthur behaved to Mme. Schontz as Sabine did to Calyste, as Calyste did to Béatrix.

Within a week there was a change like that of a grub to a butterfly in the handsome and clever young Count, Charles-Édouard Rusticoli de la Palférine (the hero of the sketch called *A Prince of Bohemia*, which makes it unnecessary to describe his person and character in this place). Hitherto he had lived very poorly, making up his deficits with the audacity of a Danton; now he paid his debts, by Maxime's advice he had a little low carriage, he was elected to the Jockey Club, to the club in the Rue de Grammont, he became superlatively elegant. Finally, he published in the *Journal des Débats* a novel which earned him in a few days such a reputation as professional writers do not achieve after many years of labor and success, for in Paris nothing

is so vehement as what is to prove ephemeral. Nathan, perfectly certain that the Count would never write anything more, praised this elegant and impertinent youth to Mme. de Rochefide in such terms, that Béatrix, spurred on by the poet's account of him, expressed a wish to see this prince of fashionable vagabonds.

"He will be all the more delighted to come here," replied Nathan, "because I know he is so much in love with you as to commit any folly."

"But he has committed every folly already, I am told."

"Every folly? No," replied Nathan, "he has not yet been so foolish as to love a decent woman."

A few days after the plot of the boulevard had been laid between Maxime and the seductive Count Charles-Édouard, this young gentleman, on whom Nature had bestowed—in irony, no doubt—a pathetically melancholy countenance, made his first incursion into the nest in the Rue de Courcelles, where the dove, to receive him, fixed an evening when Calyste was obliged to go out with his wife. If ever you meet la Palférine—or when you come to the *Prince of Bohemia* in the third part of this long picture of modern manners—you will at once understand the triumph achieved in a single evening by that sparkling wit, those astonishing high spirits, especially if you can conceive of the capital byplay of the sponsor who agreed to second him on this occasion. Nathan was a good fellow; he showed off the young Count as a jeweler shows off a necklace he wants to sell, by making the stones sparkle in the light.

La Palférine discreetly was the first to leave; he left Nathan and the Marquise together, trusting to the great author's co-operation, which was admirable. Seeing the Marquise quite amazed, he fired her fancy by a certain reticence, which stirred in her such chords of curiosity as she did not know existed in her. Nathan gave her to understand that it was not so much la Palférine's wit that won him his successes with women as his superior gifts in the art of love; and he cried him up beyond measure.

This is the place for setting forth a novel result of the great law of contrasts, which gives rise to many a crisis in



the human heart, and accounts for so many vagaries that we are forced to refer to it sometimes, as well as to the law of affinities. Courtesans—including all that portion of the female sex which is named, unnamed, and renamed every quarter of a century—all preserve, in the depths of their hearts, a vigorous wish to recover their liberty, to feel a pure, saintly, and heroic love for some man to whom they can sacrifice everything. (See *A Harlot's Progress*.) They feel this antithetical need so keenly, that it is rare to find a woman of the kind who has not many times aspired to become virtuous through love. The most frightful deception cannot discourage them. Women who are, on the contrary, restrained by education, and by their rank in life, fettered by the dignity of their family, living in the midst of wealth, crowned by a halo of virtue, are tempted—secretly, of course—to try the tropical regions of passion. These two antagonistic types of women have, at the bottom of their hearts, the one a little craving for virtue, the other a little craving for dissipation, which Jean-Jacques Rousseau first had the courage to point out. In those it is the last gleam of the divine light not yet extinct; in these it is a trace of the primitive clay.

This remaining claw of the beast was tickled, this hair of the Devil was pulled with the greatest skill, by Nathan. The Marquise seriously wondered whether she had not hitherto been the dupe of her intellect, whether her education was complete. Vice!—is perhaps the desire to know everything.

Next day Calyste was seen by Béatrix as what he was—a perfect and loyal gentleman, devoid of spirit and wit.

In Paris, to be known as a wit, a man's wit must flow as water flows from a spring; for all men of fashion, and Parisians in general, are witty. But Calyste was too much in love, he was too much absorbed to observe the change in Béatrix, and satisfy her by opening up fresh veins; he was very colorless in the reflected light of the previous evening, and could not give the greedy Béatrix the smallest excitement. A great love is a credit account open to such voracious drafts on it that the moment of bankruptcy is inevitable.

In spite of the weariness of this day—the day when a woman is bored by her lover!—Béatrix shuddered with fears as she thought of a duel between la Palférine, the successor of Maxime de Trailles, and Calyste du Guénic, a brave man without brag. She therefore hesitated to see the young Count any more; but the knot was cut by a simple incident. Béatrix had a third share in a box at the Italiens—a dark box on the pit tier where she might not be seen. For some few days Calyste had been so bold as to accompany the Marquise and sit behind her, timing their arrival late enough to attract no attention. Béatrix was always one of the first to leave before the end of the last act, and Calyste escorted her, keeping an eye on her, though old Antoine was in waiting on his mistress.

Maxime and la Palférine studied these tactics, dictated by the proprieties, by the love of concealment characteristic of the “Eternal Baby,” and also by a dread that weighs on every woman who, having once been a constellation of fashion, has fallen for love from her rank in the zodiac. She then fears humiliation as a worse agony than death; but this agony of pride, this shipwreck, which women who have kept their place on Olympus inflict on those who have fallen, came upon her, by Maxime’s contriving, under the most horrible circumstances.

At a performance of *Lucia*, which ended, as is well known, by one of Rubini’s greatest triumphs, Mme. de Rochefide, before she was called by Antoine, came out from the corridor into the vestibule of the theater, where the stairs were crowded with pretty women, grouped on the steps, or standing in knots till their servants should bring up their carriages. Béatrix was at once recognized by all; a whisper ran through every group, rising to a murmur. In the twinkling of an eye every woman vanished; the Marquise was left alone as if plague-stricken. Calyste, seeing his wife on one of the staircases, dared not join the outcast, and it was in vain that Béatrix twice gave him a tearful look, an entreaty to come to her support. At that moment la Palférine, elegant, lordly, and charming, quitted two other women, and came, with a bow, to talk to the Marquise.

“Take my arm and come defiantly with me; I can find your carriage,” said he.

“Will you finish the evening with me?” she replied, as she got into her carriage and made room for him by her side.

La Palférine said to his groom, “Follow madame’s carriage,” and got in with Mme. de Rochefide, to Calyste’s amazement. He was left standing, planted on his feet as though they were made of lead, for it was on seeing him looking pale and blank that Béatrix had invited the young Count to accompany her. Every dove is a Robespierre in white feathers.

Three carriages arrived together at the Rue de Courcelles with lightning swiftness—Calyste’s, la Palférine’s, and the Marquise’s.

“So you are here?” said Béatrix, on going into her drawing-room leaning on the young Count’s arm, and finding Calyste already there, his horse having outdistanced the other two carriages.

“So you are acquainted with this gentleman!” said Calyste to Béatrix with suppressed fury.

“M. le Comte de la Palférine was introduced to me by Nathan ten days ago,” said Béatrix; “and you, monsieur, have known me for four years——”

“And I am ready, madame,” said la Palférine, “to make Mme. d’Espard repent of having been the first to turn her back on you—down to her grandchildren——”

“Oh, it was *she*?” cried Béatrix. “I will pay her out.”

“If you want to be revenged, you must win back your husband, but I am prepared to bring him back to you,” said la Palférine in her ear.

The conversation thus begun was carried on till two in the morning, without giving Calyste an opportunity of speaking two words apart to Béatrix, who constantly kept his rage in subjection by her glances. La Palférine, who was not in love with her, was as superior in good taste, wit, and charm as Calyste was beneath himself; writhing on his seat like a worm cut in two, and thrice starting to his feet with an impulse to stop la Palférine. The third time that Calyste flew at his rival, the Count said, “Are you in pain,

monsieur?" in a tone that made Calyste sit down on the nearest chair, and remain as immovable as an image.

The Marquise chatted with the light ease of a Célimène, ignoring Calyste's presence. La Palférine was so supremely clever as to depart on a last witty speech, leaving the two lovers at war.

Thus, by Maxime's skill, the flames of discord were raging in the divided households of M. and Mme. de Rochefide.

On the morrow, having heard from la Palférine, at the Jockey Club, where the young Count was playing whist with great profit, of the success of the scene he had plotted, Maxime went to the Hôtel Schontz to ascertain how Aurélie was managing her affairs.

"My dear fellow," cried Mme. Schontz, laughing as she saw him, "I am at my wits' end. I am closing my career with the discovery that it is a misfortune to be clever."

"Explain your meaning."

"In the first place, my dear friend, I kept my Arthur for a week on a regimen of kicking his shins, with the most patriotic old stories and the most unpleasant discipline known in our profession. 'You are ill,' said he with fatherly mildness, 'for I have never been anything but kind to you, and I perfectly adore you.'—'You have one fault, my dear,' said I; 'you bore me.'—'Well, but have you not all the cleverest men and the handsomest young fellows in Paris to amuse you?' said the poor man. I was shut up. Then I felt that I loved him."

"Hah!" said Maxime.

"What is to be done? These ways are too much for us; it is impossible to resist them. Then I changed the stop; I made eyes at that wild boar of a lawyer, my future husband, as great a sheep now as Arthur; I made him sit there in Rochefide's armchair, and I thought him a perfect fool. How bored I was!—But, of course, I had to keep Fabien there that we might be discovered together——"

"Well," cried Maxime, "get on with your story! When Rochefide found you together, what next?"

"You would never guess, my good fellow. By your instructions the banns are published, the marriage contract is

being drawn, Notre-Dame de Lorette is out of court. When it is a case of matrimony, something may be paid on account.—When he found us together, Fabien and me, poor Arthur stole off on tiptoe to the dining-room, and began growling and clearing his throat and knocking the chairs about. That great gaby Fabien, to whom I cannot tell everything, was frightened, and that, my dear Maxime, is the point we have reached.—Why, if Arthur should find the couple of us some morning on coming into my room, he is capable of saying, ‘Have you had a pleasant night, children?’”

Maxime nodded his head, and for some minutes sat twirling his cane.

“I know the sort of man,” said he. “This is what you must do; there is no help for it but to throw Arthur out the window and keep the door tightly shut. You must begin again the same scene with Fabien——”

“How intolerable! For, after all, you see, the sacrament has not yet blessed me with virtue . . .”

“You must contrive to catch Arthur’s eye when he finds you together,” Maxime went on; “if he gets angry, there is an end of the matter. If he only growls as before, there is yet more an end of it.”

“How?”

“Well, you must be angry; you must say, ‘I thought you loved and valued me; but you have ceased to care for me; you feel no jealousy——,’ but you know it all, chapter and verse.—‘Under such circumstances Maxime’ (drag me in) ‘would kill his man on the spot’ (and cry). ‘And Fabien’ (make him ashamed of himself by comparing him with Fabien)—‘Fabien would have a dagger ready to stab you to the heart. That is what I call love! There, go! Good-night, good-by! Take back your house; I am going to marry Fabien. He will give me his name, he will! He has thrown over his old mother!’—In short, you——”

“Of course, of course! I will be magnificent!” cried Mme. Schontz. “Ah, Maxime! There will never be but one Maxime, as there never was but one de Marsay.”

“La Palférine is greater than I,” said de Trailles modestly. “He is getting on famously.”

“He has a tongue, but you have backbone and a grip. How many people have you kept going! How many have you doubled up!”

“La Palférine has every qualification; he is deep and well informed, while I am ignorant,” replied Maxime.—“I have seen Rastignac, who came to terms at once with the Keeper of the Seals. Fabien will be made President of the Court and officer of the Legion of Honor after a year’s probation.”

“I will take up religion,” replied Mme. Schontz, emphasizing the phrase so as to win an approving look from Maxime.

“Priests are worth a hundred of us!” said Maxime.

“Really?” said Aurélie. “Then I may find someone to talk to in a country town.—I have begun my part. Fabien has already told his mother that grace has dawned on me, and he has bewitched the good woman with my million and his Presidency; she agrees that we are to live with her; she asked for a portrait of me, and has sent me hers; if Love were to look at it, he would fall backwards.—Go, then, Maxime; I will demolish the poor man this evening. It goes to my heart.”

Two days later la Palférine and Maxime met at the door of the Jockey Club.

“It is done,” said Charles-Édouard.

The words, containing a whole horrible and terrible drama, such as vengeance often carries out, made the Comte de Trailles smile.

“We shall have all de Rochefide’s jeremiads,” said Maxime, “for you and Aurélie have finished together. Aurélie has turned Arthur out of doors, and now we must get hold of him. He is to give three hundred thousand francs to Mme. du Ronceret and return to his wife. We will prove to him that Béatrix is superior to Aurélie.”

“We have at least ten days before us,” said Charles-Édouard sapiently, “and not too much in all conscience; for now I know the Marquise, and the poor man will be handsomely fleeced.”

“What will you do when the bomb bursts?”

“We can always be clever when we have time to think it out; I am grand when I am able to prepare for it.”

The two gamblers went into the drawing-room together, and found the Marquis de Rochefide looking two years older; he had no stays on; he had sacrificed his elegance; his beard had grown.

“Well, my dear Marquis?” said Maxime.

“Oh, my dear fellow, my life is broken . . .” and for ten minutes Arthur talked, and Maxime gravely listened; he was thinking of his marriage, which was to take place a week hence.

“My dear Arthur, I advised you of the only means I knew of to keep Aurélie, and you did not choose . . .”

“What means?”

“Did I not advise you to go to supper with Antonia?”

“Quite true.—How can I help it? I love her.—And you, you make love as Grisier fences.”

“Listen to me, Arthur; give her three hundred thousand francs for her little house, and I promise you I will find you something better.—I will speak to you again of the unknown fair one by and by; I see d’Ajuda, who wants to say two words to me.”

And Maxime left the inconsolable man to talk to the representative of the family needing consolation.

“My dear fellow,” said the other Marquis in an undertone, “the Duchess is in despair; Calyste has quietly packed up and procured a passport. Sabine wants to follow the fugitives, catch Béatrix, and claw her. She is expecting another child; and the whole thing looks rather murderous, for she has gone quite openly and bought pistols.”

“Tell the Duchess that Mme. de Rochefide is not going, and within a fortnight the whole thing will be settled. Now, d’Ajuda, your hand on it? Neither you nor I have said anything or known anything. We shall admire the effects of chance.”

“The Duchess has already made me swear secrecy on the Gospels and the Cross.”

“You will receive my wife a month hence?”

“With pleasure.”

"Everybody will be satisfied," replied Maxime. "Only warn the Duchess that something is about to happen which will delay her departure for Italy for six weeks; it concerns M. du Guénic. You will know all about it later."

"What is it?" asked d'Ajuda, who was looking at la Palférine.

"Socrates said before his death, 'We owe a cock to Æsculapius.' But your brother-in-law will be let off for the comb," replied la Palférine without hesitation.

For ten days Calyste endured the burden of a woman's anger, all the more implacable because it was seconded by a real passion. Béatrix felt that form of love so roughly but truly described to the Duchess by Maxime de Trailles. Perhaps there is no highly organized being that does not experience this overwhelming passion once in a lifetime. The Marquise felt herself quelled by a superior force, by a young man who was not impressed by her rank, who, being of as noble birth as herself, could look at her with a calm and powerful eye, and from whom her greatest feminine efforts could scarcely extract a smile of admiration. Finally, she was crushed by a tyrant, who always left her bathed in tears, deeply hurt, and believing herself wronged. Charles-Édouard played the same farce on Mme. de Rochefide that she had been playing these six months on Calyste.

Since the scene of her mortification at the Italiens, Béatrix had adhered to one formula—

"You preferred the world and your wife to me, so you do not love me. If you wish to prove that you do love me, sacrifice your wife and the world. Give up Sabine, leave her, and let us go to live in Switzerland, in Italy, or in Germany."

Justifying herself by this cool ultimatum, she had established the sort of blockade which women carry into effect by cold looks, scornful shrugs, and a face like a stone citadel. She believed herself rid of Calyste; she thought he would never venture on a breach with the Grandlieus. To give up Sabine, to whom Mlle. des Touches had given her fortune, meant poverty for him.



However, Calyste, mad with despair, had secretly procured a passport, and begged his mother to forward to him a considerable sum. While waiting for the money to reach him, he kept watch over Béatrix, himself a victim to the jealousy of a Breton. At last, nine days after the fateful communication made by la Palférine to Maxime at the club, the Baron, to whom his mother had sent thirty thousand francs, flew to the Rue de Courcelles, determined to force the blockade, to turn out la Palférine, and to leave Paris with his idol appeased.

This was one of those fearful alternatives when a woman, who has preserved a fragment of self-respect may sink forever into the depths of vice, but may, on the other hand, return to virtue. Hitherto Mme. de Rochefide had regarded herself as a virtuous woman, whose heart had been invaded by two passions; but to love Charles-Édouard, and allow herself to be loved by Calyste, would wreck her self-esteem; for where falsehood begins, infamy begins. She had granted rights to Calyste, and no human power could hinder the Breton from throwing himself at her feet and watering them with the tears of abject repentance. Many persons wonder to see the icy insensibility under which women smother their passions; but if they could not thus blot out the past, life for them would be bereft of dignity; they could never escape from the inevitable collusion to which they had once succumbed.

In her entirely new position Béatrix would have been saved if la Palférine had come to her; but old Antoine's alertness was her ruin.

On hearing a carriage stop at the door, she exclaimed to Calyste, "Here are visitors!" and she hurried away to prevent a catastrophe.

Antoine, a prudent man, replied to Charles-Édouard, who had called solely to hear these very words, "Madame is gone out."

When Béatrix heard from the old servant that the young Count had called, and what he had been told, she said, "Quite right," and returned to the drawing-room, saying to herself, "I will be a nun!"

Calyste, who had made so bold as to open the window, caught sight of his rival.

“Who was it?” he asked.

“I do not know; Antoine has not come up yet.”

“It was la Palférine——”

“Very possibly.”

“You love him, and that is why you find fault with me.—  
I saw him!”

“You saw him?”

“I opened the window.”

Béatrix dropped half dead on the sofa. Then she tried to temporize to save the future; she put off their departure for ten days on the plea of business, and vowed to herself that she would close her door against Calyste if only she could pacify la Palférine, for these are the horrible compromises and burning torments that underlie lives that have gone off the rails on which the great train of Society runs.

As soon as Béatrix was alone she felt so miserable, so deeply humiliated, that she went to bed; she was ill; the fearful struggle that rent her heart seemed to leave a horrible reaction, and she sent for the doctor; but, at the same time, she dispatched to la Palférine the following note, in which she avenged herself on Calyste with a sort of frenzy:—

“Come to see me, my friend, I am in desperation. Antoine turned you away when your visit would have put an end to one of the most horrible nightmares of my life, by rescuing me from a man I hate, whom I hope never to see again. I love no one on earth but you, and I never shall love anyone but you, though I am so unhappy as not to please you so much as I could wish . . .”

She covered four pages, which, having begun thus, ended in a rhapsody far too poetical to be reproduced in print, in which Béatrix so effectually compromised herself, that in conclusion she said—

“Am I not wholly at your mercy? Ah, no price would be too great for me to prove how dearly you are loved!”

And she signed her name, a thing she had never done for either Calyste or Conti.

On the following day, when the young Count called on the Marquise, she was taking a bath. Antoine begged him to wait. But he dismissed Calyste in his turn, when, starving with passion, he also came early; and la Palférine could see him as he got into his carriage again in despair.

"Oh, Charles," said the Marquise, coming into the drawing-room, "you have ruined me!"

"I know it, madame," replied he coolly. "You swore that you loved me alone, you offered to give me a letter in which you will set down the reasons you would have had for killing yourself, so that in the event of your being unfaithful to me I might poison you without fear of human justice—as if superior souls needed to resort to poison to avenge themselves!—You wrote, 'No price would be too great for me to prove how dearly you are loved!'"—Well, I find a contradiction between these closing words of your letter and your speech, 'You have ruined me.' I will know now whether you have had the courage to break with du Guénic."

"You are revenged on him beforehand," said she, throwing her arms round his neck. "And that matter is enough to bind you and me forever——"

"Madame," said the prince of bohemia coldly, "if you desire my friendship, I consent; but there are conditions——"

"Conditions?"

"Yes, conditions—as follows: You must be reconciled with M. de Rochefide, resume the honors of your position, return to your fine house in the Rue d'Anjou—you will be one of the queens of Paris. You can achieve this by making Rochefide play a part in politics and guiding your conduct with such skill and tenacity as Mme. d'Espard has displayed. This is the position which any woman must fill whom I am to honor with my devotion——"

"But you forget that M. de Rochefide's consent is necessary."

"Oh, my dear child," replied la Palférine, "we have prepared him for it. I have pledged my honor as a gentleman

that you were worth all the Schontzes of the Quartier Saint-Georges put together, and you owe it to my honor——”

For eight days, every day, Calyste called on Béatrix, and was invariably sent away by Antoine, who put on a grave face and assured him, “Mme. la Marquise is seriously ill.”

From thence Calyste rushed off to la Palférine, whose servant always explained, “M. le Comte is gone hunting.” And each time Calyste left a letter for the Count.

At last, on the ninth day, Calyste, in reply to a note from la Palférine fixing a time for an explanation, found him at home, but with him Maxime de Trailles, to whom the younger rake wished, no doubt, to give proof of his abilities by getting him to witness the scene.

“M. le Baron,” said Charles-Édouard quietly, “here are the six notes you have done me the honor of writing to me. They are unopened, just as you sent them; I knew beforehand what might be in them when I heard that you had been seeking me everywhere since the day when I looked at you out of the window, while you were at the door of a house where, on the previous day, I had been at the door while you were at the window. I thought it best to remain ignorant of an ill-judged challenge. Between you and me, you have too much good taste to owe a woman a grudge because she has ceased to love you. And to fight your preferred rival is a bad way to reinstate yourself.

“Also, in the present case, your letters were invalidated, null and void, as lawyers say, in consequence of a radical error: you have too much good sense to quarrel with a husband for taking back his wife. M. de Rochefide feels that the Marquise’s position is undignified. You will no longer find Mme. de Rochefide in the Rue de Courcelles; six months hence, next winter, you will see her in her husband’s home. You very rashly thrust yourself into the midst of a reconciliation between a married couple, to which you yourself gave rise by failing to shelter Mme. de Rochefide from the mortification she endured at the opera-house. As we left, Béatrix, to whom I had already brought some friendly ad-

vances on her husband's part, took me in her carriage, and her first words were, 'Go and bring Arthur!'

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Calyste, "she was right; I had failed in my devotion——"

"But, unfortunately, monsieur, poor Arthur was living with one of those dreadful women—that Mme. Schontz, who for a long time had expected every hour to find herself deserted. Mme. Schontz, who, on the strength of Béatrix's complexion, cherished a desire to see herself some day the Marquise de Rochefide, was furious when she saw her castles in the air fallen. Those women, monsieur, will lose an eye if they can spoil two for an enemy; La Schontz, who has just left Paris, has been the instrument of spoiling six! And if I had been so rash as to love Béatrix, the sum-total would have been eight. You, monsieur, must have discovered that you need an oculist."

Maxime could not help smiling at the change in Calyste's face; he turned pale as his eyes were opened to the situation.

"Would you believe, M. le Baron, that that wretched woman has consented to marry the man who furnished her with means of revenge? Oh! women!—You understand now why Béatrix should shut herself up with Arthur for a few months at Nogent-sur-Marne, where they have a charming little house; they will recover their sight there. Meanwhile their house will be entirely redecorated; the Marquise means to display a princely style of splendor. When a man is sincerely in love with so noble a woman, so great, so exquisite, the victim of conjugal devotion, as soon as she has the courage to return to her duties as a wife, the part of those who adore her as you do, who admire her as I do, is to remain her friends when they can be nothing more.

"You will forgive me for having thought it well to invite M. de Trailles to be present at this explanation, but I was particularly anxious to make this all perfectly clear. For my part, I especially wished to assure you that, though I admire Mme. de Rochefide's cleverness as a woman, she is to me supremely odious."

"And that is what our fairest dreams, our celestial loves

end in," said Calyste, overwhelmed by so many revelations and disenchantments.

"In a fish's tail," cried Maxime, "or, which is worse, in an apothecary's gallipot! I have never known a first love that did not end idiotically. Ah, M. le Baron, whatever there may be that is heavenly in man finds its nourishment in heaven alone! This is the excuse for us rakes. I, monsieur, have gone deeply into the question, and, as you see, I am just married. I shall be faithful to my wife, and I would urge you to return to Mme. du Guénic—but—three months hence.

"Do not regret Béatrix; she is a pattern of those vain natures, devoid of energy, but flirts out of vainglory—a Mme. d'Espard without political faculty, a woman devoid of heart and brain, frivolous in wickedness. Mme. de Rochefide loves no one but Mme. de Rochefide; she would have involved you in an irremediable quarrel with Mme. du Guénic, and then have thrown you over without a qualm; in fact, she is as inadequate for vice as for virtue."

"I do not agree with you, Maxime," said la Palférine; "she will be the most delightful mistress of a great house in all Paris."

Calyste did not leave the house without shaking hands with Charles-Édouard and Maxime de Trailles, thanking them for having cured him of his illusions.

Three days later the Duchesse de Grandlieu, who had not seen her daughter Sabine since the morning of the great conference, called one morning and found Calyste in his bath-room. Sabine was sewing at some new finery for her baby-clothes.

"Well, how are you children getting on?" asked the kind Duchess.

"As well as possible, dear mamma," replied Sabine, looking at her mother with eyes bright with happiness. "We have acted out the fable of the Two Pigeons—that is all."

Calyste held out his hand to his wife and pressed hers tenderly.



# **THE COMMISSION IN LUNACY**



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## THE COMMISSION IN LUNACY

*Dedicated to Monsieur le Contre-Amiral Bazoche, Governor of the Isle of Bourbon, by the grateful writer,*

*De Balzac.*

IN 1828, at about one o'clock one morning, two persons came out of a large house in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, near the Élysée-Bourbon. One was a famous doctor, Horace Bianchon; the other was one of the most elegant men in Paris, the Baron de Rastignac; they were friends of long standing. Each had sent away his carriage, and no cab was to be seen in the street; but the night was fine, and the pavement dry.

"We will walk as far as the Boulevard," said Eugène de Rastignac to Bianchon. "You can get a hackney cab at the club; there is always one to be found there till day-break. Come with me as far as my house."

"With pleasure."

"Well, and what have you to say about it?"

"About that woman?" said the doctor coldly.

"There I recognize my Bianchon!" exclaimed Rastignac.

"Why, how?"

"Well, my dear fellow, you speak of the Marquise d'Espard as if she were a case for your hospital."

"Do you want to know what I think, Eugène? If you throw over Madame de Nucingen for this Marquise, you will swap a one-eyed horse for a blind one."

"Madame de Nucingen is six-and-thirty, Bianchon."

"And this woman is three-and-thirty," said the doctor quickly.

"Her worst enemies only say six-and-twenty."

"My dear boy, when you really want to know a woman's age, look at her temples and the tip of her nose. Whatever women may achieve with their cosmetics, they can do nothing against those incorruptible witnesses to their ex-

periences. There each year of life has left its stigmata. When a woman's temples are flaccid, seamed, withered in a particular way; when at the tip of her nose you see those minute specks, which look like the imperceptible black smuts which are shed in London by the chimneys in which coal is burnt. . . . Your servant, sir! That woman is more than thirty. She may be handsome, witty, loving—whatever you please, but she is past thirty, she is arriving at maturity. I do not blame men who attach themselves to that kind of woman; only, a man of your superior distinction must not mistake a winter pippin for a little summer apple, smiling on the bough, and waiting for you to crunch it. Love never goes to study the registers of birth and marriage; no one loves a woman because she is handsome or ugly, stupid or clever; we love because we love."

"Well, for my part, I love for quite other reasons. She is Marquise d'Espard; she was a Blamont-Chauvry; she is the fashion; she has soul; her foot is as pretty as the Duchesse de Berri's; she has perhaps a hundred thousand francs a year—some day, perhaps, I may marry her! In short, she will put me into a position which will enable me to pay my debts."

"I thought you were rich," interrupted Bianchon.

"Bah! I have twenty thousand francs a year—just enough to keep up my stables. I was thoroughly done, my dear fellow, in that Nucingen business; I will tell you about that.—I have got my sisters married; that is the clearest profit I can show since we last met; and I would rather have them provided for than have five hundred thousand francs a year. Now, what would you have me do? I am ambitious. To what can Madame de Nucingen lead? A year more and I shall be shelved, stuck in a pigeon-hole like a married man. I have all the discomforts of marriage and of single life, without the advantages of either; a false position, to which every man must come who remains tied too long to the same apron-string."

"So you think you will come upon a treasure here?" said Bianchon. "Your Marquise, my dear fellow, does not hit my fancy at all."

“Your liberal opinions blur your eyesight. If Madame d’Espard were a Madame Rabourdin . . .”

“Listen to me. Noble or simple, she would still have no soul; she would be still a perfect type of selfishness. Take my word for it, medical men are accustomed to judge of people and things; the sharpest of us read the soul while we study the body. In spite of that pretty boudoir where we have spent this evening, in spite of the magnificence of the house, it is quite possible that Madame la Marquise is in debt.”

“What makes you think so?”

“I do not assert it; I am supposing. She talked of her soul as Louis XVIII. used to talk of his heart. I tell you this: That fragile, fair woman, with her chestnut hair, who pities herself that she may be pitied, enjoys an iron constitution, an appetite like a wolf’s, and the strength and cowardice of a tiger. Gauze, and silk, and muslin were never more cleverly twisted round a lie! *Ecco.*”

“Bianchon, you frighten me! You have learned a good many things, then, since we lived in the *Maison Vauquer*?”

“Yes; since then, my boy, I have seen puppets, both dolls and mannikins. I know something of the ways of the fine ladies whose bodies we attend to, saving that which is dearest to them, their child—if they love it—or their pretty faces, which they always worship. A man spends his nights by their pillow, wearing himself to death to spare them the slightest loss of beauty in any part; he succeeds, he keeps their secret like the dead; they send to ask for his bill, and think it horribly exorbitant. Who saved them? Nature. Far from recommending him, they speak ill of him, fearing lest he should become the physician of their best friends.

“My dear fellow, those women of whom you say, ‘They are angels!’ I—I—have seen stripped of the little grimaces under which they hide their soul, as well as of the frippery under which they disguise their defects—without manners and without stays; they are not beautiful.

“We saw a great deal of mud, a great deal of dirt, under the waters of the world when we were aground for a time on the shoals of the *Maison Vauquer*.—What we saw

there was nothing. Since I have gone into higher society, I have seen monsters dressed in satin, Michonneaus in white gloves, Poirets bedizened with orders, fine gentlemen doing more usurious business than old Gobseck! To the shame of mankind, when I have wanted to shake hands with Virtue, I have found her shivering in a loft, persecuted by calumny, half starving on an income or a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year, and regarded as crazy, or eccentric, or imbecile.

“In short, my dear boy, the Marquise is a woman of fashion, and I have a particular horror of that kind of woman. Do you want to know why? A woman who has a lofty soul, fine taste, gentle wit, a generously warm heart, and who lives a simple life, has not a chance of being the fashion. *Ergo*: A woman of fashion and a man in power are analogous; but there is this difference: the qualities by which a man raises himself above others ennoble him and are a glory to him; whereas the qualities by which a woman gains power for a day are hideous vices; she belies her nature to hide her character, and to live the militant life of the world she must have iron strength under a frail appearance.

“I, as a physician, know that a sound stomach excludes a good heart. Your woman of fashion feels nothing; her rage for pleasure has its source in a longing to heat up her cold nature, a craving for excitement and enjoyment, like an old man who stands night after night by the footlights at the opera. As she has more brain than heart, she sacrifices genuine passion and true friends to her triumph, as a general sends his most devoted subalterns to the front in order to win a battle. The woman of fashion ceases to be a woman; she is neither mother, nor wife, nor lover. She is, medically speaking, sex in the brain. And your Marquise, too, has all the characteristics of her monstrosity, the beak of a bird of prey, the clear, cold eye, the gentle voice—she is as polished as the steel of a machine, she touches everything except the heart.”

“There is some truth in what you say, Bianchon.”

“Some truth?” replied Bianchon. “It is all true. Do

you suppose that I was not struck to the heart by the insulting politeness by which she made me measure the imaginary distance which her noble birth sets between us? That I did not feel the deepest pity for her cat-like civilities when I remembered what her object was? A year hence she will not write one word to do me the slightest service, and this evening she pelted me with smiles, believing that I can influence my uncle Popinot, on whom the success of her case——”

“Would you rather she should have played the fool with you, my dear fellow?—I accept your diatribe against women of fashion; but you are beside the mark. I should always prefer for a wife a Marquise d’Espard to the most devout and devoted creature on earth. Marry an angel! you would have to go and bury your happiness in the depths of the country! The wife of a politician is a governing machine, a contrivance that makes compliments and courtesies. She is the most important and most faithful tool which an ambitious man can use; a friend, in short, who may compromise herself without mischief, and whom he may belie without harmful results. Fancy Mahomet in Paris in the nineteenth century! His wife would be a Rohan, a Duchesse de Chevreuse of the Fronde, as keen and as flattering as an Ambassadress, as wily as Figaro. Your loving wives lead nowhere; a woman of the world leads to everything; she is the diamond with which a man cuts every window when he has not the golden key which unlocks every door. Leave humdrum virtues to the humdrum, ambitious vices to the ambitious.

“Besides, my dear fellow, do you imagine that the love of a Duchesse de Langeais, or de Maufrigneuse, or of a Lady Dudley does not bestow immense pleasure? If only you knew how much value the cold, severe style of such women gives to the smallest evidence of their affection! What a delight it is to see a periwinkle piercing through the snow! A smile from below a fan contradicts the reserve of an assumed attitude, and is worth all the unbridled tenderness of your middle-class women with their mortgaged devotion; for, in love, devotion is nearly akin to speculation.

“And, then, a woman of fashion, a Blamont-Chauvry, has her virtues too! Her virtues are fortune, power, effect, a certain contempt of all that is beneath her——”

“Thank you!” said Bianchon.

“Old curmudgeon!” said Rastignac, laughing. “Come—do not be common; do like your friend Desplein; be a Baron, a Knight of Saint-Michael; become a peer of France, and marry your daughters to dukes.”

“I! May the five hundred thousand devils——”

“Come, come! Can you be superior only in medicine? Really, you distress me . . .”

“I hate that sort of people; I long for a revolution to deliver us from them forever.”

“And so, my dear Robespierre of the lancet, you will not go to-morrow to your uncle Popinot?”

“Yes, I will,” said Bianchon; “for you I would go to hell to fetch water . . .”

“My good friend, you really touch me. I have sworn that a commission shall sit on the Marquis. Why, here is even a long-saved tear to thank you.”

“But,” Bianchon went on, “I do not promise to succeed as you wish with Jean-Jules Popinot. You do not know him. However, I will take him to see your Marquise the day after to-morrow; she may get round him if she can. I doubt it. If all the truffles, all the Duchesses, all the mistresses, and all the charmers in Paris were there in the full bloom of their beauty; if the King promised him the *pairie*, and the Almighty gave him the Order of Paradise with the revenues of Purgatory, not one of all these powers would induce him to transfer a single straw from one saucer of his scales into the other. He is a judge, as Death is Death.”

The two friends had reached the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines.

“Here you are at home,” said Bianchon, laughing, as he pointed to the ministerial residence. “And here is my carriage,” he added, calling a hackney cab. “And these—express our fortune.”

“You will be happy at the bottom of the sea, while I am

still struggling with the tempests on the surface, till I sink and go to ask you for a corner in your grotto, old fellow!"

"Till Saturday," replied Bianchon.

"Agreed," said Rastignac. "And you promise me Popinot?"

"I will do all my conscience will allow. Perhaps this appeal for a commission covers some little dramorama, to use a word of our good bad times."

"Poor Bianchon! he will never be anything but a good fellow," said Rastignac to himself as the cab drove off.

"Rastignac has given me the most difficult negotiation in the world," said Bianchon to himself, remembering, as he rose next morning, the delicate commission intrusted to him. "However, I have never asked the smallest service from my uncle in Court, and have paid more than a thousand visits gratis for him. And, after all, we are not apt to mince matters between ourselves. He will say Yes or No, and there an end."

After this little soliloquy the famous physician bent his steps, at seven in the morning, towards the Rue du Fouarre, where dwelt Monsieur Jean-Jules Popinot, judge of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine. The Rue du Fouarre—an old word meaning straw—was in the thirteenth century the most important street in Paris. There stood the Schools of the University, where the voices of Abélard and of Gerson were heard in the world of learning. It is now one of the dirtiest streets of the Twelfth Arrondissement, the poorest quarter of Paris, that in which two-thirds of the population lack firing in winter, which leaves most brats at the gate of the Foundling Hospital, which sends most beggars to the poorhouse, most rag-pickers to the street corners, most decrepit old folks to bask against the walls on which the sun shines, most delinquents to the police courts.

Half-way down this street, which is always damp, and where the gutter carries to the Seine the blackened waters from some dye-works, there is an old house, restored no doubt under Francis I., and built of bricks held together



by a few courses of masonry. That it is substantial seems proved by the shape of its front wall, not uncommonly seen in some parts of Paris. It bellies, so to speak, in a manner caused by the protuberance of its first floor, crushed under the weight of the second and third, but upheld by the strong wall of the ground floor. At first sight it would seem as though the piers between the windows, though strengthened by the stone mullions, must give way; but the observer presently perceives that, as in the tower at Bologna, the old bricks and old time-eaten stones of this house persistently preserve their center of gravity.

At every season of the year the solid piers of the ground floor have the yellow tone and the imperceptible sweating surface that moisture gives to stone. The passer-by feels chilled as he walks close to this wall, where worn corner-stones ineffectually shelter him from the wheels of vehicles. As is always the case in houses built before carriages were in use, the vault of the doorway forms a very low archway not unlike the barbican of a prison. To the right of this entrance there are three windows, protected outside by iron gratings of so close a pattern, that the curious cannot possibly see the use made of the dark, damp rooms within, and the panes too are dirty and dusty; to the left are two similar windows, one of which is sometimes open, exposing to view the porter, his wife, and his children; swarming, working, cooking, eating, and screaming, in a floored and wainscoted room where everything is dropping to pieces, and into which you descend two steps—a depth which seems to suggest the gradual elevation of the soil of Paris.

If on a rainy day some foot-passenger takes refuge under the long vault, with projecting lime-washed beams, which leads from the door to the staircase, he will hardly fail to pause and look at the picture presented by the interior of this house. To the left is a square garden-plot, allowing of not more than four long steps in each direction, a garden of black soil, with trellises bereft of vines, and where, in default of vegetation under the shade of two trees, papers collect, old rags, potsherds, bits of mortar fallen from the roof; a barren ground, where time has shed on the walls,

and on the trunks and branches of the trees, a powdery deposit like cold soot. The two parts of the house, set at a right angle, derive light from this garden-court shut in by two adjoining houses built on wooden piers, decrepit and ready to fall, where on each floor some grotesque evidence is to be seen of the craft pursued by the lodger within. Here long poles are hung with immense skeins of dyed worsted put out to dry; there, on ropes, dance clean-washed shirts; higher up, on a shelf, volumes display their freshly marbled edges; women sing, husbands whistle, children shout; the carpenter saws his planks, a copper-turner makes the metal screech; all kinds of industries combine to produce a noise which the number of instruments renders distracting.

The general system of decoration in this passage, which is neither courtyard, garden, nor vaulted way, though a little of all, consists of wooden pillars resting on square stone blocks, and forming arches. Two archways open on to the little garden; two others, facing the front gateway, lead to a wooden staircase, with an iron balustrade that was once a miracle of smith's work, so whimsical are the shapes given to the metal; the worn steps creak under every tread. The entrance to each flat has an architrave dark with dirt, grease, and dust, and outer doors, covered with Utrecht velvet set with brass nails, once gilt, in a diamond pattern. These relics of splendor show that in the time of Louis XIV. the house was the residence of some Councillor to the *Parlement*, some rich priests, or some treasurer of the ecclesiastical revenue. But these vestiges of former luxury bring a smile to the lips by the artless contrast of past and present.

M. Jean-Jules Popinot lived on the first floor of this house, where the gloom, natural to all first floors in Paris houses, was increased by the narrowness of the street. This old tenement was known to all the twelfth *arrondissement*, on which Providence had bestowed this lawyer, as it gives a beneficent plant to cure or alleviate every malady. Here is a sketch of the man whom the brilliant Marquise d'Espard hoped to fascinate.

M. Popinot, as is seemly for a magistrate, was always

dressed in black—a style which contributed to make him ridiculous in the eyes of those who were in the habit of judging everything from a superficial examination. Men who are jealous of maintaining the dignity required by this color ought to devote themselves to constant and minute care of their person; but our dear M. Popinot was incapable of forcing himself to the puritanical cleanliness which black demands. His trousers, always threadbare, looked like camel—the stuff of which attorneys' gowns are made; and his habitual stoop set them, in time, in such innumerable creases, that in places they were traced with lines, whitish, rusty, or shiny, betraying either sordid avarice, or the most unheeding poverty. His coarse worsted stockings were twisted anyhow in his ill-shaped shoes. His linen had the tawny tinge acquired by long sojourn in a wardrobe, showing that the late lamented Madame Popinot had had a mania for much linen; in the Flemish fashion, perhaps, she had given herself the trouble of a great wash no more than twice a year. The old man's coat and waistcoat were in harmony with his trousers, shoes, stockings, and linen. He always had the luck of his carelessness; for, the first day he put on a new coat, he unfailingly matched it with the rest of his costume by staining it with incredible promptitude. The good man waited till his housekeeper told him that his hat was too shabby before buying a new one. His necktie was always crumpled and starchless, and he never set his dog's-eared shirt collar straight after his judge's bands had disordered it. He took no care of his gray hair, and shaved but twice a week. He never wore gloves, and generally kept his hands stuffed into his empty trousers' pockets; the soiled pocket-holes, almost always torn, added a final touch to the slovenliness of his person.

Anyone who knows the Palais de Justice at Paris, where every variety of black attire may be studied, can easily imagine the appearance of M. Popinot. The habit of sitting for days at a time modifies the structure of the body, just as the fatigue of hearing interminable pleadings tells on the expression of a magistrate's face. Shut up as he is in courts ridiculously small, devoid of architectural dignity, and where

the air is quickly vitiated, a Paris judge inevitably acquires a countenance puckered and seamed by reflection, and depressed by weariness; his complexion turns pallid, acquiring an earthy or greenish hue according to his individual temperament. In short, within a given time the most blooming young man is turned into an "inasmuch" machine—an instrument which applies the Code to individual cases with the indifference of clock-work.

Hence, nature having bestowed on M. Popinot a not too pleasing exterior, his life as a lawyer had not improved it. His frame was graceless and angular. His thick knees, huge feet, and broad hands formed a contrast with a priest-like face having a vague resemblance to a calf's head, meek to unmeaningness, and but little brightened by divergent, bloodless eyes, divided by a straight flat nose, surmounted by a flat forehead, flanked by enormous ears, flabby and graceless. His thin, weak hair showed the baldness through various irregular partings.

One feature only commended this face to the physiognomist. This man had a mouth to whose lips divine kindness lent its sweetness. They were wholesome, full, red lips, finely wrinkled, sinuous, mobile, by which nature had given expression to noble feeling; lips which spoke to the heart and proclaimed the man's intelligence and lucidity, a gift of second sight, and a heavenly temper; and you would have judged him wrongly from looking merely at his sloping forehead, his fireless eyes, and his shambling gait. His life answered to his countenance; it was full of secret labor, and hid the virtue of a saint. His superior knowledge of law proved so strong a recommendation at the time when Napoleon was reorganizing it in 1808 and 1811, that, by the advice of Cambacères, he was one of the first men named to sit on the Imperial High Court of Justice at Paris. Popinot was no schemer. Whenever any demand was made, any request preferred for an appointment, the Minister would overlook Popinot, who never set foot in the house of the High Chancellor or the Chief Justice. From the High Court he was sent down to the Common Court, and pushed to the lowest rung of the ladder by active struggling men. There

he was appointed supernumerary judge. There was a general outcry among the lawyers: "Popinot a supernumerary!" Such injustice struck the legal world with dismay—the attorneys, the registrars, everybody but Popinot himself, who made no complaint. The first clamor over, everybody was satisfied that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, which must certainly be the legal world. Popinot remained supernumerary judge till the day when the most famous Great Seal under the Restoration avenged the oversights heaped on this modest and uncomplaining man by the Chief Justices of the Empire. After being a supernumerary for twelve years, M. Popinot would no doubt die a puisne judge of the Court of the Seine.

To account for the obscure fortunes of one of the superior men of the legal profession, it is necessary to enter here into some details which will serve to reveal his life and character, and which will, at the same time, display some of the wheels of the great machine known as Justice. M. Popinot was classed by the three Presidents who successively controlled the Court of the Seine under the category of possible judges, the stuff of which judges are made. Thus classified, he did not achieve the reputation for capacity which his previous labors had deserved. Just as a painter is invariably included in a category as a landscape painter, a portrait painter, a painter of history, of sea pieces, or of genre, by a public consisting of artists, connoisseurs, and simpletons, who, out of envy, or critical omnipotence, or prejudice, fence in his intellect, assuming, one and all, that there are ganglions in every brain—a narrow judgment which the world applies to writers, to statesmen, to everybody who begins with some specialty before being hailed as omniscient; so Popinot's fate was sealed, and he was hedged round to do a particular kind of work. Magistrates, attorneys, pleaders, all who pasture on the legal common, distinguish two elements in every case—law and equity. Equity is the outcome of facts, law is the application of principles to facts. A man may be right in equity but wrong in law, without any blame to the judge. Between his conscience and the facts there is a whole gulf of determining

reasons unknown to the judge, but which condemn or legitimize the act. A judge is not God; his duty is to adapt facts to principles, to judge cases of infinite variety while measuring them by a fixed standard.

France employs about six thousand judges; no generation has six thousand great men at her command, much less can she find them in the legal profession. Popinot, in the midst of the civilization of Paris, was just a very clever cadi, who, by the character of his mind, and by dint of rubbing the letter of the law into the essence of facts, had learned to see the error of spontaneous and violent decisions. By the help of his judicial second sight he could pierce the double casing of lies in which advocates hide the heart of a trial. He was a judge, as the great Desplein was a surgeon; he probed men's consciences as the anatomist probed their bodies. His life and habits had led him to an exact appreciation of their most secret thoughts by a thorough study of facts.

He sifted a case as Cuvier sifted the earth's crust. Like that great thinker, he proceeded from deduction to deduction before drawing his conclusions, and reconstructed the past career of a conscience as Cuvier reconstructed an Anoplotherium. When considering a brief he would often wake in the night, startled by a gleam of truth suddenly sparkling in his brain. Struck by the deep injustice, which is the end of these contests, in which everything is against the honest man, everything to the advantage of the rogue, he often summed up in favor of equity against law in such cases as bore on questions of what may be termed divination. Hence he was regarded by his colleagues as a man not of a practical mind; his arguments on two lines of deduction made their deliberations lengthy. When Popinot observed their dislike to listening to him he gave his opinion briefly; it was said that he was not a good judge in this class of cases; but as his gift of discrimination was remarkable, his opinion lucid, and his penetration profound, he was considered to have a special aptitude for the laborious duties of an examining judge. So an examining judge he remained during the greater part of his legal career.

Although his qualifications made him eminently fitted for its difficult functions, and he had the reputation of being so learned in criminal law that his duty was a pleasure to him, the kindness of his heart constantly kept him in torture, and he was nipped as in a vice between his conscience and his pity. The services of an examining judge are better paid than those of a judge in civil actions, but they do not therefore prove a temptation; they are too onerous. Popinot, a man of modest and virtuous learning, without ambition, an indefatigable worker, never complained of his fate: he sacrificed his tastes and his compassionate soul to the public good, and allowed himself to be transported to the noisome pools of criminal examinations, where he showed himself alike severe and beneficent. His clerk sometimes would give the accused some money to buy tobacco, or a warm winter garment, as he led him back from the judge's office to the *Souricière*, the mouse-trap—the House of Detention where the accused are kept under the orders of the Examining Judge. He knew how to be an inflexible judge and a charitable man. And no one extracted a confession so easily as he without having recourse to judicial trickery. He had, too, all the acumen of an observer. This man, apparently so foolishly good-natured, simple, and absent-minded, could guess all the cunning of a prison wag, unmask the astutest street hussy, and subdue a scoundrel. Unusual circumstances had sharpened his perspicacity; but to relate these we must intrude on his domestic history, for in him the judge was the social side of the man; another man, greater and less known, existed within.

Twelve years before the beginning of this story, in 1816, during the terrible scarcity which coincided disastrously with the stay in France of the so-called Allies, Popinot was appointed President of the Commission Extraordinary, formed to distribute food to the poor of his neighborhood, just when he had planned to move from the Rue du Fouarre, which he as little liked to live in as his wife did. The great lawyer, the clear-sighted criminal judge, whose superiority seemed to his colleagues a form of aberration, had for five years been watching legal results without seeing their causes.

As he scrambled up into lofts, as he saw the poverty, as he studied the desperate necessities which gradually bring the poor to criminal acts, as he estimated their long struggles, compassion filled his soul. The judge then became the Saint Vincent de Paul of these grown-up children, these suffering toilers. The transformation was not immediately complete. Beneficence has its temptations as vice has. Charity consumes a saint's purse, as roulette consumes the possessions of a gambler, quite gradually. Popinot went from misery to misery, from charity to charity; then, by the time he had lifted all the rags which cover public pauperism, like a bandage under which an inflamed wound lies festering, at the end of a year he had become the Providence incarnate of that quarter of the town. He was a member of the Benevolent Committee and of the Charity Organization. Wherever any gratuitous services were needed he was ready, and did everything without fuss, like the *man with the short cloak*, who spends his life in carrying soup round the markets and other places where there are starving folks.

Popinot was fortunate in acting on a larger circle and in a higher sphere; he had an eye on everything, he prevented crime, he gave work to the unemployed, he found a refuge for the helpless, he distributed aid with discernment wherever danger threatened, he made himself the counselor of the widow, the protector of homeless children, the sleeping partner of small traders. No one at the Courts, no one in Paris, knew of this secret life of Popinot's. There are virtues so splendid that they necessitate obscurity; men make haste to hide them under a bushel. As to those whom the lawyer succored, they, hard at work all day and tired at night, were little able to sing his praises; theirs was the gracelessness of children, who can never pay because they owe too much. There is such compulsory ingratitude; but what heart that has sown good to reap gratitude can think itself great?

By the end of the second year of his apostolic work, Popinot had turned the storeroom at the bottom of his house into a parlor, lighted by the three iron-barred windows. The walls and ceiling of this spacious room were whitewashed, and



the furniture consisted of wooden benches like those seen in schools, a clumsy cupboard, a walnut-wood writing-table, and an armchair. In the cupboard were his registers of donations, his tickets for orders for bread, and his diary. He kept his ledger like a tradesman, that he might not be ruined by kindness. All the sorrows of the neighborhood were entered and numbered in a book, where each had its little account, as merchants' customers have theirs. When there was any question as to a man or a family needing help, the lawyer could always command information from the police.

Lavienne, a man made for his master, was his aid-de-camp. He redeemed or renewed pawn-tickets, and visited the districts most threatened with famine, while his master was in court.

From four till seven in the morning in summer, from six till nine in winter, this room was full of women, children, and paupers, while Popinot gave audience. There was no need for a stove in winter; the crowd was so dense that the air was warmed; only Lavienne strewed straw on the wet floor. By long use the benches were as polished as varnished mahogany; at the height of a man's shoulders the wall had a coat of dark, indescribable color, given to it by the rags and tattered clothes of these poor creatures. The poor wretches loved Popinot so well that when they assembled before his door was opened, before daybreak on a winter's morning, the women warming themselves with their foot-braziers, the men swinging their arms for circulation, never a sound had disturbed his sleep. Rag-pickers and other toilers of the night knew the house, and often saw a light burning in the lawyer's private room at unholy hours. Even thieves, as they passed by, said, "That is his house," and respected it. The morning he gave to the poor, the mid-day hours to criminals, the evening to law work.

Thus the gift of observation that characterized Popinot was necessarily *bifrons*; he could guess the virtues of a pauper—good feelings nipped, fine actions in embryo, unrecognized self-sacrifice, just as he could read at the bottom of a man's conscience the faintest outlines of a crime,

the slenderest threads of wrongdoing, and infer all the rest.

Popinot's inherited fortune was a thousand crowns a year. His wife, sister to M. Bianchon *senior*, a doctor at Sancerre, had brought him about twice as much. She, dying five years since, had left her fortune to her husband. As the salary of a supernumerary judge is not large, and Popinot had been a fully salaried judge only for four years, we may guess his reasons for parsimony in all that concerned his person and mode of life, when we consider how small his means were and how great his beneficence. Besides, is not such indifference to dress as stamped Popinot an absent-minded man, a distinguishing mark of scientific attainment, of art passionately pursued, of a perpetually active mind? To complete this portrait, it will be enough to add that Popinot was one of the few judges of the Court of the Seine on whom the ribbon of the Legion of Honor had not been conferred.

Such was the man who had been instructed by the President of the Second Chamber of the Court—to which Popinot had belonged since his reinstatement among the judges in civil law—to examine the Marquis d'Espard at the request of his wife, who sued for a Commission in Lunacy.

The Rue du Fouarre, where so many unhappy wretches swarmed in the early morning, would be deserted by nine o'clock, and as gloomy and squalid as ever. Bianchon put his horse to a trot in order to find his uncle in the midst of his business. It was not without a smile that he thought of the curious contrast the judge's appearance would make in Madame d'Espard's room; but he promised himself that he would persuade him to dress in a way that should not be too ridiculous.

"If only my uncle happens to have a new coat!" said Bianchon to himself as he turned into the Rue du Fouarre, where a pale light shone from the parlor windows. "I shall do well, I believe, to talk that over with Lavienne."

At the sound of wheels half a score of startled paupers came out from under the gateway, and took off their hats on recognizing Bianchon; for the doctor, who treated

gratuitously the sick recommended to him by the lawyer, was not less well known than he to the poor creatures assembled there.

Bianchon found his uncle in the middle of the parlor, where the benches were occupied by patients presenting such grotesque singularities of costume as would have made the least artistic passer-by turn round to gaze at them. A draughtsman—a Rembrandt, if there were one in our day—might have conceived of one of his finest compositions from seeing these children of misery, in artless attitudes, and all silent.

Here was the rugged countenance of an old man with a white beard and an apostolic head—a Saint Peter ready to hand; his chest, partly uncovered, showed salient muscles, the evidence of an iron constitution which had served him as a fulcrum to resist a whole poem of sorrows. There a young woman was suckling her youngest-born to keep it from crying, while another of about five stood between her knees. Her white bosom, gleaming amid rags, the baby with its transparent flesh-tints, and the brother, whose attitude promised a street Arab in the future, touched the fancy with pathos by its almost graceful contrast with the long row of faces crimson with cold, in the midst of which sat this family group. Further away, an old woman, pale and rigid, had the repulsive look of rebellious pauperism, eager to avenge all its past woes in one day of violence.

There, again, was the young workman, weakly and indolent, whose brightly intelligent eye revealed fine faculties crushed by necessity struggled with in vain, saying nothing of his sufferings, and nearly dead for lack of an opportunity to squeeze between the bars of the vast stews where the wretched swim round and round and devour each other.

The majority were women; their husbands, gone to their work, left it to them, no doubt, to plead the cause of the family with the ingenuity which characterizes the woman of the people, who is almost always queen in her hovel. You would have seen a torn bandana on every head, on every form a skirt deep in mud, ragged kerchiefs, worn and dirty jackets, but eyes that burnt like live coals. It was a hor-

rible assemblage, raising at first sight a feeling of disgust, but giving a certain sense of terror the instant you perceived that the resignation of these souls, all engaged in the struggle for every necessary of life, was purely fortuitous, a speculation on benevolence. The two tallow candles which lighted the parlor flickered in a sort of fog caused by the fetid atmosphere of the ill-ventilated room.

The magistrate himself was not the least picturesque figure in the midst of this assembly. He had on his head a rusty cotton night-cap; as he had no cravat, his neck was visible, red with cold and wrinkled, in contrast with the threadbare collar of his old dressing-gown. His worn face had the half-stupid look that comes of absorbed attention. His lips, like those of all men who work, were puckered up like a bag with the strings drawn tight. His knitted brows seemed to bear the burden of all the sorrows confided to him: he felt, analyzed, and judged them all. As watchful as a Jew money-lender, he never raised his eyes from his books and registers but to look into the very heart of the persons he was examining, with the flashing glance by which a miser expresses his alarm.

Lavienne, standing behind his master, ready to carry out his orders, served no doubt as a sort of police, and welcomed new-comers by encouraging them to get over their shyness. When the doctor appeared there was a stir on the benches. Lavienne turned his head, and was strangely surprised to see Bianchon.

"Ah! It is you, old boy!" exclaimed Popinot, stretching himself. "What brings you so early?"

"I was afraid lest you should make an official visit about which I wish to speak to you before I could see you."

"Well," said the lawyer, addressing a stout little woman who was still standing close to him, "if you do not tell me what it is you want, I cannot guess it, child."

"Make haste," said Lavienne. "Do not waste other people's time."

"Monsieur," said the woman at last, turning red, and speaking so low as only to be heard by Popinot and Lavienne, "I have a green-grocery truck, and I have my last

baby out at nurse, and I owe for his keep. Well, I had hidden my little bit of money——”

“Yes; and your man took it?” said Popinot, guessing the sequel.

“Yes, sir.”

“What is your name?”

“La Pomponne.”

“And your husband’s?”

“Toupinet.”

“Rue du Petit-Banquier?” said Popinot, turning over his register. “He is in prison,” he added, reading a note at the margin of the section in which this family was described.

“For debt, my kind Monsieur.”

Popinot shook his head.

“But I have nothing to buy any stock for my truck; the landlord came yesterday and made me pay up; otherwise I should have been turned out.”

Lavienne bent over his master, and whispered in his ear.

“Well, how much do you want to buy fruit in the market?”

“Why, my good Monsieur, to carry on my business, I should want—Yes, I should certainly want ten francs.”

Popinot signed to Lavienne, who took ten francs out of a large bag, and handed them to the woman, while the lawyer made a note of the loan in his ledger. As he saw the thrill of delight that made the poor hawker tremble, Bianchon understood the apprehensions that must have agitated her on her way to the lawyer’s house.

“You next,” said Lavienne to the old man with the white beard.

Bianchon drew the servant aside, and asked him how long this audience would last.

“Monsieur has had two hundred persons this morning, and there are eighty to be turned off,” said Lavienne. “You will have time to pay your early visit, sir.”

“Here, my boy,” said the lawyer, turning round and taking Horace by the arm; “here are two addresses near this—one in the Rue de Seine, and the other in the Rue de

l'Arbalète. Go there at once. Rue de Seine, a young girl has just asphyxiated herself; and Rue de l'Arbalète, you will find a man to remove to your hospital. I will wait breakfast for you."

Bianchon returned an hour later. The Rue du Fouarre was deserted; day was beginning to dawn there; his uncle had gone up to his rooms; the last poor wretch whose misery the judge had relieved was departing, and Lavienne's money bag was empty.

"Well, how are they going on?" asked the old lawyer, as the doctor came in.

"The man is dead," replied Bianchon; "the girl will get over it."

Since the eye and hand of a woman had been lacking, the flat in which Popinot lived had assumed an aspect in harmony with its master's. The indifference of a man who is absorbed in one dominant idea had set its stamp of eccentricity on everything. Everywhere lay unconquerable dust, every object was adapted to a wrong purpose with a pertinacity suggestive of a bachelor's home. There were papers in the flower vases, empty ink-bottles on the tables, plates that had been forgotten, matches used as tapers for a minute when something had to be found, drawers or boxes half turned out and left unfinished; in short, all the confusion and vacancies resulting from plans for order never carried out. The lawyer's private room, especially disordered by this incessant rummage, bore witness to his un-resting pace, the hurry of a man overwhelmed with business, hunted by contradictory necessities. The bookcase looked as if it had been sacked; there were books scattered over everything, some piled up open, one on another, others on the floor face downwards; registers of proceedings laid on the floor in rows, lengthwise, in front of the shelves; and that floor had not been polished for two years.

The tables and shelves were covered with *ex votos*, the offerings of the grateful poor. On a pair of blue glass jars which ornamented the chimney-shelf there were two glass balls, of which the core was made up of many colored fragments, giving them the appearance of some singular

natural product. Against the wall hung frames of artificial flowers, and decorations in which Popinot's initials were surrounded by hearts and everlasting flowers. Here were boxes of elaborate and useless cabinet work; there letter-weights carved in the style of work done by convicts in penal servitude. These masterpieces of patience, enigmas of gratitude, and withered bouquets gave the lawyer's room the appearance of a toyshop. The good man used these works of art as hiding-places which he filled with bills, worn-out pens, and scraps of paper. All these pathetic witnesses to his divine charity were thick with dust, dingy, and faded.

Some birds, beautifully stuffed, but eaten by moth, perched in this wilderness of trumpery, presided over by an Angora cat, Madame Popinot's pet, restored to her no doubt with all the graces of life by some impecunious naturalist, who thus repaid a gift of charity with a perennial treasure. Some local artist whose heart had misguided his brush had painted portraits of M. and Madame Popinot. Even in the bedroom there were embroidered pin-cushions, landscapes in cross-stitch, and crosses in folded paper, so elaborately cockled as to show the senseless labor they had cost.

The window-curtains were black with smoke, and the hangings absolutely colorless. Between the fireplace and the large square table at which the magistrate worked, the cook had set two cups of coffee on a small table, and two arm-chairs, in mahogany and horsehair, awaited the uncle and nephew. As daylight, darkened by the windows, could not penetrate to this corner, the cook had left two dips burning, whose unsnuffed wicks showed a sort of mushroom growth, giving the red light which promises length of life to the candle from slowness of combustion—a discovery due to some miser.

“My dear uncle, you ought to wrap yourself more warmly when you go down to that parlor.”

“I cannot bear to keep them waiting, poor souls!—Well, and what do you want of me?”

“I have come to ask you to dine to-morrow with the Marquise d'Espard.”

“A relation of ours?” asked Popinot, with such genuine absence of mind that Bianchon laughed.

“No, uncle; the Marquise d’Espard is a high and puissant lady, who has laid before the Courts a petition desiring that a Commission in Lunacy should sit on her husband, and you are appointed——”

“And you want me to dine with her! Are you mad?” said the lawyer, taking up the code of proceedings. “Here, only read this article, prohibiting any magistrate’s eating or drinking in the house of either of two parties whom he is called upon to decide between. Let her come and see me, your Marquise, if she has anything to say to me. I was in fact to go to examine her husband to-morrow, after working the case up to-night.”

He rose, took up a packet of papers that lay under a weight where he could see it, and after reading the title, he said—

“Here is the affidavit. Since you take an interest in this high and puissant lady, let us see what she wants.”

Popinot wrapped his dressing-gown across his body, from which it was constantly slipping and leaving his chest bare; he sopped his bread in the half-cold coffee, and opened the petition, which he read, allowing himself to throw in a parenthesis now and then, and some discussions, in which his nephew took part:—

“To Monsieur the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine, sitting at the Palais de Justice.

“Madame Jeanne Clémentine Athénaïs de Blamont-Chauvry, wife of M. Charles Maurice Marie Andoche, Comte de Nègrepelisse, Marquis d’Espard—a very good family—‘landowner, the said Mme. d’Espard living in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, No. 104, and the said M. d’Espard in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, No. 22.’—to be sure, the President told me he lived in this part of the town—‘having for her solicitor Maître Desroches’—Desroches! a pettifogging jobber, a man looked down upon by his brother lawyers, and who does his clients no good——”

“Poor fellow!” said Bianchon, “unluckily he has no



money, and he rushes round like the Devil in holy water—That is all.”

“Has the honor to submit to you, Monsieur the President, that for a year past the moral and intellectual powers of her husband, M. d’Espard, have undergone so serious a change, that at the present day they have reached the state of dementia and idiotcy provided for by Article 448 of the Civil Code, and require the application of the remedies set forth by that article, for the security of his fortune and his person, and to guard the interest of his children whom he keeps to live with him.

“That, in point of fact, the mental condition of M. d’Espard, which for some years has given grounds for alarm based on the system he has pursued in the management of his affairs, has reached, during the last twelvemonth, a deplorable depth of depression; that his infirm will was the first thing to show the results of the malady; and that its effete state leaves M. the Marquis d’Espard exposed to all the perils of his incompetency, as is proved by the following facts:—

“For a long time all the income accruing from M. d’Espard’s estates are paid, without any reasonable cause, or even temporary advantage, into the hands of an old woman, whose repulsive ugliness is generally remarked on, named Madame Jeanrenaud, living sometimes in Paris, Rue de la Vrillière, No. 8, sometimes at Villeparisis, near Claye, in the Department of Seine et Marne, and for the benefit of her son, aged thirty-six, an officer in the ex-Imperial Guards, whom the Marquis d’Espard has placed by his influence in the King’s Guards as Major in the First Regiment of Cuirassiers. These two persons, who in 1814 were in extreme poverty, have since then purchased house-property of considerable value; among other items, quite recently, a large house in the Grande Rue Verte, where the said Jeanrenaud is laying out considerable sums in order to settle there with the woman Jeanrenaud, intending to marry; these sums amount already to more than a hundred thousand francs. The marriage has been arranged by the intervention of M. d’Espard with his banker, one Mongenod, whose

niece he has asked in marriage for the said Jeanrenaud, promising to use his influence to procure him the title and dignity of Baron. This has in fact been secured by his Majesty's letters patent, dated December 29th of last year, at the request of the Marquis d'Espard, as can be proved by his Excellency the Keeper of the Seals, if the Court should think proper to require his testimony.

“That no reason, not even such as morality and the law would concur in disapproving, can justify the influence which the said Mme. Jeanrenaud exerts over M. d'Espard, who, indeed, sees her very seldom; nor account for his strange affection for the said Baron Jeanrenaud, Major, with whom he has but little intercourse. And yet their power is so considerable, that whenever they need money, if only to gratify a mere whim, this lady or her son——’  
Heh, heh! *no reason even such as morality and the law concur in disapproving!* What does the clerk or the attorney mean to insinuate?” said Popinot.

Bianchon laughed.

“This lady, or her son, obtain whatever they ask of the Marquis d'Espard without demur; and if he has not ready money, M. d'Espard draws bills to be paid by the said Mongenod, who has offered to give evidence to that effect for the petitioner.

“That, moreover, in further proof of these facts, lately, on the occasion of the renewal of the leases on the Espard estate, the farmers having paid a considerable premium for the renewal of their leases on the old terms, M. Jeanrenaud at once secured the payment of it into his own hands.

“That the Marquis d'Espard parts with these sums of money so little of his own free-will, that when he was spoken to on the subject he seemed to remember nothing of the matter; that whenever anybody of any weight has questioned him as to his devotion to these two persons, his replies have shown so complete an absence of ideas and of sense of his own interests, that there obviously must be some occult cause at work to which the petitioner begs to direct the eye of justice, inasmuch as it is impossible but that this cause should be criminal, malignant, and wrongful, or else of a

nature to come under medical jurisdiction; unless this influence is of the kind which constitutes an abuse of moral power—such as can only be described by the word *possession*—’ The devil!’ exclaimed Popinot. “What do you say to that, doctor? These are strange statements.”

“They might certainly,” said Bianchon, “be an effect of magnetic force.”

“Then do you believe in Mesmer’s nonsense, and his tub, and seeing through walls?”

“Yes, uncle,” said the doctor gravely. “As I heard you read that petition I thought of that. I assure you that I have verified, in another sphere of action, several analogous facts proving the unlimited influence one man may acquire over another. In contradiction to the opinion of my brethren, I am perfectly convinced of the power of the will regarded as a motor force. All collusion and charlatanism apart, I have seen the results of such a possession. Actions promised during sleep by a magnetized patient to the magnetizer have been scrupulously performed on waking. The will of one had become the will of the other.”

“Every kind of action?”

“Yes.”

“Even a criminal act?”

“Even a crime.”

“If it were not from you, I would not listen to such a thing.”

“I will make you witness it,” said Bianchon.

“Hm, hm,” muttered the lawyer. “But supposing that this so-called possession fell under this class of facts, it would be difficult to prove it as legal evidence.”

“If this woman Jeanrenaud is so hideously old and ugly, I do not see what other means of fascination she can have used,” observed Bianchon.

“But,” observed the lawyer, “in 1814, the time at which this fascination is supposed to have taken place, this woman was fourteen years younger; if she had been connected with M. d’Espard ten years before that, these calculations take us back four-and-twenty years, to a time when the lady may have been young and pretty, and have won for herself

and her son a power over M. d'Espard which some men do not know how to evade. Though the source of this power is reprehensible in the sight of justice, it is justifiable in the eye of nature. Madame Jeanrenaud may have been aggrieved by the marriage, contracted probably at about that time, between the Marquis d'Espard and Mademoiselle de Blamont-Chauvry, and at the bottom of all this there may be nothing more than the rivalry of two women, since the Marquis has for a long time lived apart from Mme. d'Espard."

"But her repulsive ugliness, uncle."

"Power of fascination is in direct proportion to ugliness," said the lawyer; "that is an old story. And then think of the smallpox, doctor. But to proceed.

"That so long ago as in 1815, in order to supply the sums of money required by these two persons, the Marquis d'Espard went with his two children to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, in rooms quite unworthy of his name and rank—well, we may live as we please—that he keeps his two children there, the Comte Clément d'Espard and Vicomte Camille d'Espard, in a style of living quite unsuited to their future prospects, their name and fortune; that he often wants money, to such a point, that not long since the landlord, one Mariast, put in an execution on the furniture in the rooms; that when this execution was carried out in his presence, the Marquis d'Espard helped the bailiff, whom he treated like a man of rank, paying him all the marks of attention and respect which he would have shown to a person of superior birth and dignity to himself."

The uncle and nephew glanced at each other and laughed.

"That, moreover, every act of his life, besides the facts with reference to the widow Jeanrenaud and the Baron Jeanrenaud, her son, are those of a madman; that for nearly ten years he has given his thoughts exclusively to China, its customs, manners, and history; that he refers everything to a Chinese origin; that when he is questioned on the subject, he confuses the events of the day and the business of yesterday with facts relating to China; that he censures the acts of the Government and the conduct of the King, though he

is personally much attached to him, by comparing them with the politics of China ;

“ ‘ That this monomania has driven the Marquis d’Espard to conduct devoid of all sense: against the customs of men of rank, and, in opposition to his own professed ideas as to the duties of the nobility, he has joined a commercial undertaking, for which he constantly draws bills which, as they fall due, threaten both his honor and his fortune, since they stamp him as a trader, and in default of payment may lead to his being declared insolvent; that these debts, which are owing to stationers, printers, lithographers, and print-colorists, who have supplied the materials for his publication, called *A Picturesque History of China*, now coming out in parts, are so heavy that these tradesmen have requested the petitioner to apply for a Commission in Lunacy with regard to the Marquis d’Espard in order to save their own credit.’ ”

“ The man is mad ! ” exclaimed Bianchon.

“ You think so, do you ? ” said his uncle. “ If you listen to only one bell, you hear only one sound.”

“ But it seems to me—— ” said Bianchon.

“ But it seems to me,” said Popinot, “ that if any relation of mine wanted to get hold of the management of my affairs, and if, instead of being a humble lawyer, whose colleagues can, any day, verify what his condition is, I were a duke of the realm, an attorney with a little cunning, like Desroches, might bring just such a petition against me.

“ ‘ That his children’s education has been neglected for this monomania; and that he has taught them, against all the rules of education, the facts of Chinese history, which contradict the tenets of the Catholic Church. He also has them taught the Chinese dialects.’ ”

“ Here Desroches strikes me as funny,” said Bianchon.

“ The petition is drawn up by his head clerk Godeschal, who, as you know, is not strong in Chinese,” said the lawyer.

“ ‘ That he often leaves his children destitute of the most necessary things; that the petitioner, notwithstanding her

entreaties, can never see them; that the said Marquis d'Espard brings them to her only once a year; that, knowing the privations to which they are exposed, she makes vain efforts to give them the things most necessary for their existence, and which they require——' Oh! Madame la Marquise, this is preposterous. By proving too much you prove nothing.—My dear boy," said the old man, laying the document on his knee, "where is the mother who ever lacked heart and wit and yearning to such a degree as to fall below the inspirations suggested by her animal instinct? A mother is as cunning to get at her childrer as a girl can be in the conduct of a love intrigue. If your Marquise really wanted to give her children food and clothes, the Devil himself would not have hindered her, heh? That is rather too big a fable for an old lawyer to swallow!—To proceed.

"That at the age the said children have now attained it is necessary that steps should be taken to preserve them from the evil effects of such an education; that they should be provided for as beseems their rank, and that they should cease to have before their eyes the sad example of their father's conduct;

"That there are proofs in support of these allegations which the Court can easily order to be produced. Many times has M. d'Espard spoken of the judge of the Twelfth Arrondissement as a mandarin of the third class; he often speaks of the professors of the Collège Henri IV. as "men of letters"—and that offends them! 'In speaking of the simplest things, he says, "They were not done so in China"; in the course of the most ordinary conversation he will sometimes allude to Madame Jeanrenaud, or sometimes to events which happened in the time of Louis XIV., and then sit plunged in the darkest melancholy; sometimes he fancies he is in China. Several of his neighbors, among others, one Edmé Becker, medical student, and Jean Baptiste Frémot, a professor, living under the same roof, are of opinion, after frequent intercourse with the Marquis d'Espard, that his monomania with regard to everything Chinese is the result of a scheme laid by the said Baron Jeanrenaud and the widow his mother to bring about the deadening of all the

Marquis d'Espard's mental faculties, since the only service which Mme. Jeanrenaud appears to render M. d'Espard is to procure him everything that relates to the Chinese Empire;

“‘ Finally, that the petitioner is prepared to show to the Court that the moneys absorbed by the said Baron and Mme. Jeanrenaud between 1814 and 1828 amount to not less than one million francs.

“‘ In confirmation of the facts herein set forth, the petitioner can bring the evidence of persons who are in the habit of seeing the Marquis d'Espard, whose names and professions are subjoined, many of whom have urged her to demand a commission in lunacy to declare M. d'Espard incapable of managing his own affairs, as being the only way to preserve his fortune from the effects of his maladministration and his children from his fatal influence.

“‘ Taking all this into consideration, M. le Président, and the affidavits subjoined, the petitioner desires that it may please you, inasmuch as the foregoing facts sufficiently prove the insanity and incompetency of the Marquis d'Espard herein described with his titles and residence, to order that, to the end that he may be declared incompetent by law, this petition and the documents in evidence may be laid before the King's public prosecutor; and that you will charge one of the judges of this Court to make his report to you on any day you may be pleased to name, and thereupon to pronounce judgment,' etc.

“ And here,” said Popinot, “ is the President's order instructing me!—Well, what does the Marquise d'Espard want with me? I know everything. But I shall go to-morrow with my registrar to see M. le Marquis, for this does not seem at all clear to me.”

“ Listen, my dear uncle, I have never asked the least little favor of you that had to do with your legal functions; well, I now beg you to show Madame d'Espard the kindness which her situation deserves. If she came here, you would listen to her? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, then, go and listen to her in her own house.

Madame d'Espard is a sickly, nervous, delicate woman, who would faint in your rat's hole of a place. Go in the evening, instead of accepting her dinner, since the law forbids your eating or drinking at your client's expense."

"And does not the law forbid you from taking any legacy from your dead?" said Popinot, fancying that he saw a touch of irony on his nephew's lips.

"Come, uncle, if it were only to enable you to get at the truth of this business, grant my request. You will come as the examining judge, since matters do not seem to you very clear. Deuce take it! It is as necessary to cross-question the Marquise as it is to examine the Marquis."

"You are right," said the lawyer. "It is quite possible that it is she who is mad. I will go."

"I will call for you. Write down in your engagement book: 'To-morrow evening at nine, Madame d'Espard.'—Good!" said Bianchon, seeing his uncle make a note of the engagement.

Next evening at nine Bianchon mounted his uncle's dusty staircase, and found him at work on the statement of some complicated judgment. The coat Lavienne had ordered of the tailor had not been sent, so Popinot put on his old stained coat, and was the Popinot unadorned whose appearance made those laugh who did not know the secrets of his private life. Bianchon, however, obtained permission to pull his cravat straight, and to button his coat, and he hid the stains by crossing the breast of it with the right side over the left, and so displaying the new front of the cloth. But in a minute the judge rucked the coat up over his chest by the way in which he stuffed his hands into his pockets, obeying an irresistible habit. Thus the coat, deeply wrinkled both in front and behind, made a sort of hump in the middle of the back, leaving a gap between the waistcoat and trousers through which his shirt showed. Bianchon, to his sorrow, only discovered this crowning absurdity at the moment when his uncle entered the Marquise's room.

A brief sketch of the person and the career of the lady in whose presence the doctor and the judge now found them-



selves is necessary for an understanding of her interview with Popinot.

Madame d'Espard had, for the last seven years, been very much the fashion in Paris, where Fashion can raise and drop by turns various personages who, now great and now small, that is to say, in view or forgotten, are at last quite intolerable—as discarded ministers are, and every kind of decayed sovereignty. These flatterers of the past, odious with their stale pretensions, know everything, speak ill of everything, and, like ruined profligates, are friends with all the world. Since her husband had separated from her in 1815, Madame d'Espard must have married in the beginning of 1812. Her children, therefore, were aged respectively fifteen and thirteen. By what luck was the mother of a family, about three-and-thirty years of age, still the fashion?

Though Fashion is capricious, and no one can foresee who shall be her favorites, though she often exalts a banker's wife, or some woman of very doubtful elegance and beauty, it certainly seems supernatural when Fashion puts on constitutional airs and gives promotion for age. But in this case Fashion had done as the world did, and accepted Madame d'Espard as still young.

The Marquise, who was thirty-three by her register of birth, was twenty-two in a drawing-room in the evening. But by what care, what artifice! Elaborate curls shaded her temples. She condemned herself to live in twilight, affecting illness so as to sit under the protecting tones of light filtered through muslin. Like Diane de Poitiers, she used cold water in her bath, and, like her again, the Marquise slept on a horsehair mattress, with morocco-covered pillows to preserve her hair; she ate very little, only drank water, and observed monastic regularity in the smallest actions of her life.

This severe system has, it is said, been carried so far as to the use of ice instead of water, and nothing but cold food, by a famous Polish lady of our day who spends a life, now verging on a century old, after the fashion of a town belle. Fated to live as long as Marion Delorme, whom history has credited with surviving to be a hundred and

thirty, the old vice-queen of Poland, at the age of nearly a hundred, has the heart and brain of youth, a charming face, an elegant shape; and in her conversation, sparkling with brilliancy like fagots in the fire, she can compare the mer and books of our literature with the men and books of the eighteenth century. Living in Warsaw, she orders her caps of Herbault in Paris. She is a great lady with the amiability of a mere girl; she swims, she runs like a schoolboy, and can sink on to a sofa with the grace of a young coquette; she mocks at death, and laughs at life. After having astonished the Emperor Alexander, she can still amaze the Emperor Nicholas by the splendor of her entertainments. She can still bring tears to the eyes of a youthful lover, for her age is whatever she pleases, and she has the exquisite self-devotion of a *grisette*. In short, she is herself a fairy tale, unless, indeed, she is a fairy.

Had Madame d'Espard known Madame Zayonseck? Did she mean to imitate her career? Be that as it may, the Marquise proved the merits of the treatment; her complexion was clear, her brow un wrinkled, her figure, like that of Henri II.'s lady-love, preserved the litheness, the freshness, the covered charms which bring a woman love and keep it alive. The simple precautions of this course, suggested by art and nature, and perhaps by experience, had met in her with a general system which confirmed the results. The Marquise was absolutely indifferent to everything that was not herself: men amused her, but no man had ever caused her those deep agitations which stir both natures to their depths, and wreck one on the other. She knew neither hatred nor love. When she was offended, she avenged herself coldly, quietly, at her leisure, waiting for the opportunity to gratify the ill-will she cherished against anybody who dwelt in her unfavorable remembrance. She made no fuss, she did not excite herself; she talked, because she knew that by two words a woman may cause the death of three men.

She had parted from M. d'Espard with the greatest satisfaction. Had he not taken with him two children who at present were troublesome, and in the future would stand in the way of her pretensions? Her most intimate friends,

as much as her least persistent admirers, seeing about her none of Cornelia's jewels, who come and go, and unconsciously betray their mother's age, took her for quite a young woman. The two boys, about whom she seemed so anxious in her petition, were, like their father, as unknown in the world as the northwest passage is unknown to navigators. M. d'Espard was supposed to be an eccentric personage, who had deserted his wife without having the smallest cause for complaint against her.

Mistress of herself at two-and-twenty, and mistress of her fortune of twenty-six thousand francs a year, the Marquise hesitated long before deciding on a course of action and ordering her life. Though she benefited by the expenses her husband had incurred in his house, though she had all the furniture, the carriages, the horses, in short, all the details of a handsome establishment, she lived a retired life during the years 1816, 17, and 18, a time when families were recovering from the disasters resulting from political tempests. She belonged to one of the most important and illustrious families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and her parents advised her to live with them as much as possible after the separation forced upon her by her husband's inexplicable caprice.

In 1820 the Marquise roused herself from her lethargy; she went to Court, appeared at parties, and entertained in her own house. From 1821 to 1827 she lived in great style, and made herself remarked for her taste and her dress; she had a day, an hour, for receiving visits, and ere long she had seated herself on the throne, occupied before her by Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauséant, the Duchesse de Langeais, and Madame Firmiani—who on her marriage with M. de Camps had resigned the scepter in favor of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, from whom Madame d'Espard snatched it. The world knew nothing beyond this of the private life of the Marquise d'Espard. She seemed likely to shine for long on the Parisian horizon, like the sun near its setting, but which will never set.

The Marquise was on terms of great intimacy with a duchess as famous for her beauty as for her attachment to

a prince just now in banishment, but accustomed to play a leading part in every prospective government. Madame d'Espard was also the friend of a foreign lady, with whom a famous and very wily Russian diplomat was in the habit of discussing public affairs. And then an antiquated countess, who was accustomed to shuffle the cards for the great game of politics, had adopted her in a maternal fashion. Thus, to any man of high ambitions, Madame d'Espard was preparing a covert but very real influence to follow the public and frivolous ascendancy she now owed to fashion. Her drawing-room was acquiring political individuality: "What do they say at Madame d'Espard's?" "Are they against the measure in Madame d'Espard's drawing-room?" were questions repeated by a sufficient number of simpletons to give the flock of the faithful who surrounded her the importance of a coterie. A few damaged politicians whose wounds she had bound up, and whom she flattered, pronounced her as capable in diplomacy as the wife of the Russian ambassador to London. The Marquise had indeed several times suggested to deputies or to peers words and ideas that had rung through Europe. She had often judged correctly of certain events on which her circle of friends dared not express an opinion. The principal persons about the Court came in the evening to play whist in her rooms.

Then she also had the qualities of her defects; she was thought to be—and she was—discreet. Her friendship seemed to be stanch; she worked for her protégés with a persistency which showed that she cared less for patronage than for increased influence. This conduct was based on her dominant passion: Vanity. Conquests and pleasure, which so many women love, to her seemed only means to an end; she aimed at living on every point of the largest circle that life can describe.

Among the men still young, and to whom the future belonged, who crowded her drawing-room on great occasions, were to be seen MM. de Marsay and de Ronquerolles, de Montriveau, de la Roche-Hugon, de Sérizy, Ferraud, Maxime de Trailles, de Listomère, the two Vandenesses, du

Châtelet, and others. She would frequently receive a man whose wife she would not admit, and her power was great enough to induce certain ambitious men to submit to these hard conditions, such as two famous royalist bankers, M. de Nucingen and Ferdinand du Tillet. She had so thoroughly studied the strength and the weakness of Paris life, that her conduct had never given any man the smallest advantage over her. An enormous price might have been set on a note or letter, by which she might have compromised herself, without one being produced.

If an arid soul enabled her to play her part to the life, her person was no less available for it. She had a youthful figure. Her voice was, at will, soft and fresh, or clear and hard. She possessed in the highest degree the secret of that aristocratic pose by which a woman wipes out the past. The Marquise knew well the art of setting an immense space between herself and the sort of man who fancies he may be familiar after some chance advances. Her imposing gaze could deny everything. In her conversation fine and beautiful sentiments and noble resolutions flowed naturally, as it seemed, from a pure heart and soul; but in reality she was all self, and quite capable of blasting a man who was clumsy in his negotiations, at the very time when she was shamefully making a compromise for the benefit of her own interest.

Rastignac, in trying to fasten on to this woman, had discerned her to be the cleverest of tools, but he had not yet used it; far from handling it, he was already finding himself crushed by it. This young *Condottiere* of the brain, condemned, like Napoleon, to give battle constantly, while knowing that a single defeat would prove the grave of his fortunes, had met a dangerous adversary in his protectress. For the first time in his turbulent life, he was playing a game with a partner worthy of him. He saw a place as Minister in the conquest of Madame d'Espard, so he was her tool till he could make her his—a perilous beginning.

The Hôtel d'Espard needed a large household, and the Marquise had a great number of servants. The grand receptions were held in the ground-floor rooms, but she lived

on the first floor of the house. The perfect order of a fine staircase splendidly decorated, and rooms fitted in the dignified style which formerly prevailed at Versailles, spoke of an immense fortune. When the judge saw the carriage gates thrown open to admit his nephew's cab, he took in with a rapid glance the lodge, the porter, the courtyard, the stables, the arrangement of the house, the flowers that decorated the stairs, the perfect cleanliness of the banisters, walls, and carpets, and counted the footmen in livery who, as the bell rang, appeared on the landing. His eyes, which only yesterday in his parlor had sounded the dignity of misery under the muddy clothing of the poor, now studied with the same penetrating vision the furniture and splendor of the rooms he passed through, to pierce to the misery of grandeur.

“M. Popinot.—M. Bianchon.”

The two names were pronounced at the door of the boudoir where the Marquise was sitting, a pretty room recently refurnished, and looking out on the garden behind the house. At the moment Madame d'Espard was seated in one of the old *rococo* armchairs of which Madame had set the fashion. Rastignac was at her left hand on a low chair, in which he looked settled like an Italian lady's “cousin.” A third person was standing by the corner of the chimney-piece. As the shrewd doctor had suspected, the Marquise was a woman of a parched and wiry constitution. But for her regimen her complexion must have taken the ruddy tone that is produced by constant heat; but she added to the effect of her acquired pallor by the strong colors of the stuffs she hung her rooms with, or in which she dressed. Reddish-brown, marone, bistre with a golden light in it, suited her to perfection. Her boudoir, copied from that of a famous lady then at the height of fashion in London, was in tan-colored velvet; but she had added various details of ornament which moderated the pompous splendor of this royal hue. Her hair was dressed like a girl's in bands ending in curls, which emphasized the rather long oval of her face; but an oval face is as majestic as a round one is ignoble. The mirrors, cut with facets to lengthen or flatten

the face at will, amply prove the rule as applied to the physiognomy.

On seeing Popinot, who stood in the doorway craning his neck like a startled animal, with his left hand in his pocket, and the right hand holding a hat with a greasy lining, the Marquise gave Rastignac a look where lay a germ of mockery. The good man's rather foolish appearance was so completely in harmony with his grotesque figure and scared looks, that Rastignac, catching sight of Bianchon's dejected expression of humiliation through his uncle, could not help laughing, and turned away. The Marquise bowed a greeting, and made a great effort to rise from her seat, falling back again, not without grace, with an air of apologizing for her incivility by affected weakness.

At this instant the person who was standing between the fireplace and the door bowed slightly, and pushed forward two chairs, which he offered by a gesture to the doctor and the judge; then, when they had seated themselves, he leaned against the wall again, crossing his arms.

A word as to this man. There is living now, in our day, a painter—Decamps—who possesses in the very highest degree the art of commanding your interest in everything he sets before your eyes, whether it be a stone or a man. In this respect his pencil is more skillful than his brush. He will sketch an empty room and leave a broom against the wall. If he chooses, you shall shudder; you shall believe that this broom has just been the instrument of crime, and is dripping with blood; it shall be the broom which the widow Bancal used to clean out the room where Fualdès was murdered. Yes, the painter will touzle that broom like a man in a rage; he will make each hair of it stand on end as though it were on your own bristling scalp; he will make it the interpreter between the secret poem of his imagination and the poem that shall have its birth in yours. After terrifying you by the aspect of that broom, to-morrow he will draw another, and lying by it a cat, asleep, but mysterious in its sleep, shall tell you that this broom is that on which the wife of a German cobbler rides off to the Sabbath on the Brocken. Or it will be a quite harmless broom, on

which he will hang the coat of a clerk in the Treasury. Decamps had in his brush what Paganini had in his bow—a magnetically communicative power.

Well, I should have to transfer to my style that striking genius, that marvelous knack of the pencil, to depict the upright, tall, lean man dressed in black, with black hair, who stood there without speaking a word. This gentleman had a face like a knife-blade, cold and harsh, with a color like Seine water when it is muddy and strewn with fragments of charcoal from a sunken barge. He looked at the floor, listening and passing judgment. His attitude was terrifying. He stood there like the dreadful broom to which Decamps has given the power of revealing a crime. Now and then, in the course of conversation, the Marquise tried to get some tacit advice; but however eager her questioning, he was as grave and as rigid as the statue of the Commendatore.

The worthy Popinot, sitting on the edge of his chair in front of the fire, his hat between his knees, stared at the gilt chandeliers, the clock, and the curiosities with which the chimney-shelf was covered, the velvet and trimmings of the curtains, and all the costly and elegant nothings that a woman of fashion collects about her. He was roused from his homely meditations by Madame d'Espard, who addressed him in a piping tone—

“Monsieur, I owe you a million thanks——”

“A million thanks,” thought he to himself, “that is too many; it does not mean one.”

“For the trouble you condescend——”

“Condescend!” thought he; “she is laughing at me.”

“To take in coming to see an unhappy client, who is too ill to go out——”

Here the lawyer cut the Marquise short by giving her an inquisitorial look, examining the sanitary condition of the unhappy client.

“As sound as a bell,” said he to himself.

“Madame,” said he, assuming a respectful mien, “you owe me nothing. Although my visit to you is not in strict accordance with the practice of the Court, we ought to



spare no pains to discover the truth in cases of this kind. Our judgment is then guided less by the letter of the law than by the promptings of our conscience. Whether I seek the truth here or in my own consulting-room, so long as I find it, all will be well."

While Popinot was speaking, Rastignac was shaking hands with Bianchon; the Marquise welcomed the doctor with a little bow full of gracious significance.

"Who is that?" asked Bianchon in a whisper of Rastignac, indicating the dark man.

"The Chevalier d'Espard, the Marquis's brother."

"Your nephew told me," said the Marquise to Popinot, "how much you are occupied, and I know too that you are so good as to wish to conceal your kind actions, so as to release those whom you oblige from the burden of gratitude. The work in Court is most fatiguing, it would seem. Why have they not twice as many judges?"

"Ah, Madame, that would not be difficult; we should be none the worse if they had. But when that happens, fowls will cut their teeth!"

As he heard this speech, so entirely in character with the lawyer's appearance, the Chevalier measured him from head to foot, out of one eye, as much as to say, "We shall easily manage him!"

The Marquise looked at Rastignac, who bent over her. "That is the sort of man," murmured the dandy in her ear, "who is trusted to pass judgments on the life and interests of private individuals."

Like most men who have grown old in a business, Popinot readily let himself follow the habits he had acquired, more particularly habits of mind. His conversation was all of "the shop." He was fond of questioning those he talked to, forcing them to unexpected conclusions, making them tell more than they wished to reveal. Pozzo di Borgo, it is said, used to amuse himself by discovering other folks' secrets, and entangling them in his diplomatic snares, and thus, by invincible habit, showed how his mind was soaked in wiliness. As soon as Popinot had surveyed the ground, so to speak, on which he stood, he saw that it would be

necessary to have recourse to the cleverest subtleties, the most elaborately wrapped up and disguised, which were in use in the Courts, to detect the truth.

Bianchon sat cold and stern, as a man who has made up his mind to endure torture without revealing his sufferings; but in his heart he wished that his uncle could only trample on this woman as we trample on a viper—a comparison suggested to him by the Marquise's long dress, by the curve of her attitude, her long neck, small head, and undulating movements.

"Well, Monsieur," said Madame d'Espard, "however great my dislike to be or seem selfish, I have been suffering too long not to wish that you may settle matters at once. Shall I soon get a favorable decision?"

"Madame, I will do my best to bring matters to a conclusion," said Popinot, with an air of frank good-nature. "Are you ignorant of the reason which made the separation necessary which now subsists between you and the Marquis d'Espard?"

"Yes, Monsieur," she replied, evidently prepared with a story to tell. "At the beginning of 1816 M. d'Espard, whose temper had completely changed within three months or so, proposed that we should go to live on one of his estates near Briançon, without any regard for my health, which that climate would have destroyed, or for my habits of life; I refused to go. My refusal gave rise to such unjustifiable reproaches on his part, that from that hour I had my suspicions as to the soundness of his mind. On the following day he left me, leaving me his house and the free use of my own income, and he went to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Saint-Genève, taking with him my two children——"

"One moment, Madame," said the lawyer, interrupting her. "What was that income?"

"Twenty-six thousand francs a year," she replied parenthetically. "I at once consulted old M. Bordin as to what I ought to do," she went on; "but it seems that there are so many difficulties in the way of depriving a father of the care of his children, that I was forced to resign myself to

remaining alone at the age of twenty-two—an age at which many young women do very foolish things. You have read my petition, no doubt, Monsieur; you know the principal facts on which I rely to procure a Commission in Lunacy with regard to M. d'Espard?"

"Have you ever applied to him, Madame, to obtain the care of your children?"

"Yes, Monsieur; but in vain. It is very hard on a mother to be deprived of the affection of her children, particularly when they can give her such happiness as every woman clings to."

"The elder must be sixteen," said Popinot.

"Fifteen," said the Marquise eagerly.

Here Bianchon and Rastignac looked at each other. Madame d'Espard bit her lips.

"What can the age of my children matter to you?"

"Well, Madame," said the lawyer, without seeming to attach any importance to his words, "a lad of fifteen and his brother, of thirteen, I suppose, have legs and their wits about them; they might come to see you on the sly. If they do not, it is because they obey their father, and to obey him in that matter they must love him very dearly."

"I do not understand," said the Marquise.

"You do not know, perhaps," replied Popinot, "that in your petition your attorney represents your children as being very unhappy with their father?"

Madame d'Espard replied with charming innocence—

"I do not know what my attorney may have put into my mouth."

"Forgive my inferences," said Popinot, "but Justice weighs everything. What I ask you, Madame, is suggested by my wish thoroughly to understand the matter. By your account M. d'Espard deserted you on the most frivolous pretext. Instead of going to Briançon, where he wished to take you, he remained in Paris. This point is not clear. Did he know this Madame Jeanrenaud before his marriage?"

"No, Monsieur," replied the Marquise, with some asperity, visible only to Rastignac and the Chevalier d'Espard.

She was offended at being cross-questioned by this lawyer

when she had intended to beguile his judgment; but as Popinot still looked stupid from sheer absence of mind, she ended by attributing his interrogatory to the Questioning Spirit of Voltaire's bailiff.

"My parents," she went on, "married me at the age of sixteen to M. d'Espard, whose name, fortune, and mode of life were such as my family looked for in the man who was to be my husband. M. d'Espard was then six-and-twenty; he was a gentleman in the English sense of the word; his manners pleased me, he seemed to have plenty of ambition, and I like ambitious people," she added, looking at Rastignac. "If M. d'Espard had never met that Madame Jeanrenaud, his character, his learning, his acquirements would have raised him—as his friends then believed—to high office in the Government. King Charles X., at that time Monsieur, had the greatest esteem for him, and a peer's seat, an appointment at Court, some important post certainly would have been his. That woman turned his head, and has ruined all the prospects of my family."

"What were M. d'Espard's religious opinions at that time?"

"He was, and is still, a very pious man."

"You do not suppose that Madame Jeanrenaud may have influenced him by mysticism?"

"No, Monsieur."

"You have a very fine house, Madame," said Popinot suddenly, taking his hands out of his pockets, and rising to pick up his coat-tails and warm himself. "This boudoir is very nice, those chairs are magnificent, the whole apartment is sumptuous. You must indeed be most unhappy when, seeing yourself here, you know that your children are ill lodged, ill clothed, and ill fed. I can imagine nothing more terrible for a mother."

"Yes, indeed. I should be so glad to give the poor little fellows some amusement, while their father keeps them at work from morning till night at that wretched history of China."

"You give handsome balls; they would enjoy them, but they might acquire a taste for dissipation. However, their

father might send them to you once or twice in the course of the winter."

"He brings them here on my birthday and on New Year's Day. On those days M. d'Espard does me the favor of dining here with them."

"It is very singular behavior," said the judge, with an air of conviction. "Have you ever seen this Dame Jeanre-naud?"

"My brother-in-law one day, out of interest in his brother——"

"Ah! Monsieur is M. d'Espard's brother?" said the lawyer, interrupting her.

The Chevalier bowed, but did not speak.

"M. d'Espard, who has watched this affair, took me to the Oratoire, where this woman goes to sermon, for she is a Protestant. I saw her; she is not in the least attractive; she looks like a butcher's wife, extremely fat, horribly marked with the smallpox; she has feet and hands like a man's, she squints; in short, she is monstrous!"

"It is inconceivable," said the judge, looking like the most imbecile judge in the whole kingdom. "And this creature lives near here, Rue Verte, in a fine house? There are no plain folks left, it would seem?"

"In a mansion on which her son has spent absurd sums."

"Madame," said Popinot, "I live in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau; I know nothing of such expenses. What do you call absurd sums?"

"Well," said the Marquise, "a stable with five horses and three carriages, a phaeton, a brougham, and a cabriolet."

"That costs a large sum, then?" asked Popinot in surprise.

"Enormous sums!" said Rastignac, intervening. "Such an establishment would cost, for the stables, the keeping the carriages in order, and the liveries for the men, between fifteen and sixteen thousand francs a year."

"Should you think so, Madame?" said the judge, looking much astonished.

“Yes, at least,” replied the Marquise.

“And the furniture, too, must have cost a lot of money?”

“More than a hundred thousand francs,” replied Madame d’Espard, who could not help smiling at the lawyer’s vulgarity.

“Judges, Madame, are apt to be incredulous; it is what they are paid for, and I am incredulous. The Baron Jeanrenaud and his mother must have fleeced M. d’Espard most preposterously, if what you say is correct. There is a stable establishment which, by your account, costs sixteen thousand francs a year. Housekeeping, servants’ wages, and the gross expenses of the house itself must run to twice as much; that makes a total of from fifty to sixty thousand francs a year. Do you suppose that these people, formerly so extremely poor, can have so large a fortune? A million yields scarcely forty thousand a year.”

“Monsieur, the mother and son invested the money given them by M. d’Espard in the Funds when they were at 60 to 80. I should think their income must be more than sixty thousand francs. And then the son has fine appointments.”

“If they spend sixty thousand francs a year,” said the judge, “how much do you spend?”

“Well,” said Madame d’Espard, “about the same.” The Chevalier started a little, the Marquise colored; Bianchon looked at Rastignac; but Popinot preserved an expression of simplicity which quite deceived Madame d’Espard. The Chevalier took no part in the conversation; he saw that all was lost.

“These people, Madame, might be indicted before the superior Court,” said Popinot.

“That was my opinion,” exclaimed the Marquise, enchanted. “If threatened with the police, they would have come to terms.”

“Madame,” said Popinot, “when M. d’Espard left you, did he not give you a power of attorney enabling you to manage and control your own affairs?”

“I do not understand the object of all these questions,” said the Marquise with petulance. “It seems to me that if you would only consider the state in which I am placed

by my husband's insanity, you ought to be troubling yourself about him, and not about me."

"We are coming to that, Madame," said the judge. "Before placing in your hands, or in any others, the control of M. d'Espard's property, supposing he were pronounced incapable, the Court must inquire as to how you have managed your own. If M. d'Espard gave you power, he would have shown confidence in you, and the Court would recognize the fact. Had you any power from him? You might have bought or sold house property or invested money in business?"

"No, Monsieur, the Blamont-Chauvrys are not in the habit of trading," said she, extremely nettled in her pride as an aristocrat, and forgetting the business in hand. "My property is intact, and M. d'Espard gave me no power to act."

The Chevalier put his hand over his eyes not to betray the vexation he felt at his sister-in-law's short-sightedness, for she was ruining herself by her answers. Popinot had gone straight to the mark in spite of his apparent doublings.

"Madame," said the lawyer, indicating the Chevalier, "this gentleman, of course, is your near connection? May we speak openly before these other gentlemen?"

"Speak on," said the Marquise, surprised at this caution.

"Well, Madame, granting that you spend only sixty thousand francs a year, to anyone who sees your stables, your house, your train of servants, and a style of housekeeping which strikes me as far more luxurious than that of the Jeanrenauds, that sum would seem well laid out."

The Marquise bowed an agreement.

"But," continued the judge, "if you have no more than twenty-six thousand francs a year, you may have a hundred thousand francs of debts. The Court would therefore have a right to imagine that the motives which prompt you to ask that your husband may be deprived of the control of his property are complicated by self-interest and the need for paying your debts—if—you—have—any. The requests addressed to me have interested me in your position; consider fully and make your confession. If my suppositions

have hit the truth, there is yet time to avoid the blame which the Court would have a perfect right to express in the saving clauses of the verdict if you could not show your attitude to be absolutely honorable and clear.

“It is our duty to examine the motives of the applicant as well as to listen to the plea of the witness under examination, to ascertain whether the petitioner may not have been prompted by passion, by a desire for money, which is unfortunately too common——”

The Marquise was on Saint Laurence’s gridiron.

“And I must have explanations on this point. Madame, I have no wish to call you to account; I only want to know how you have managed to live at the rate of sixty thousand francs a year, and that for some years past. There are plenty of women who achieve this in their housekeeping, but you are not one of those. Tell me, you may have the most legitimate resources, a royal pension, or some claim on the indemnities lately granted; but even then you must have had your husband’s authority to receive them.”

The Marquise did not speak.

“You must remember,” Popinot went on, “that M. d’Espard may wish to enter a protest, and his counsel will have a right to find out whether you have any creditors. This boudoir is newly furnished, your rooms are not now furnished with the things left to you by M. d’Espard in 1816. If, as you did me the honor of informing me, furniture is costly for the Jeanrenauds, it must be yet more so for you, who are a great lady. Though I am a judge, I am but a man; I may be wrong—tell me so. Remember the duties imposed on me by the law, and the rigorous inquiries it demands, when the case before it is the suspension from all his functions of the father of a family in the prime of life. So you will pardon me, Madame la Marquise, for laying all these difficulties before you; it will be easy for you to give me an explanation.

“When a man is pronounced incapable of the control of his own affairs, a trustee has to be appointed. Who will be the trustee?”

“His brother,” said the Marquise.



The Chevalier bowed. There was a short silence, very uncomfortable for the five persons who were present. The judge, in sport as it were, had laid open the woman's sore place. Popinot's countenance of common, clumsy good-nature, at which the Marquise, the Chevalier, and Rastignac had been inclined to laugh, had gained importance in their eyes. As they stole a look at him, they discerned the various expressions of that eloquent mouth. The ridiculous mortal was a judge of acumen. His studious notice of the boudoir was accounted for: he had started from the gilt elephant supporting the chimney-clock, examining all this luxury, and had ended by reading this woman's soul.

"If the Marquis d'Espard is mad about China, I see that you are not less fond of its products," said Popinot, looking at the porcelain on the chimney-piece. "But perhaps it was from M. le Marquis that you had these charming Oriental pieces," and he pointed to some precious trifles.

This irony, in very good taste, made Bianchon smile and petrified Rastignac, while the Marquise bit her thin lips.

"Instead of being the protector of a woman placed in a cruel dilemma—an alternative between losing her fortune and her children, and being regarded as her husband's enemy," she said, "you accuse me, Monsieur! You suspect my motives! You must own that your conduct is strange!"

"Madame," said the judge eagerly, "the caution exercised by the Court in such cases as these might have given you, in any other judge, a perhaps less indulgent critic than I am.—And do you suppose that M. d'Espard's lawyer will show you any great consideration? Will he not be suspicious of motives which may be perfectly pure and disinterested? Your life will be at his mercy; he will inquire into it without qualifying his search by the respectful deference I have for you."

"I am much obliged to you, Monsieur," said the Marquise satirically. "Admitting for the moment that I owe thirty thousand, or fifty thousand francs, in the first place, it would be a mere trifle to the d'Espards and the de Blamont-Chauvrys. But if my husband is not in the posses-

sion of his mental faculties, would that prevent his being pronounced incapable?"

"No, Madame," said Popinot.

"Although you have questioned me with a sort of cunning which I should not have expected in a judge, and under circumstances where straightforwardness would have answered your purpose," she went on, "I will tell you without subterfuge that my position in the world, and the efforts I have to make to keep up my connection, are not in the least to my taste. I began my life by a long period of solitude; but my children's interest appealed to me; I felt that I must fill their father's place. By receiving my friends, by keeping up all this connection, by contracting these debts, I have secured their future welfare; I have prepared for them a brilliant career where they will find help and favor; and to have what has thus been acquired, many a man of business, lawyer or banker, would gladly pay all it has cost me."

"I appreciate your devoted conduct, Madame," replied Popinot. "It does you honor, and I blame you for nothing. A judge belongs to all: he must know and weigh every fact."

Madame d'Espard's tact and practice in estimating men made her understand that M. Popinot was not to be influenced by any consideration. She had counted on an ambitious lawyer, she had found a man of conscience. She at once thought of finding other means for securing the success of her side.

The servants brought in tea.

"Have you any further explanations to give me, Madame?" said Popinot, seeing these preparations.

"Monsieur," she replied haughtily, "do your business your own way; question M. d'Espard, and you will pity me, I am sure." She raised her head, looking Popinot in the face with pride, mingled with impertinence; the worthy man bowed himself out respectfully.

"A nice man is your uncle," said Rastignac to Bianchon. "Is he really so dense? Does not he know what the Marquise d'Espard is, what her influence means, her unavowed

power over people? The Keeper of the Seals will be with her to-morrow——”

“My dear fellow, how can I help it?” said Bianchon. “Did not I warn you? He is not a man you can get over.”

“No,” said Rastignac; “he is a man you must run over.”

The doctor was obliged to make his bow to the Marquise and her mute Chevalier to catch up Popinot, who, not being the man to endure an embarrassing position, was pacing through the rooms.

“That woman owes a hundred thousand crowns,” said the judge, as he stepped into his nephew’s cab.

“And what do you think of the case?”

“I?” said the judge: “I never have an opinion till I have gone into everything. To-morrow early I will send to Madame Jeanrenaud to call on me in my private office at four o’clock, to make her explain the facts which concern her, for she is compromised.”

“I should very much like to know what the end will be.”

“Why, bless me, do not you see that the Marquise is the tool of that tall lean man who never uttered a word? There is a strain of Cain in him, but of the Cain who goes to the Law Courts for his bludgeon, and there, unluckily for him, we keep more than one Damocles’ sword.”

“Oh, Rastignac! what brought you into that boat, I wonder?” exclaimed Bianchon.

“Ah, we are used to seeing these little family conspiracies,” said Popinot. “Not a year passes without a number of verdicts of ‘insufficient evidence’ against applications of this kind. In our state of society such an attempt brings no dishonor, while we send a poor devil to the galleys if he breaks a pane of glass dividing him from a bowl full of gold. Our Code is not faultless.”

“But these are the facts?”

“My boy, do you not know all the judicial romances with which clients impose on their attorneys? If the attorneys condemned themselves to state nothing but the truth, they would not earn enough to keep their office open.”

Next day, at four in the afternoon, a very stout dame,

looking a good deal like a cask dressed up in a gown and belt, mounted Judge Popinot's stairs, perspiring and panting. She had, with great difficulty, got out of a green landau, which suited her to a miracle; you could not think of the woman without the landau, or the landau without the woman.

"It is I, my dear sir," said she, appearing in the doorway of the judge's room. "Madame Jeanrenaud, whom you summoned exactly as if I were a thief, neither more nor less."

The common words were spoken in a common voice, broken by the wheezing of asthma, and ending in a cough.

"When I go through a damp place, I can't tell you what I suffer, sir. I shall never make old bones, saving your presence. However, here I am."

The lawyer was quite amazed at the appearance of this supposed *Maréchale d'Ancre*. Madame Jeanrenaud's face was pitted with an infinite number of little holes, was very red, with a pug nose and a low forehead, and was as round as a ball; for everything about the good woman was round. She had the bright eyes of a country woman, an honest gaze, a cheerful tone, and chestnut hair held in place by a bonnet cap under a green bonnet decked with a shabby bunch of auriculas. Her stupendous bust was a thing to laugh at, for it made one fear some grotesque explosion every time she coughed. Her enormous legs were of the shape which makes the Paris street boy describe such a woman as being built on piles. The widow wore a green gown trimmed with chinchilla, which looked on her as a splash of dirty oil would look on a bride's veil. In short, everything about her harmonized with her last words: "Here I am."

"Madame," said Popinot, "you are suspected of having used some seductive arts to induce M. d'Espard to hand over to you very considerable sums of money."

"Of what! of what!" cried she. "Of seductive arts? But, my dear sir, you are a man to be respected, and, moreover, as a lawyer you ought to have some good sense. Look at me. Tell me if I am likely to seduce anyone. I

cannot tie my own shoes, nor even stoop. For these twenty years past, the Lord be praised, I have not dared to put on a pair of stays under pain of sudden death. I was as thin as an asparagus stalk when I was seventeen, and pretty too—I may say so now. So I married Jeanrenaud, a good fellow, and head-man on the salt-barges. I had my boy, who is a fine young man; he is my pride, and it is not holding myself cheap to say he is my best piece of work. My little Jeanrenaud was a soldier who did Napoleon credit, and who served in the Imperial Guard. But, alas! at the death of my old man, who was drowned, times changed for the worse. I had the smallpox. I was kept two years in my room without stirring, and I came out of it the size you see me, hideous for ever, and as wretched as could be. These are my seductive arts.”

“But what, then, can the reasons be that have induced M. d’Espard to give you sums——?”

“Hugious sums, Monsieur, say the word; I do not mind. But as to his reasons, I am not at liberty to explain them.”

“You are wrong. At this moment, his family, very naturally alarmed, are about to bring an action——”

“Heaven above us!” said the good woman, starting up. “Is it possible that he should be worried on my account? That king of men, a man that has not his match! Rather than he should have the smallest trouble, or a hair less on his head I could almost say, we would return every sou, Monsieur. Write that down on your papers. Heaven above us! I will go at once and tell Jeanrenaud what is going on! A pretty thing indeed!”

And the little old woman went out, rolled herself downstairs, and disappeared.

“That one tells no lies,” said Popinot to himself. “Well, to-morrow I shall know the whole story, for I shall go to see the Marquis d’Espard.”

People who have outlived the age when a man wastes his vitality at random, know how great an influence may be exercised on more important events by apparently trivial incidents, and will not be surprised at the weight here given to the following minor fact. Next day Popinot had an

attack of coryza, a complaint which is not dangerous, and generally known by the absurd and inadequate name of a cold in the head.

The judge, who could not suppose that the delay could be serious, feeling himself a little feverish, kept his room, and did not go to see the Marquis d'Espard. This day lost was, to this affair, what on the Day of Dupes the cup of soup had been, taken by Marie de Medici, which, by delaying her meeting with Louis XIII., enabled Richelieu to arrive at Saint-Germain before her, and recapture his royal slave.

Before accompanying the lawyer and his registering clerk to the Marquis d'Espard's house, it may be as well to glance at the home and the private affairs of this father of sons whom his wife's petition represented to be a madman.

Here and there in the old parts of Paris a few buildings may still be seen in which the archæologist can discern an intention of decorating the city, and that love of property which leads the owner to give a durable character to the structure. The house in which M. d'Espard was then living, in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève, was one of these old mansions, built in stone, and not devoid of a certain richness of style; but time had blackened the stone, and revolutions in the town had damaged it both outside and inside. The dignitaries who formerly dwelt in the neighborhood of the University having disappeared with the great ecclesiastical foundations, this house had become the home of industries and of inhabitants whom it was never destined to shelter. During the last century a printing establishment had worn down the polished floors, soiled the carved wood, blackened the walls, and altered the principal internal arrangements. Formerly the residence of a Cardinal, this fine house was now divided among plebeian tenements. The character of the architecture showed that it had been built under the reigns of Henry III., Henry IV., and Louis XIII., at the time when the hotels Mignon and Serpente were erected in the same neighborhood, with the palace of the Princess Palatine, and the Sorbonne. An old man could remember having heard it called, in the last century, the

hotel Duperron, so it seemed probable that the illustrious Cardinal of that name had built, or perhaps merely lived in it.

There still exists, indeed, in the corner of the courtyard, a *perron* or flight of several outer steps by which the house is entered; and the way into the garden on the garden front is down a similar flight of steps. In spite of dilapidations, the luxury lavished by the architect on the balustrade and entrance porch crowning these two *perrons* suggests the simple-minded purpose of commemorating the owner's name, a sort of sculptured pun which our ancestors often allowed themselves. Finally, in support of this evidence, archæologists can still discern in the medallions which show on the principal front some traces of the cords of the Roman hat.

M. le Marquis d'Espard lived on the ground floor, in order, no doubt, to enjoy the garden, which might be called spacious for that neighborhood, and which lay open to the south, two advantages imperatively necessary for his children's health. The situation of the house, in a street on a steep hill, as its name indicates, secured these ground-floor rooms against ever being damp. M. d'Espard had taken them, no doubt, for a very moderate price, rents being low at the time when he settled in that quarter, in order to be among the schools and to superintend his boys' education. Moreover, the state in which he found the place, with everything to repair, had no doubt induced the owner to be accommodating. Thus M. d'Espard had been able to go to some expense to settle himself suitably without being accused of extravagance. The loftiness of the rooms, the paneling, of which nothing survived but the frames, the decoration of the ceilings, all displayed the dignity which the prelacy stamped on whatever it attempted or created, and which artists discern to this day in the smallest relic that remains, though it be but a book, a dress, the panel of a bookcase, or an armchair.

The Marquis had the rooms painted in the rich brown tones beloved of the Dutch and of the citizens of Old Paris, hues which lend such good effects to the painter of *genre*. The panels were hung with plain paper in harmony with the

paint. The window curtains were of inexpensive materials, but chosen so as to produce a generally happy result; the furniture was not too crowded and judiciously placed. Anyone on going into this home could not resist a sense of sweet peacefulness, produced by the perfect calm, the stillness which prevailed, by the unpretentious unity of color, the keeping of the picture, in the words a painter might use. A certain nobleness in the details, the exquisite cleanliness of the furniture, and a perfect concord of men and things, all brought the word "suavity" to the lips.

Few persons were admitted to the rooms used by the Marquis and his two sons, whose life might perhaps seem mysterious to their neighbors. In a wing towards the street, on the third floor, there are three large rooms which had been left in the state of dilapidation and grotesque barrenness to which they had been reduced by the printing works. These three rooms, devoted to the evolution of the *Picturesque History of China*, were contrived to serve as a writing-room, a depository, and a private room, where M. d'Espard sat during part of the day; for after breakfast till four in the afternoon the Marquis remained in this room on the third floor to work at the publication he had undertaken. Visitors wanting to see him commonly found him there, and often the two boys on their return from school resorted thither. Thus the ground-floor rooms were a sort of sanctuary where the father and sons spent their time from the hour of dinner till the next day, and his domestic life was carefully closed against the public eye.

His only servants were a cook—an old woman who had long been attached to his family, and a man-servant forty years old, who was with him when he married Mademoiselle de Blamont. His children's nurse had also remained with them, and the minute care to which the apartment bore witness revealed the sense of order and the maternal affection expended by this woman in her master's interest, in the management of his house, and the charge of his children. These three good souls, grave and uncommunicative folks, seemed to have entered into the idea which ruled the Marquis's domestic life. And the contrast between their habits and those



of most servants was a peculiarity which cast an air of mystery over the house, and fomented the calumny to which M. d'Espard himself lent occasion. Very laudable motives had made him determine never to be on visiting terms with any of the other tenants in the house. In undertaking to educate his boys he wished to keep them from all contact with strangers. Perhaps, too, he wished to avoid the intrusion of neighbors.

In a man of his rank, at a time when the Quartier Latin was distracted by Liberalism, such conduct was sure to rouse in opposition a host of petty passions, of feelings whose folly is only to be measured by their meanness, the outcome of porters' gossip and malevolent tattle from door to door, all unknown to M. d'Espard and his retainers. His man-servant was stigmatized as a Jesuit, his cook as a sly fox; the nurse was in collusion with Madame Jeanrenaud to rob the madman. The madman was the Marquis. By degrees the other tenants came to regard as proofs of madness a number of things they had noticed in M. d'Espard, and passed through the sieve of their judgment without discerning any reasonable motive for them.

Having no belief in the success of the *History of China*, they had managed to convince the landlord of the house that M. d'Espard had no money just at a time when, with the forgetfulness which often befalls busy men, he had allowed the tax-collector to send him a summons for non-payment of arrears. The landlord had forthwith claimed his quarter's rent from January 1st by sending in a receipt, which the porter's wife had amused herself by detaining. On the 15th a summons to pay was served on M. d'Espard, the portress had delivered it at her leisure, and he supposed it to be some misunderstanding, not conceiving of any incivility from a man in whose house he had been living for twelve years. The Marquis was actually seized by a bailiff at the time when his man-servant had gone to carry the money for the rent to the landlord.

This arrest, insidiously reported to the persons with whom he was in treaty for his undertaking, had alarmed some of them who were already doubtful of M. d'Espard's solvency

in consequence of the enormous sums which Baron Jean-renaud and his mother were said to be receiving from him. And, indeed, these suspicions on the part of the tenants, the creditors, and the landlord had some excuse in the Marquis's extreme economy in housekeeping. He conducted it as a ruined man might. His servants always paid in ready money for the most trifling necessities of life, and acted as not choosing to take credit; if now they had asked for anything on credit, it would probably have been refused, calumnious gossip had been so widely believed in the neighborhood. There are tradesmen who like those of their customers who pay badly when they see them often, while they hate others, and very good ones, who hold themselves on too high a level to allow of any familiarity as *chums*, a vulgar but expressive word. Men are made so; in almost every class they will allow to a gossip, or a vulgar soul that flatters them, facilities and favors they refuse to the superiority they resent, in whatever form it may show itself. The shopkeeper who rails at the Court has his courtiers.

In short, the manners of the Marquis and his children were certain to arouse ill-feeling in their neighbors, and to work them up by degrees to the pitch of malevolence when men do not hesitate at an act of meanness if only it may damage the adversary they have themselves created.

M. d'Espard was a gentleman, as his wife was a lady, by birth and breeding; noble types, already so rare in France that the observer can easily count the persons who perfectly realize them. These two characters are based on primitive ideas, on beliefs that may be called innate, on habits formed in infancy, and which have ceased to exist. To believe in pure blood, in a privileged race, to stand in thought above other men, must we not from birth have measured the distance which divides patricians from the mob? To command, must we not have never met our equal? And finally, must not education inculcate the ideas with which Nature inspires those great men on whose brow she has placed a crown before their mother has ever set a kiss there? These ideas, this education, are no longer possible in France, where for forty years past chance has arrogated the right of making noble-

men by dipping them in the blood of battles, by gilding them with glory, by crowning them with the halo of genius; where the abolition of entail and of eldest sonship, by frittering away estates, compels the nobleman to attend to his own business instead of attending to affairs of state, and where personal greatness can only be such greatness as is acquired by long and patient toil: quite a new era.

Regarded as a relic of that great institution known as feudalism, M. d'Espard deserved respectful admiration. If he believed himself to be by blood the superior of other men, he also believed in all the obligations of nobility; he had the virtues and the strength it demands. He had brought up his children in his own principles, and taught them from the cradle the religion of their caste. A deep sense of their own dignity, pride of name, the conviction that they were by birth great, gave rise in them to a kingly pride, the courage of knights, and the protecting kindness of a baronial lord; their manners, harmonizing with their notions, would have become princes, and offended all the world of the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève—a world, above all others, of equality, where everyone believed that M. d'Espard was ruined, and where all, from the lowest to the highest, refused the privileges of nobility to a nobleman without money, because they all were ready to allow an enriched bourgeois to usurp them. Thus the lack of communion between this family and other persons was as much moral as it was physical.

In the father and the children alike, their personality harmonized with the spirit within. M. d'Espard, at this time about fifty, might have sat as a model to represent the aristocracy of birth in the nineteenth century. He was slight and fair; there was in the outline and general expression of his face a native distinction which spoke of lofty sentiments, but it bore the impress of a deliberate coldness which commanded respect a little too decidedly. His aquiline nose bent at the tip from left to right, a slight crookedness which was not devoid of grace; his blue eyes, his high forehead, prominent enough at the brows to form a thick ridge that checked the light and shaded his eyes, all indicated a spirit

of rectitude, capable of perseverance and perfect loyalty, while it gave a singular look to his countenance. This pent-house forehead might, in fact, hint at a touch of madness, and his thick-knitted eyebrows added to the apparent eccentricity. He had the white well-kept hands of a gentleman; his foot was high and narrow. His hesitating speech—not merely as to his pronunciation, which was that of a stammerer, but also in the expression of his ideas, his thought, and language—produced on the mind of the hearer the impression of a man who, in familiar phraseology, comes and goes, feels his way, tries everything, breaks off his gestures, and finishes nothing. This defect was purely superficial, and in contrast with the decisiveness of a firmly-set mouth, and the strongly-marked character of his physiognomy. His rather jerky gait matched his mode of speech. These peculiarities helped to affirm his supposed insanity. In spite of his elegant appearance, he was systematically parsimonious in his personal expenses, and wore the same black frock-coat for three or four years, brushed with extreme care by his old man-servant.

As to the children, they both were handsome, and endowed with a grace which did not exclude an expression of aristocratic disdain. They had the bright coloring, the clear eye, the transparent flesh which reveal habits of purity, regularity of life, and a due proportion of work and play. They both had black hair and blue eyes, and a twist in their nose, like their father; but their mother, perhaps, had transmitted to them the dignity of speech, of look and mien, which are hereditary in the Blamont-Chauvrys. Their voices, as clear as crystal, had an emotional quality, the softness which proves so seductive; they had, in short, the voice a woman would willingly listen to after feeling the flame of their looks. But, above all, they had the modesty of pride, a chaste reserve, a *touch-me-not* which at a maturer age might have seemed intentional coyness, so much did their demeanor inspire a wish to know them. The elder, Comte Clément de Nègrepelisse, was close upon his sixteenth year. For the last two years he had ceased to wear the pretty English round jacket which his brother, Vicomte Camille d'Espard,

still wore. The Count, who for the last six months went no more to the Collège Henri IV., was dressed in the style of a young man enjoying the first pleasures of fashion. His father had not wished to condemn him to a year's useless study of philosophy; he was trying to give his knowledge some consistency by the study of transcendental mathematics. At the same time, the Marquis was having him taught Eastern languages, the international law of Europe, heraldry, and history from the original sources—charters, early documents, and collections of edicts. Camille had lately begun to study rhetoric.

The day when Popinot arranged to go to question M. d'Espard was a Thursday, a holiday. At about nine in the morning, before their father was awake, the brothers were playing in the garden. Clément was finding it hard to refuse his brother, who was anxious to go to the shooting gallery for the first time, and who begged him to second his request to the Marquis. The Viscount always rather took advantage of his weakness, and was very fond of wrestling with his brother. So the couple were quarreling and fighting in play like schoolboys. As they ran in the garden, chasing each other, they made so much noise as to wake their father, who came to the window without their perceiving him in the heat of the fray. The Marquis amused himself with watching his two children twisted together like snakes, their faces flushed by the exertion of their strength; their complexion was rose and white, their eyes flashed sparks, their limbs writhed like cords in the fire; they fell, sprang up again, and caught each other like athletes in a circus, affording their father one of those moments of happiness which would make amends for the keenest anxieties of a busy life. Two other persons, one on the second and one on the first floor, were also looking into the garden, and saying that the old madman was amusing himself by making his children fight. Immediately a number of heads appeared at the windows; the Marquis, noticing them, called a word to his sons, who at once climbed up to the window and jumped into his room, and Clément obtained the permission asked by Camille.

All through the house everyone was talking of the Mar-

quis's new form of insanity. When Popinot arrived at about twelve o'clock, accompanied by his clerk, the portress, when he asked for M. d'Espard, conducted him to the third floor, telling him "as how M. d'Espard, no longer ago than that very morning, had set on his two children to fight, and laughed like the monster he was on seeing the younger biting the elder till he bled, and as how no doubt he longed to see them kill each other.—Don't ask me the reason why," she added; "he doesn't know himself!"

Just as the woman spoke these decisive words, she had brought the judge to the landing on the third floor, face to face with a door covered with notices announcing the successive numbers of the *Picturesque History of China*. The muddy floor, the dirty banisters, the door where the printers had left their marks, the dilapidated window, and the ceiling on which the apprentices had amused themselves with drawing monstrosities with the smoky flare of their tallow dips, the piles of paper and litter heaped up in the corners, intentionally or from sheer neglect—in short, every detail of the picture lying before his eyes agreed so well with the facts alleged by the Marquise that the judge, in spite of his impartiality, could not help believing them.

"There you are, gentlemen," said the porter's wife; "there is the manufactory, where the Chinese swallow up enough to feed the whole neighborhood."

The clerk looked at the judge with a smile, and Popinot found it hard to keep his countenance. They went together into the outer room, where sat an old man, who, no doubt, performed the functions of office clerk, shopman, and cashier. This old man was the Maître Jacques of China. Along the walls ran long shelves, on which the published numbers lay in piles. A partition in wood, with a grating lined with green curtains, cut off the end of the room, forming a private office. A till with a slit to admit or disgorge crown pieces indicated the cash-desk.

"M. d'Espard?" said Popinot, addressing the man, who wore a gray blouse.

The shopman opened the door into the next room, where the lawyer and his companion saw a venerable old man,

white-headed and simply dressed, wearing the Cross of Saint-Louis, seated at a desk. He ceased comparing some sheets of colored prints to look up at the two visitors. This room was an unpretentious office, full of books and proof-sheets. There was a black wood table at which someone, at the moment absent, no doubt was accustomed to work.

“The Marquis d’Espard?” said Popinot.

“No, Monsieur,” said the old man, rising; “what do you want with him?” he added, coming forward, and showing by his demeanor the dignified manners and habits due to a gentlemanly education.

“We wish to speak to him on business exclusively personal to himself,” replied Popinot.

“D’Espard, here are some gentlemen who want to see you,” then said the old man, going into the furthest room, where the Marquis was sitting by the fire, reading the newspaper.

This innermost room had a shabby carpet, the windows were hung with gray holland curtains; the furniture consisted of a few mahogany chairs, two armchairs, a desk with a revolving front, an ordinary office table, and, on the chimney-shelf, a dingy clock and two old candle-sticks. The old man led the way for Popinot and his registrar, and pulled forward two chairs, as though he were master of the place; M. d’Espard left it to him. After the preliminary civilities, during which the judge watched the supposed lunatic, the Marquis naturally asked what was the object of this visit. On this Popinot glanced significantly at the old gentleman and the Marquis.

“I believe, Monsieur le Marquis,” said he, “that the character of my functions, and the inquiry that has brought me here, make it desirable that we should be alone, though it is understood by law that in such cases the inquiries have a sort of family publicity. I am judge on the Inferior Court of Appeal for the Department of the Seine, and charged by the President with the duty of examining you as to certain facts set forth in a petition for a Commission in Lunacy on the part of the Marquise d’Espard.”

The old man withdrew. When the lawyer and the Mar-

quis were alone, the clerk shut the door, and seated himself unceremoniously at the office table, where he laid out his papers and prepared to take down his notes. Popinot had still kept his eye on M. d'Espard; he was watching the effect on him of this crude statement, so painful for a man in full possession of his reason. The Marquis d'Espard, whose face was usually pale, as are those of fair men, suddenly turned scarlet with anger; he trembled for an instant, sat down, laid his paper on the chimney-piece, and looked down. In a moment he had recovered his gentlemanly dignity, and looked steadily at the judge, as if to read in his countenance the indications of his character.

"How is it, Monsieur," he asked, "that I have had no notice of such a petition?"

"Monsieur le Marquis, persons on whom such a commission is held, not being supposed to have the use of their reason, any notice of the petition is unnecessary. The duty of the Court chiefly consists in verifying the allegations of the petitioner."

"Nothing can be fairer," replied the Marquis. "Well, then, Monsieur, be so good as to tell me what I ought to do——"

"You have only to answer my questions, omitting nothing. However delicate the reasons may be which may have led you to act in such a manner as to give Madame d'Espard a pretext for her petition, speak without fear. It is unnecessary to assure you that lawyers know their duties, and that in such cases the profoundest secrecy——"

"Monsieur," said the Marquis, whose face expressed the sincerest pain, "if my explanations should lead to any blame being attached to Madame d'Espard's conduct, what will be the result?"

"The Court may add its censure to its reasons for its decision."

"Is such censure optional? If I were to stipulate with you, before replying, that nothing should be said that could annoy Madame d'Espard in the event of your report being in my favor, would the Court take my request into consideration?"



The judge looked at the Marquis, and the two men exchanged sentiments of equal magnanimity.

"Noël," said Popinot to his registrar, "go into the other room. If you can be of use, I will call you in.—If, as I am inclined to think," he went on, speaking to the Marquis when the clerk had gone out, "I find that there is some misunderstanding in this case, I can promise you, Monsieur, that on your application the Court will act with due courtesy.

"There is a leading fact put forward by Madame d'Espard, the most serious of all, of which I must beg for an explanation," said the judge after a pause. "It refers to the dissipation of your fortune to the advantage of a certain Madame Jeanrenaud, the widow of a barge-master—or rather, to that of her son, Colonel Jeanrenaud, for whom you are said to have procured an appointment, to have exhausted your influence with the King, and at last to have extended such protection as secures him a good marriage. The petition suggests that such a friendship is more devoted than any feelings, even those which morality must disapprove——"

A sudden flush crimsoned the Marquis's face and forehead, tears even started to his eyes, for his eyelashes were wet, then wholesome pride crushed the emotions, which in a man are accounted a weakness.

"To tell you the truth, Monsieur," said the Marquis, in a broken voice, "you place me in a strange dilemma. The motives of my conduct were to have died with me. To reveal them I must disclose to you some secret wounds, must place the honor of my family in your keeping, and must speak of myself, a delicate matter, as you will fully understand. I hope, Monsieur, that it will all remain a secret between us. You will, no doubt, be able to find in the formulas of the law one which will allow of judgment being pronounced without any betrayal of my confidences."

"So far as that goes, it is perfectly possible, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Some time after my marriage," said M. d'Espard, "my wife having run into considerable expenses, I was obliged to

have recourse to borrowing. You know what was the position of noble families during the Revolution; I had not been able to keep a steward or a man of business. Nowadays gentlemen are for the most part obliged to manage their affairs themselves. Most of my title-deeds had been brought to Paris, from Languedoc, Provence, or Le Comtat, by my father, who dreaded, and not without reason, the inquisition which family title-deeds, and what were then styled the 'parchments' of the privileged class, brought down on the owners.

"Our name is Nègrepelisse; d'Espard is a title acquired in the time of Henry IV. by a marriage which brought us the estates and titles of the house of d'Espard, on condition of our bearing an escutcheon of pretense on our coat-of-arms, those of the house of d'Espard, an old family of Béarn, connected in the female line with that of Albret: quarterly, paly of or and sable; and azure two griffins' claws armed, gules in saltire, with the famous motto *Des partem leonis*. At the time of this alliance we lost Nègrepelisse, a little town which was as famous during the religious struggles as was my ancestor who then bore the name. Captain de Nègrepelisse was ruined by the burning of all his property, for the Protestants did not spare a friend of Montluc's.

"The Crown was unjust to M. de Nègrepelisse; he received neither a marshal's baton, nor a post as governor, nor any indemnity; King Charles IX., who was fond of him, died without being able to reward him; Henri IV. arranged his marriage with Mademoiselle d'Espard, and secured him the estates of that house, but all those of the Nègrepelisses had already passed into the hands of his creditors.

"My great-grandfather, the Marquis d'Espard, was, like me, placed early in life at the head of his family by the death of his father, who, after dissipating his wife's fortune, left his son nothing but the entailed estates of the d'Espards, burdened with a jointure. The young Marquis was all the more straitened for money because he held a post at Court. Being in great favor with Louis XIV., the King's goodwill

brought him a fortune. But here, Monsieur, a blot stained our escutcheon, an unconfessed and horrible stain of blood and disgrace which I am making it my business to wipe out. I discovered the secret among the deeds relating to the estate of Nègrepelisse and the packets of letters."

At this solemn moment the Marquis spoke without hesitation or any of the repetition habitual with him; but it is a matter of common observation that persons who, in ordinary life, are afflicted with these two defects, are freed from them as soon as any passionate emotion underlies their speech.

"The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was decreed," he went on. "You are no doubt aware, Monsieur, that this was an opportunity for many favorites to make their fortunes. Louis XIV. bestowed on the magnates about his Court the confiscated lands of those Protestant families who did not take the prescribed steps for the sale of their property. Some persons in high favor went 'Protestant-hunting,' as the phrase was. I have ascertained beyond a doubt that the fortune enjoyed to this day by two ducal families is derived from lands seized from hapless merchants.

"I will not attempt to explain to you, a man of law, all the maneuvers employed to entrap the refugees who had large fortunes to carry away. It is enough to say that the lands of Nègrepelisse, comprising twenty-two churches and rights over the town, and those of Gravenges which had formerly belonged to us, were at that time in the hands of a Protestant family. My grandfather recovered them by gift from Louis XIV. This gift was effected by documents hall-marked by atrocious iniquity. The owner of these two estates, thinking he would be able to return, had gone through the form of a sale, and was going to Switzerland to join his family, whom he had sent in advance. He wished, no doubt, to take advantage of every delay granted by the law, so as to settle the concerns of his business.

"This man was arrested by order of the governor, the trustee confessed the truth, the poor merchant was hanged, and my ancestor had the two estates. I would gladly have been able to ignore the share he took in the plot; but the

governor was his uncle on the mother's side; and I have unfortunately read the letter in which he begged him to apply to Deodat<sup>us</sup>, the name agreed upon by the Court to designate the King. In this letter there is a tone of jocosity with reference to the victim, which filled me with horror. In the end, the sums of money sent by the refugee family to ransom the poor man's life were kept by the governor, who dispatched the merchant all the same."

The Marquis paused, as though the memory of it were still too heavy for him to bear.

"This unfortunate family were named Jeanrenaud," he went on. "That name is enough to account for my conduct. I could never think without keen pain of the secret disgrace that weighed on my family. That fortune enabled my grandfather to marry a demoiselle de Navarreins-Lansac, heiress to the younger branch of that house, who were at that time much richer than the elder branch of the Navarreins. My father thus became one of the largest landowners in the kingdom. He was able to marry my mother, a Grandlieu of the younger branch. Though ill-gotten, this property has been singularly profitable.

"For my part, being determined to remedy the mischief, I wrote to Switzerland, and knew no peace till I was on the traces of the Protestant victim's heirs. At last I discovered that the Jeanrenauds, reduced to abject want, had left Fribourg and returned to live in France. Finally, I found in M. Jeanrenaud, lieutenant in a cavalry regiment under Napoleon, the sole heir of this unhappy family. In my eyes, Monsieur, the rights of the Jeanrenauds were clear. To establish a prescriptive right is it not necessary that there should have been some possibility of proceeding against those who are in the enjoyment of it? To whom could these refugees have appealed? Their Court of Justice was on high, or rather, Monsieur, it was here," and the Marquis struck his hand on his heart. "I did not choose that my children should be able to think of me as I have thought of my father and of my ancestors. I aim at leaving them an unblemished inheritance and escutcheon. I did not choose that nobility should be a lie in my person. And, after all,

politically speaking, ought those *émigrés* who are now appealing against revolutionary confiscations, to keep the property derived from antecedent confiscations by positive crimes?

“I found in M. Jeanrenaud and his mother the most perverse honesty; to hear them you would suppose that they were robbing me. In spite of all I could say, they will accept no more than the value of the lands at the time when the King bestowed them on my family. The price was settled between us at the sum of eleven hundred thousand francs, which I was to pay at my convenience and without interest. To achieve this I had to forego my income for a long time. And then, Monsieur, began the destruction of some illusions I had allowed myself as to Madame d’Espard’s character. When I proposed to her that we should leave Paris and go into the country, where we could live respected on half of her income, and so more rapidly complete a restitution of which I spoke to her without going into the more serious details, Madame d’Espard treated me as a madman. I then understood my wife’s real character. She would have approved of my grandfather’s conduct without a scruple, and have laughed at the Huguenots. Terrified by her coldness, and her little affection for her children, whom she abandoned to me without a regret, I determined to leave her the command of her fortune, after paying our common debts. It was no business of hers, as she told me, to pay for my follies. As I then had not enough to live on and pay for my sons’ education, I determined to educate them myself, to make them gentlemen and men of feeling. By investing my money in the Funds I have been enabled to pay off my obligation sooner than I had dared to hope, for I took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the improvement in prices. If I had kept four thousand francs a year for my boys and myself, I could only have paid off twenty thousand crowns a year, and it would have taken almost eighteen years to achieve my freedom. As it is, I have lately repaid the whole of the eleven hundred thousand francs that were due. Thus I enjoy the happiness of having made this restitution without doing my children the smallest wrong.

“These, Monsieur, are the reasons for the payments made to Madame Jeanrenaud and her son.”

“So Madame d’Espard knew the motives of your retirement?” said the judge, controlling the emotion he felt at this narrative.

“Yes, Monsieur.”

Popinot gave an expressive shrug; he rose and opened the door into the next room.

“Noël, you can go,” said he to his clerk.

“Monsieur,” he went on, “though what you have told me is enough to enlighten me thoroughly, I should like to hear what you have to say to the other facts put forward in the petition. For instance, you are here carrying on a business such as is not habitually undertaken by a man of rank.”

“We cannot discuss that matter here,” said the Marquis, signing to the judge to quit the room. “Nouvion,” said he to the old man, “I am going down to my rooms; the children will soon be in · dine with us.”

“Then, Monsieur le Marquis,” said Popinot on the stairs, “that is not your apartment?”

“No, Monsieur; I took those rooms for the office of this undertaking. You see,” and he pointed to an advertisement sheet, “the *History* is being brought out by one of the most respectable firms in Paris, and not by me.”

The Marquis showed the lawyer into the ground-floor rooms, saying, “This is my apartment.”

Popinot was quite touched by the poetry, not aimed at but pervading this dwelling. The weather was lovely, the windows were open, the air from the garden brought in a wholesome earthy smell, the sunshine brightened and gilded the woodwork, of a rather gloomy brown. At the sight Popinot made up his mind that a madman would hardly be capable of inventing the tender harmony of which he was at that moment conscious.

“I should like just such an apartment,” thought he. “You think of leaving this part of the town?” he inquired.

“I hope so,” replied the Marquis. “But I shall remain till my younger son has finished his studies, and till the chil-

dren's character is thoroughly formed, before introducing them to the world and to their mother's circle. Indeed, after giving them the solid information they possess, I intend to complete it by taking them to travel to the capitals of Europe, that they may see men and things, and become accustomed to speak the languages they have learned. And, Monsieur," he went on, giving the judge a chair in the drawing-room, "I could not discuss the book on China with you, in the presence of an old friend of my family, the Comte de Nouvion, who, having emigrated, has returned to France without any fortune whatever, and who is my partner in this concern, less for my profit than his. Without telling him what my motives were, I explained to him that I was as poor as he, but that I had enough money to start a speculation in which he might be usefully employed. My tutor was the Abbé Grozier, whom Charles X. on my recommendation appointed Keeper of the Books at the Arsenal, which were returned to that Prince when he was still Monsieur. The Abbé Grozier was deeply learned with regard to China, its manners and customs; he made me heir to this knowledge at an age when it is difficult not to become a fanatic for the things we learn. At five-and-twenty I knew Chinese, and I confess I have never been able to check myself in an exclusive admiration for that nation, who conquered their conquerors, whose annals extend back indisputably to a period more remote than mythological or Biblical times, who by their immutable institutions have preserved the integrity of their empire, whose monuments are gigantic, whose administration is perfect, among whom revolutions are impossible, who have regarded ideal beauty as a barren element in art, who have luxury and industry to such a pitch that we cannot outdo them in anything, while they are our equals in things where we believe ourselves superior.

"Still, Monsieur, though I often make a jest of comparing China with the present condition of European states, I am not a Chinaman, I am a French gentleman. If you entertain any doubts as to the financial side of this undertaking, I can prove to you that at this moment we have two thousand five hundred subscribers to this work, which is

literary, iconographical, statistical, and religious; its importance has been generally appreciated: our subscribers belong to every nation in Europe, we have but twelve hundred in France. Our book will cost about three hundred francs, and the Comte de Novion will derive from it from six to seven thousand francs a year, for his comfort was the real motive of the undertaking. For my part, I aimed only at the possibility of affording my children some pleasures. The hundred thousand francs I have made, quite in spite of myself, will pay for their fencing lessons, horses, dress, and theatres, pay the masters who teach them accomplishments, procure them canvases to spoil, the books they may wish to buy, in short, all the little fancies which a father finds so much pleasure in gratifying. If I had been compelled to refuse these indulgences to my poor boys, who are so good and work so hard, the sacrifice I made to the honor of my name would have been doubly painful.

“In point of fact, the twelve years I have spent in retirement from the world to educate my children have led to my being completely forgotten at Court. I have given up the career of politics; I have lost my historical fortune, and all the distinctions which I might have acquired and bequeathed to my children; but our house will have lost nothing; my boys will be men of mark. Though I have missed the senatorship, they will win it nobly by devoting themselves to the affairs of the country, and doing such service as is not soon forgotten. While purifying the past record of my family, I have insured it a glorious future; and is not that to have achieved a noble task, though in secret and without glory?—And now, Monsieur, have you any other explanations to ask of me?”

At this instant the tramp of horses was heard in the courtyard.

“Here they are!” said the Marquis. In a moment the two lads, fashionably but plainly dressed, came into the room, booted, spurred, and gloved, and flourishing their riding-whips. Their beaming faces brought in the freshness of the outer air; they were brilliant with health. They both grasped their father’s hand, giving him a look, as friends



do, a glance of unspoken affection, and then they bowed coldly to the lawyer. Popinot felt that it was quite unnecessary to question the Marquis as to his relations towards his sons.

“Have you enjoyed yourselves?” asked the Marquis.

“Yes, father; I knocked down six dolls in twelve shots at the first trial!” cried Camille.

“And where did you ride?”

“In the Bois; we saw my mother.”

“Did she stop?”

“We were riding so fast just then that I dare say she did not see us,” replied the young Count.

“But, then, why did you not go to speak to her?”

“I fancy I have noticed, father, that she does not care that we should speak to her in public,” said Clément, in an undertone. “We are a little too big.”

The judge’s hearing was keen enough to catch these words, which brought a cloud to the Marquis’s brow. Popinot took pleasure in contemplating the picture of the father and his boys. His eyes went back with a sense of pathos to M. d’Espard’s face; his features, his expression, and his manner all expressed honesty in its noblest aspect, intellectual and chivalrous honesty, nobility in all its beauty.

“You—you see, Monsieur,” said the Marquis, and his hesitation had returned, “you see that Justice may look in—in here at any time—yes, at any time—here. If there is anybody crazy, it can only be the children—the children—who are a little crazy about their father, and the father who is very crazy about his children—but that sort of madness rings true.”

At this juncture Madame Jeanrenaud’s voice was heard in the anteroom, and the good woman came bustling in, in spite of the man-servant’s remonstrances.

“I take no roundabout ways, I can tell you!” she exclaimed. “Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, I want to speak to you, this very minute,” she went on, with a comprehensive bow to the company. “By George, and I am too late as it is, since Monsieur the criminal Judge is before me.”

“Criminal!” cried the two boys.

“Good reason why I did not find you at your own house, since you were here. Well, well! the Law is always to the fore when there is mischief brewing.—I came, Monsieur le Marquis, to tell you that my son and I are of one mind to give you everything back, since our honor is threatened. My son and I, we had rather give you back everything than cause you the smallest trouble. My word, they must be as stupid as pans without handles to call you a lunatic—”

“A lunatic! My father?” exclaimed the boys, clinging to the Marquis. “What is this?”

“Silence, Madame,” said Popinot.

“Children, leave us,” said the Marquis.

The two boys went into the garden without a word, but very much alarmed.

“Madame,” said the judge, “the moneys paid to you by Monsieur le Marquis were legally due, though given to you in virtue of a very far-reaching theory of honesty. If all the people possessed of confiscated goods, by whatever cause, even if acquired by treachery, were compelled to make restitution every hundred and fifty years, there would be few legitimate owners in France. The possessions of Jacques Cœur enriched twenty noble families; the confiscations pronounced by the English to the advantage of their adherents at the time when they held a part of France made the fortune of several princely houses.

“Our law allows M. d’Espard to dispose of his income without accounting for it, or suffering him to be accused of its misapplication. A Commission in Lunacy can only be granted when a man’s actions are devoid of reason; but in this case, the remittances made to you have a reason based on the most sacred and most honorable motives. Hence you may keep it all without remorse, and leave the world to misinterpret a noble action. In Paris, the highest virtue is the object of the foulest calumny. It is, unfortunately, the present condition of society that makes the Marquis’s actions sublime. For the honor of my country, I would that such deeds were regarded as a matter of course; but, as things are, I am forced by comparison to look upon M. d’Espard as a man to whom a crown should be awarded,

rather than that he should be threatened with a Commission in Lunacy.

“In the course of a long professional career, I have seen and heard nothing which has touched me more deeply than that I have just seen and heard. But it is not extraordinary that virtue should wear its noblest aspect when it is practiced by men of the highest class.

“Having heard me express myself in this way, I hope, Monsieur le Marquis, that you feel certain of my silence, and that you will not for a moment be uneasy as to the decision pronounced in the case—if it comes before the Court.”

“There, now! Well said,” cried Madame Jeanrenaud. “That is something like a judge! Look here, my dear sir, I would hug you if I were not so ugly; you speak like a book.”

The Marquis held out his hand to Popinot, who gently pressed it with a look full of sympathetic comprehension at this great man in private life, and the Marquis responded with a pleasant smile. These two natures, both so large and full—one commonplace but divinely kind, the other lofty and sublime—had fallen into unison gently, without a jar, without a flash of passion, as though two pure lights had been merged into one. The father of a whole district felt himself worthy to grasp the hand of this man who was doubly noble, and the Marquis felt in the depths of his soul an instinct that told him that the judge’s hand was one of those from which the treasures of inexhaustible beneficence perennially flow.

“Monsieur le Marquis,” added Popinot, with a bow, “I am happy to be able to tell you that, from the first words of this inquiry, I regarded my clerk as quite unnecessary.”

He went close to M. d’Espard, led him into the window-bay, and said: “It is time that you should return home, Monsieur. I believe that Madame la Marquise has acted in this matter under an influence which you ought at once to counteract.”

Popinot withdrew; he looked back several times as he crossed the courtyard, touched by the recollection of the scene. It was one of those which take root in the memory

to blossom again in certain hours when the soul seeks consolation.

“Those rooms would just suit me,” said he to himself as he reached home. “If M. d’Espard leaves them, I will take up his lease.”

The next day, at about ten in the morning, Popinot, who had written out his report the previous evening, made his way to the Palais de Justice, intending to have prompt and righteous justice done. As he went into the robing-room to put on his gown and bands, the usher told him that the President of his Court begged him to attend in his private room, where he was waiting for him. Popinot forthwith obeyed.

“Good-morning, my dear Popinot,” said the President, “I have been waiting for you.”

“Why, Monsieur le Président, is anything wrong?”

“A mere silly trifle,” said the President. “The Keeper of the Seals, with whom I had the honor of dining yesterday, led me apart into a corner. He had heard that you had been to tea with Madame d’Espard, in whose case you were employed to make inquiries. He gave me to understand that it would be as well that you should not sit on this case——”

“But, Monsieur le Président, I can prove that I left Madame d’Espard’s house at the moment when tea was brought in. And my conscience——”

“Yes, yes; the whole Bench, the two Courts, all the profession know you. I need not repeat what I said about you to his Eminence; but, you know, ‘Cæsar’s wife must not be suspected.’ So we shall not make this foolish trifle a matter of discipline, but only of the proprieties. Between ourselves, it is not on your account, but on that of the Bench.”

“But, Monsieur, if you only knew the kind of woman ——” said the judge, trying to pull his report out of his pocket.

“I am perfectly certain that you have proceeded in this matter with the strictest independence of judgment. I myself, in the provinces, have often taken more than a cup of

tea with the people I had to try; but the fact that the Keeper of the Seals should have mentioned it and that you might be talked about, is enough to make the Court avoid any discussion of the matter. Any conflict with public opinion must always be dangerous for a constitutional body, even when the right is on its side against the public, because their weapons are not equal. Journalism may say or suppose anything, and our dignity forbids us even to reply. In fact, I have spoken of the matter to your President, and M. Camusot has been appointed in your place on your retirement, which you will signify. It is a family matter, so to speak. And I now beg you to signify your retirement from the case as a personal favor. To make up, you will get the Cross of the Legion of Honor, which has so long been due to you. I make that my business."

When he saw M. Camusot, a judge recently called to Paris from a provincial Court of the same class, as he went forward bowing to the Judge and the President, Popinot could not suppress an ironical smile. This pale, fair young man, full of covert ambition, looked ready to hang and unhang, at the pleasure of any earthly king, the innocent and the guilty alike, and to follow the example of a Laubardemont rather than that of a Molé.

Popinot withdrew with a bow; he scorned to deny the lying accusation that had been brought against him.

PARIS, *February* 1836.

# **A SEASIDE TRAGEDY**

[*Un Drame au Bord de la Mer* appeared as one of the *Marana* group of stories in 1835-37; in 1843 it was separated from them for a time, and as *La Justice Paternelle* accompanied *La Muse du Département*, *Albert Savarus*, and *Facino Cane* in a separate publication.]

## A SEASIDE TRAGEDY<sup>1</sup>

*To Mme. la Princesse Caroline Galitzin de Genthod, née Comtesse Walewska, this souvenir of the Author is respectfully dedicated.*

THE young for the most part delight to measure the future with a pair of compasses of their own; when the strength of the will equals the boldness of the angle that they thus project, the whole world is theirs.

This phenomenon of mental existence takes place, however, only at a certain age, and that age, without exception, lies in the years between twenty-two and eight-and-twenty. It is an age of first conceptions, because it is an age of vast longings, an age which is doubtful of nothing; doubt at that time is a confession of weakness; it passes as swiftly as the sowing time, and is followed by the age of execution. There are in some sort two periods of youth in every life—the youth of confident hopes, and the youth of action; sometimes in those whom Nature has favored, the two ages coincide, and then we have a Cæsar, a Newton, or a Bonaparte—the greatest among great men.

I was measuring the space of time that a single thought needs for its development, and (compass in hand) stood on a crag a hundred fathoms above the sea, surveying my future, and filling it with great works, like an engineer who should survey an empty land, and cover it with fortresses and palaces. The sea was calm, the waves toyed with the reefs of rock. I had just dressed after a swim, and was waiting for Pauline, my guardian angel, who was bathing in a granite basin floored with fine sand, the daintiest bathing-place of Nature's fashioning for the sea-fairies.

We were at the utmost extremity of Croisic Point, a tiny peninsula in Brittany; we were far from the haven itself, and in a part of the coast so inaccessible that the inland

<sup>1</sup> A letter written by Louis Lambert.



revenue department ignored it, and a coastguard scarcely ever passed that way. Ah! to dip in the winds of space, after a plunge in the sea! Who would not have launched forth into the future? Why did I think? Why does a trouble invade us?—Who knows? Ideas drift across heart and brain by no will of yours. No courtesan is more capricious, more imperious, than an artist's inspiration; you must seize her like Fortune, and grasp her by the hair—when she comes. Borne aloft by my thought, like Astolpho upon his hippogriff, I rode across my world, and arranged it all to my liking. Then when I was fain to find some augury in the things about me for these daring castles that a wild imagination bade me build, I heard a sweet cry above the murmur of the restless sea-fringe that marks the ebb and flow of the tide upon the shore, the sound of a woman's voice calling to me through the loneliness and silence, the glad cry of a woman fresh from the sea. It was as if a soul leapt forth in that cry, and it seemed to me as if I had seen the footprints of an angel on the bare rocks, an angel with outspread wings, who cried, "You will succeed!" I came down, radiant and light of foot, by bounds, like a pebble flung down some steep slope. "What is it?" she asked as soon as she saw me, and I did not answer; my eyes were full of tears.

Yesterday Pauline had felt my sorrow, as to-day she felt my joy, with the magical responsiveness of a harp that is sensitive to every change in the atmosphere.—Life has exquisite moments. We went in silence along the beach. The sky was cloudless; there was not a ripple on the sea; others might have seen nothing there but two vast blue steppes above and below; but as for us, who had no need of words to understand each other, who could conjure up illusions to feast the eyes of youth and fill the space between the zones of sea and sky—those swaddling-bands of the Infinite—we pressed each other's hands at the slightest change that passed over the fields of water or the fields of air, for in those fleeting signs we read the interpretation of our double thought. Who has not known, in the midst of pleasure, the moment of infinite joy when the soul slips its fetters of

flesh, as it were, and returns to the world whence it came? And pleasure is not our only guide to those regions; are there not hours when feeling and thought intertwine with thought and feeling, and fare forth together as two children who take each other by the hand and run, without knowing why? We went thus.

The roofs of the town had come to be a faint gray line on the horizon by the time that we came upon a poor fisherman on his way back to Croisic. He was barefooted, his trousers, of linen cloth, were botched, and tattered, and fringed with rags; he wore a shirt of sailcloth, and a mere rag of a jacket. This wretchedness jarred upon us, as if it had been a discordant note in the midst of our harmony. We both looked at each other, regretting that we had not Abul Kasim's treasury to draw upon at that moment. The fisherman was swinging a splendid lobster and an adder-pike on a string in his right hand, while in the left he carried his fishing tackle. We called to him, with a view to buying his fish. The same idea that occurred to us both found expression in a smile, to which I replied by a light pressure of the arm that lay in mine as I drew it closer to my heart.

It was one of those nothings that memory afterwards weaves into poems, when by the fireside our thoughts turn to the hour when that nothing so moved us, and the place rises before us seen through a mirage which as yet has not been investigated, a magical illusion that often invests material things about us during those moments when life flows swiftly and our hearts are full. The most beautiful places are only what we make them.

What man is there, with something of a poet in him, who does not find that some fragment of rock holds a larger place in his memories than famous views in many lands which he has made costly journeyings to see? Beside that rock what thoughts surged through him! There he lived through a whole life; there fears were dissipated, and gleams of hope shone into the depths of his soul. At that moment the sun, as if sympathizing with those thoughts of love or of the future, cast a glow of light and warmth over the tawny sides of the rock; his eyes were drawn to a mountain flower here

and there on its sides, and the crannies and rifts grew larger in the silence and peace; the mass, so dark in reality, took the hue of his dreams; and then how beautiful it was with its scanty plant life, its pungent-scented camomile flowers, its velvet fronds of maidenhair fern! How splendidly decked for a prolonged festival of human powers exultant in their strength! Once already the Lake of Biemme, seen from the island of Saint-Pierre, had so spoken to me; perhaps the rock at Croisic will be the last of these joys. But, then, what will become of Pauline?

"You have had a fine catch this morning, good man," I said to the fisherman.

"Yes, sir," he answered, coming to a stand; and we saw his face, swarthy with exposure to the sun's rays that beat down on the surface of the sea. The expression of his face told of the patient resignation and the simple manners of fisher folk. There was no roughness in the man's voice; he had a kindly mouth, and there was an indefinable something about him—ambitionless, starved, and stunted. We should have been disappointed if he had looked otherwise.

"Where will you sell the fish?"

"In the town."

"What will they give you for the lobster?"

"Fifteen sous."

"And for the adder-pike?"

"Twenty sous."

"Why does it cost so much more than the lobster?"

"Oh! the adder-pike" (he called it an *etter*-pike) "is much more delicate, sir! And then they are as spiteful as monkeys, and very hard to catch."

"Will you let us have them both for five francs?" asked Pauline. The man stood stock-still with astonishment.

"You shall not have them!" I cried, laughing. "I bid ten francs for them. Emotions should be paid for at a proper rate."

"Quite right," returned she; "but I mean to have them. I bid ten francs two sous for them."

"Ten sous."

"Twelve francs."

“Fifteen francs.”

“Fifteen francs fifty centimes,” said she.

“A hundred francs.”

“A hundred and fifty.”

I bowed. We were not rich enough just then to bid against each other any longer. Our poor fisherman was mystified, not knowing whether to be annoyed or to give himself up to joy; but we helped him out of his difficulty by telling him where we lodged, and bidding him take the lobster and the adder-pike to our landlady.

“Is that how you make a living?” I asked, wondering how he came to be so poor.

“It is about all I can do, and it is a very hard life,” he said. “Shore fishing is a chancy trade when you have neither boat nor nets and must do it with hooks and tackle. You have to wait for the tide, you see, for the fish or the shell-fish, while those who do things on a large scale put out to sea. It is so hard to make a living at it, that I am the only shore-fisher in these parts. For whole days together I get nothing at all. For if you are to catch anything, an adder-pike must fall asleep and get left by the tide, like this one here, or a lobster must be fool enough to stick to the rocks. Sometimes some basse come up with a high tide, and then I get hold of them.”

“And, after all, taking one thing with another, what do you make each day?”

“Eleven or twelve sous. I could get on if I had no one but myself, but I have my father to keep, and the old man can't help me; he is blind.”

The words came from him quite simply; Pauline and I looked at each other in silence.

“Have you a wife or a sweetheart?”

He glanced at us with one of the most piteous expressions that I have ever seen on a human face, and answered, “If I had a wife, I should have to turn my old father adrift; I could not keep him and keep a wife and children too.”

“But, my good fellow, why don't you try to earn more by carrying salt in the haven, or by working in the salt pits?”

"Ah! sir, I could not stand the work for three months. I am not strong enough, and if anything happened to me my father would have to beg. The only sort of work for me is something that wants a little skill and a lot of patience."

"But how can two people live on twelve sous a day?"

"Oh, sir, we live on buckwheat bannocks and the barnacles I break off the rocks."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Have you always stopped here?"

"I once went to Guérande to be drawn for the army, and once to Savenay to be examined by some gentlemen who measured me. If I had been an inch taller, they would have made me into a soldier. The first long march would have put an end to me, and my poor father would have been begging his bread this day."

I have imagined many tragedies, and Pauline, who passes her life by the side of a man who suffers as I do, is used to strong emotion, yet neither of us had ever heard words so touching as these of the fisherman. We walked on for several steps in silence, fathoming the dumb depths of this stranger's life, admiring the nobleness of a sacrifice made unconsciously; the strength of his weakness made us marvel, his reckless generosity humbled us. A vision of the life of this poor creature rose before me, a life of pure instinct, a being chained to his rock like a convict fettered to a cannon ball, seeking for shell-fish to gain a livelihood, and upheld in that long patience of twenty years by a single feeling! How many hopes disappointed by a squall, or a change in the weather! And while he was hanging over the edge of a block of granite with arms outstretched like a Hindoo fakir, his old father, crouching on his stool in the dark, silent hut, was waiting for the coarsest of the shell-fish, and bread, if the sea should please.

"Do you drink wine now and then?" I asked.

"Three or four times a year."

"Very well, you shall drink wine to-day, you and your father; and we will send you a white loaf."

"You are very kind, sir."

"We will give you the wherewithal for dinner, if you care to show us the way along the shore to Batz, where we shall see the tower that gives you a view of the harbor and the shore between Batz and Croisic."

"With pleasure," said he. "Go straight on, follow the road you are in; I will overtake you again when I have got rid of my tackle."

We both made the same sign of assent, and he rushed off towards the town in great spirits. We were still as we had been before, but the meeting had dimmed our joyousness.

"Poor man!" Pauline exclaimed, in the tone that takes from a woman's compassion any trace of the something that wounds us in pity, "it makes one ashamed to feel happy when he is so miserable, doesn't it?"

"There is nothing more bitter than helpless wishing," I answered. "The two poor creatures, this father and son, could no more understand how keen our sympathy has been than the world could understand the beauty in that life of theirs, for they are laying up treasures in heaven."

"Poor country!" she said, pointing out to me the heaps of cow dung spread along a field under a wall of unhewn stones. "I asked why they did that, and a peasant woman who was spreading it said that she was 'making firewood.' Just imagine, dear, that when the cow dung is dry, the poor people heap it up and light fires with it. During the winter they sell it, like blocks of bark fuel. And, finally, how much do you think the best-paid sempstresses earn?—Five sous a day and their board," she went on after a pause.

"Look," I said, "the sea-winds blight or uproot everything; there are no trees. Those who can afford it burn the driftwood and broken-up boats; it costs too dear, I expect, to bring firewood from other parts of Brittany where there is so much timber. It is a country without beauty, save for great souls, and those who have no hearts could not live here—it is a land for poets and barnacles, and nothing between. It was only when the salt warehouses were built on the cliff that people came to live here. There is nothing here but the sand, the sea beyond it, and above us—space."

We had already passed the town, and were crossing the waste between Croisic and the market town of Batz. Imagine, dear uncle, two leagues of waste covered with gleaming sand. Here and there a few rocks raised their heads; you might almost think that extinct monsters were crouching among the dunes. The waves broke over the low ridges along the margin of the sea, till they looked like large white roses floating on the surface of the water and drifted up upon the beach. I looked across this savanna that lay between the ocean on the right and the great lagoon on the left, made by the encroaching sea between Croisic and the sandy heights of Guérande, with the barren salt marshes at their feet; then I looked at Pauline, and asked if she felt able to walk across the sands in the burning sun.

"I have laced boots on; let us go over there," she said, looking towards the Tower of Batz, which caught the eye by its great mass, erected there like a pyramid in the desert, a slender spindle-shaped pyramid, however, a pyramid so picturesquely ornate that one could imagine it to be an outlying sentinel ruin of some great Eastern town laid desolate.

We went a few paces further to reach a fragment of rock to sit in the shade that it still cast, but it was eleven o'clock in the morning, and the shadows which crept closer and closer to our feet swiftly disappeared altogether.

"How beautiful the silence is," she said: "and how the murmur of the sea beating steadily against the beach deepens it!"

"If you surrender your mind to the three immensities around us—the air, the sea, and the sands," I answered, "and heed nothing but the monotonous sound of the ebb and flow, you would find its speech intolerable, for you would think that it bore the burden of a thought that would overwhelm you. Yesterday, at sunset, I felt that sensation; it crushed me."

"Oh yes, let us talk," she said after a long pause. "No speaker is more terrible. I imagine that I am discovering the causes of the harmonies about us," she went on. "This landscape that has but three contrasting colors—the gleam-

ing yellow of the sand, the blue heaven, and the changeless green of the sea—is great without anything savage in its grandeur, vast but not desolate, monotonous but not dreary: it is made up of three elements; it has variety.”

“Women alone can render their impressions like that,” I said; “you would be the despair of a poet, dear soul that I have read so well.”

“These three expressions of the Infinite glow, like a burning flame in the noonday heat,” Pauline said, laughing. “Here I can imagine the poetry and passions of the East.”

“And I, a vision of Despair.”

“Yes,” she said; “the dune is a sublime cloister.”

We heard our guide hurrying after us; he wore his holiday clothes. We asked him a few insignificant questions; he thought he saw that our mood had changed, and, with the self-repression that misfortune teaches, he was silent; and we also—though from time to time each pressed the hand of the other to communicate thoughts and impressions—walked for half an hour in silence, either because the shimmering heat above the sands lay heavily upon us, or because the difficulty of walking absorbed our attention. We walked hand in hand like two children; we should not have gone a dozen paces if we had walked arm in arm.

The way that led to Batz was little more than a track; the first high wind effaced the ruts or the dints left by horses’ hoofs; but the experienced eyes of our guide discerned traces of cattle and sheep dung on this way, which sometimes wound towards the sea, sometimes towards the land, to avoid the cliffs on the one hand and the rocks on the other. It was noon, and we were only half-way.

“We will rest there,” I said, pointing to a headland where the rocks rose high enough to make it probable that we might find a cave among them. The fisherman, following the direction of my finger, jerked his head.

“There is someone there! Anyone coming from market at Batz to Croisic, or from Croisic to Batz, always goes round some way so as not to pass near the place.”

He spoke in a low voice that suggested a mystery.

“Then is there a robber there, a murderer?”



Our guide's only answer was a deep breath that left us twice as curious as before.

"If we go past, will any harm come to us?"

"Oh no!"

"Will you go with us?"

"No, sir!"

"Then we shall go, if you will assure us that there is no danger for us."

"I do not say that," the fisherman answered quickly; "I only say that the one who is there will say nothing to you, and will do you no harm. Oh, good Heavens! he will not so much as stir from his place."

"Then who is it?"

"A man!"

Never were two syllables uttered in such a tragical fashion.

At that moment we were some twenty paces away from the ridge about which the sea was lapping. Our guide took the way that avoided the rocks, and we held straight on for them, but Pauline took my arm. Our guide quickened his pace so as to reach the spot where the two ways met again at the same time as ourselves. He thought, no doubt, that when we had seen "the man," we should hurry from the place. This kindled our curiosity; it became so strong that our hearts beat fast, as if a feeling of terror possessed us both. In spite of the heat of the day and a certain weariness after our walk over the sands, our souls were steeped in the ineffable languid calm of an ecstasy that possessed us both, brimming with pure joy, that can only be compared with the delight of hearing exquisite music—music like the *Andiamo mio ben* of Mozart. When two souls are blended in one pure thought, are they not like two sweet voices singing together? Before you can appreciate the emotion that thrilled us both, you must likewise share in the half-voluptuous mood in which the morning's experiences had steeped us.

If you had watched for a while some daintily colored wood-dove on a swaying branch, above a spring, you would utter a cry of distress if you saw a hawk pounce down, bury claws of steel in its heart, and bear it away with the murderous speed with which powder wings a bullet. We had

scarcely set foot in the space before the cavern, a sort of esplanade some hundred feet above the sea, protected from the surge by the steep rocks that sloped to the water's edge, when we were conscious of an electric thrill, something like the shock of a sudden awakening, by some noise in a silent night. Both of us had seen a man sitting there on a block of granite, and he had looked at us.

That glance, from two bloodshot eyes, was like the flash of fire from a cannon, and his stoical immobility could only be compared to the changeless aspect of the granite slabs that lay about him. Slowly his eyes turned towards us; his body as rigid and motionless as if he had been turned to stone; then after that glance, that made such a powerful impression upon our minds, his eyes turned to gaze steadily over the vast stretch of sea, in spite of the glare reflected from it, as the eagle, it is said, gazes at the sun without lowering his eyelids, nor did he look up again from the waves.

Try to call up before you, dear uncle, some gnarled oak stump, with all its branches lately lopped away, rearing its head, like a strange apparition, by the side of a lonely road, and you will have a clear idea of this man that we saw. The form of an age-worn Hercules, the face of Olympian Jove bearing marks of the ravages of time, of a life of rough toil upon the sea, of sorrow within, of coarse food, and darkened as if blasted by lightning. I saw the muscles, like a framework of iron, standing out upon his hard shaggy hands, and all things else about him indicated a vigorous constitution. In a corner of the cavern I noticed a fairly large heap of moss, and on a rough slab of granite, that did duty as a table, a piece of a round loaf lay over the mouth of a stone-ware pitcher.

Never among my visions of the life led in the desert by early Christian anchorites had I pictured a face more awe-inspiring, more grand and terrible in repentance than this. And even you, dear uncle, in your experience of the confessional, have, perhaps, never seen a penitence so grand; for this remorse seemed to be drowned in a sea of prayers, of prayers that flowed forever from a dumb despair. This

fisherman, this rough Breton sailor, was sublime through a thought hidden within him. Had those eyes shed tears? Had the hand of that rough-hewn statue ever struck a blow? A fierce honesty was stamped upon a rugged forehead where force of character had still left some traces of the gentleness that is the prerogative of all true strength. Was that brow, so scored and furrowed with wrinkles, compatible with a great heart? How came this man to abide with the granite? How had the granite entered into him? Where did the granite end and the man begin? A whole crowd of thoughts passed through our minds; and, as our guide had expected, we went by quickly and in silence. When he saw us again, we were either perturbed with a sense of dread, or overcome by the strangeness of this thing, but he did not remind us that his prediction had come true.

“Did you see him?” he asked.

“What is the man?”

“They call him the ‘man under a vow.’”

You can readily imagine how we both turned to our fisherman at these words. He was a simple-minded fellow; he understood our mute inquiry; and this is the story which I have tried to tell, as far as possible, in the homely language in which he told it.

“The Croisic folk and the people at Batz think that he has been guilty of something, madame, and that he is doing a penance laid upon him by a famous *recteur*, to whom he went to confess, beyond Nantes. There are some who think that Cambremer (that is his name) is unlucky, and that it brings bad luck to pass through the air he breathes, so a good many of them before going round the rocks will stop to see which way the wind blows. If it blows from the nor'-west,” he said, pointing in that direction with his finger, “they would not go on if they had set out to seek a bit of the True Cross; they turn back again; they are afraid. Other folk, rich people in Croisic, say that Cambremer once made a vow, and that is why he is called ‘the man under a vow.’ He never leaves the place; he is there night and day.

“There is some show of reason for these tales,” he added,

turning round to point out to us something that had escaped our notice. "You see that wooden cross that he has set up there on the left; that is to show that he has put himself under the protection of God and the Holy Virgin and the Saints. He would not be respected as he is, if it were not that the terror people have of him makes him as safe as if he had a guard of soldiers.

"He has not said a word since he went into prison in the open air. He lives on bread and water that his brother's little girl brings him every morning. a little slip of a thing twelve years old; he has left all he has to her, and a pretty child she is, as gentle as a lamb, and full of fun, a dear little pet. She has blue eyes as long as *that*," he went on, holding out his thumb, "and hair like a cherub's. When you begin—'I say, Pérothe'—(that is what we say for *Pierrette*," he said, interrupting himself; "Saint Pierre is her patron saint, Cambremer's name is Pierre, and he was her godfather)—'I say, Pérothe, what does your uncle say to you?'—'He says nothing,' says she, 'nothing whatever, nothing at all.'—'Well, then, what does he do when you go?'—'He kisses me on the forehead of a Sunday.'—'Aren't you afraid of him?'—'Not a bit,' says she; 'he is my godfather.'—He will not have anyone else bring his food. Pérothe says that he smiles when she comes; but you might as well say that the sun shone in a fog, for he is as gloomy as a sea mist, they say."

"But you are exciting our curiosity without satisfying it," I broke in. "Do you know what brought him there? Was it trouble, or remorse, or crime, or is he mad, or what?"

"Eh! sir, there is hardly a soul save my father and me that knows the rights of the matter. My mother that's gone was in service in the house of the justice that Cambremer went to. The priest told him to go to a justice, and only gave him absolution on that condition, if the tale is true that they tell in the haven. My poor mother overheard Cambremer without meaning to do so, because the kitchen was alongside the sitting-room in the justice's house. So she heard. She is dead, and the justice has gone too. My mother made us promise, my father and me, never to

let on to the people round about; and I can tell *you* this, every hair bristled up on my head that night when my mother told us the story——”

“Well, then, tell it to us; we will not repeat it.”

The fisherman looked at us both—then he went on, something after this fashion—

“Pierre Cambremer, whom you saw yonder, is the oldest of the family. The Cambremers have been seamen from father to son; you see, their name means that the sea has always bent under them. The one you saw had a fishing-boat, several fishing-boats, and the sardine fishery was his trade, though he did deep-sea fishing as well for the dealers. He would have fitted out a bigger vessel, and gone to the cod-fishing, if he had not been so fond of his wife; a fine woman she was, a Brouin from Guérande, a strapping girl with a warm heart. She was so fond of Cambremer that she would never let her man go away from her for longer than for the sardine-fishing. They lived down yonder, there!” said our fisherman, standing on a hillock to point out to us an islet in the little inland sea between the dunes where we were walking and the salt marshes at Guérande. “Do you see the house? It belonged to him.

“Jacquette Brouin and Cambremer had but one child, a boy, whom they loved like—what shall I say?—like an only child; they were crazy over him. Their little Jacques might have done something (asking your pardon) into the soup, and they would have thought it sweetened it. Times and times again we used to see them buying the finest toys at the fair for him! There was no sense in it—everybody told them so. Little Cambremer found out that he could do as he liked with them, and he grew as willful as a red donkey. If anyone told his father, ‘Your boy has all but killed little So-and-so,’ Cambremer used to laugh and say, ‘Bah! he will be a mettlesome sailor! He will command the king’s ships.’ Another would say, ‘Pierre Cambremer, do you know that your lad put out Pougaud’s little girl’s eye?’—‘He will be one for the girls,’ Pierre would say. It was all right in his eyes. By the time the little rascal was ten years old he knocked everybody about, and twisted the fowls’ necks

for fun, and ripped open the pigs; he was as bloodthirsty as a weasel. 'He will make a famous soldier!' said Cambremer; 'he has a liking for bloodshed.'

"You see, I myself remember all this," said our fisherman; "and so does Cambremer," he added, after a pause.

"Jacques Cambremer grew up to be fifteen or sixteen, and he was—well, a bully. He would go off and amuse himself at Guérande, and cut a figure at Savenay. He must have money for that. So he began robbing his mother, and she did not dare to tell her husband. Cambremer was so honest that if anyone had overpaid him twopence on an account, he would have gone twenty leagues to pay it back. At last one day the mother had nothing left. While the father was away at the fishing, Jacques made off with the dresser, the plenishing, and the sheets and the linen, and left nothing but the four walls; he had sold all the things in the house to pay for his carryings-on at Nantes. The poor woman cried about it day and night. She would have to tell his father when he came back, and she was afraid of the father; not for herself though, not she! So when Pierre Cambremer came back and saw his house furnished with things the neighbors had lent her, he asked—

"'What does this mean?'

"And the poor thing, more dead than alive, answered, 'We have been robbed.'

"'What has become of Jacques?'

"'Jacques is away on a spree!'

"'Nobody knew where the rogue had gone.'

"'He is too fond of his fun,' said Pierre.

"Six months afterwards the poor father heard that Jacques had got into trouble at Nantes. He goes over on foot—it is quicker than going by sea—puts his hand on his son's shoulder, and fetches him home. He did not ask him, 'What have you been doing?'

"'If you don't keep steady here for a couple of years with your mother and me,' he said, 'and help with the fishing, and behave yourself like a decent fellow, you will have me to reckon with!'

"The harebrained youngster, counting on the weakness his

father and mother had for him, made a grimace at his father, and thereupon Pierre fetched him a slap in the face that laid up Jacques for six months afterwards.

“The poor mother was breaking her heart all the time. One night she was lying quietly asleep by her husband’s side, when she heard a noise and sat up, and got a stab in the arm from a knife. She shrieked; and when they had struck a light, Pierre Cambremer found that his wife was wounded. He thought it was a robber, as if there were any robbers in our part of the world, when you can carry ten thousand francs in gold from Croisic to Saint-Nazaire, and no one would so much as ask you what you had under your arm. Pierre looked about for Jacques, and could not find him anywhere. In the morning the unnatural wretch had the face to come back and say that he had been at Batz.

“I should tell you that the mother did not know where to hide her money. Cambremer himself used to leave his with M. Dupotet at Croisic. Their son’s wild ways had eaten up crowns and francs and gold louis; they were ruined, as you may say, and it was hard on folk who had about twelve thousand livres, including their little island. Nobody knew how much Cambremer had paid down at Nantes to have his son back. Their luck went from bad to worse. One of Cambremer’s brothers was unfortunate, and wanted help. Pierre told him, to comfort him, that Jacques and Pérotte (the younger brother’s girl) should be married some day. Then, to put him in the way of earning his bread, he took him to help in the fishing; for Joseph Cambremer was obliged to work with his own hands. His wife had died of the fever, and he had to pay someone else to nurse Pérotte till she was weaned. Pierre Cambremer’s wife owed as much as a hundred francs to different people on the baby’s account for linen and things, and two or three months to big Frelu, who had a child by Simon Gaudry, and nursed Pérotte. La Cambremer, too, had sewn a Spanish doubloon into the flock of her mattress, and written on it ‘For Pérotte.’ You see, she had had a good education, and could write like a clerk; she had taught her son to read too—that was the ruin of him.

“Nobody knew how it came about, but that scoundrel

Jacques got wind of the gold and took it, and went off to get drunk at Croisic. Old Cambremer, just as if it had happened on purpose, came in with his boat; and as he came up to the house he saw a scrap of paper floating about. He picked it up and took it in to his wife; and she dropped down, for she knew her own handwriting. Cambremer said not a word. He went out to Croisic, and heard there that his son was in the billiard-room. Then he sent for the good woman who kept the café, and said to her—

“‘I told Jacques not to change a piece of gold that he will pay his score with: let me have it; I will wait at the door, and you shall have silver for it.’

“The woman of the house brought him out the gold piece. Cambremer took it.

“‘Good!’ said he, and he went away home.

“All the town knew that. But this I know, and the rest of them have only a sort of general guess at how it was. He told his wife to set their room to rights; it is on the ground floor. He kindled a fire on the hearth, he lighted two candles, and put two chairs on one side of the fireplace, and a three-legged stool on the other. Then he bade his wife put out the suit he was married in, and to put on her wedding gown. He dressed himself; and then when he was dressed, he went out for his brother, and told him to keep watch outside the house, and give warning if he heard any sound on either beach, here by the sea or yonder on the salt marshes at Guérande. When he thought his wife must be dressed, he went in again; he loaded a gun, and hid it in the chimney corner.

“Back comes Jacques to the house. It was late when he came; he had been drinking and gambling up to ten o’clock; he had got someone to ferry him over at Carnouf Point. His uncle heard him hail the boat, and went to look for him along the side of the salt marshes, and passed him without saying anything.

“When Jacques came in, his father spoke.

“‘Sit you down there,’ he said, pointing to the stool. ‘You are before your father and mother; you have sinned against them, and they are your judges.’



“ Jacques began to bellow, for Cambremer’s face twitched strangely. The mother sat there, stiff as an oar.

“ ‘If you make any noise, if you stir, if you don’t sit straight up like a mast on your stool,’ said Pierre, pointing his gun at him, ‘I will shoot you like a dog.’

“ Cambremer’s son grew mute as a fish, and all this time the mother said not a word.

“ ‘Here is a bit of paper that wrapped up a Spanish gold coin. That coin was in your mother’s mattress. No one knew where it was except your mother. I found the bit of paper floating on the water when I came in. Only this evening you changed the piece of Spanish gold at Mother Fleurant’s and your mother cannot find the coin in her mattress.—Explain yourself.’

“ Jacques said that he had not taken his mother’s money, and that he had had the coin at Nantes.

“ ‘So much the better,’ said Pierre. “How can you prove it?’

“ ‘I did have it.’

“ ‘You did not take your mother’s coin?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘Can you swear it on your salvation?’

“ He was just going to swear, when his mother looked up and said—

“ ‘Jacques, my child, take care; do not swear if it is not true. . . . You can repent and mend; there is still time,’ and she cried at that.

“ ‘You are a So-and-so,’ said he; ‘you have always tried to ruin me.’

“ Cambremer turned white, and said, ‘What you have just said to your mother goes to swell your account. Now, come to the point! Will you swear?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Stop a bit,’ said Pierre, ‘was there a cross on your coin like the mark the sardine merchant put on the coin he paid me?’

“ Jacques grew sober at that, and began to cry.

“ ‘That is enough talk,’ said Pierre. ‘I say nothing of what you have done before—I have no mind that a Cam-

bremer should die in the market-place at Croisic. Say your prayers, and let us be quick! A priest is coming to hear your confession.'

"The mother had gone out of the room that she might not hear her son's doom. As soon as she went out, Joseph Cambremer, the uncle, came in with the *recteur* from Piriac. To him Jacques would not open his mouth. He was shrewd; he knew his father well enough to feel sure that he would not kill him till he had confessed.

"'Thanks. Pardon us, sir,' Cambremer said to the priest when Jacques continued obstinate. 'I meant to give my son a lesson, and I beg you to say nothing about it.—As for you,' he went on, turning to Jacques, 'if you do not mend your ways, next time you go wrong shall be the last, and shrift or no shrift, I will make an end of it.'

"He sent him off to bed. The young fellow believed him, and fancied that he could make things right with his father. He slept. His father sat up. When he saw his son fast asleep, he covered the young fellow's mouth with hemp, bound it tightly round with a strip of sail-cloth; then he tied him hand and foot. He writhed, he 'shed tears of blood,' so Cambremer told the justice. What would you have! His mother flung herself at the father's feet.

"'He is doomed,' said Cambremer; 'you will help me to put him into the boat.'

"She would not help him, and Cambremer did it alone; he fastened him down in the bottom of the boat, and tied a stone round his neck, put out of the bay, reached the sea, and came out as far as the rock where he sits now. Then the poor mother, who had made her brother-in-law take her over, cried out in vain for mercy; it was like throwing a stone at a wolf. By the moonlight she saw the father take the son, towards whom her heart still yearned, and fling him into the water; and as there was not a breath of air stirring, she heard the gurgling sound, and then *nothing*—not an eddy, not a ripple; the sea is a famous keeper of secrets, that it is! When Cambremer reached the place to silence her moans, he found her lying like one dead. The two brothers could not carry her, so they had to put her in the

boat that had carried her son, and they took her round home by way of the Croisic channel.

“Ah, well! *la belle Brouin*, as they called her, did not live the week out. She died, asking her husband to burn the accursed boat. Oh! he did it; yes, he did it. He himself was queer after that; he did not know what ailed him; he reeled about like a man who cannot carry his wine. Then he went off somewhere for ten days, and came back again to put himself where you saw him; and since he has been there, he has not said a word.”

The fisherman told us the story in a few minutes, in words even more simple than those that I have used. Working people make little comment on what they tell; they give you the facts that strike them, and interpret them by their own feelings. His language was as keenly incisive as the stroke of a hatchet.

“I shall not go to Batz,” said Pauline, when we reached the outer rim of the lake.

We went back to Croisic by way of the salt marshes, the fisherman guiding us through the labyrinth. He also had grown silent. Our mood had changed. Both of us were deep in melancholy musings, and saddened by the mournful story which explained the swift presentiment that we had felt at the sight of Cambremer. We had each of us sufficient knowledge of human nature to fill in the outlines of the three lives that our guide had sketched for us. The tragedy of these three human beings rose up before us as if we saw scene after scene of a drama crowned by the father's expiation of an inevitable crime. We did not dare to look at the rocks where he sat, the fate-bound soul who struck terror into a whole countryside. A few clouds overcast the sky. The mist rose on the horizon of the sea. We were walking through the most acrid dreariness that I have ever seen; the earth beneath our feet seemed sick and unwholesome in these salt marshes which, with good reason, might be called a cutaneous eruption on the face of the earth. The ground is scored over in rough squares, with high banks of gray earth about them; each is full of brackish water;

the salt rises to the surface. These artificial hollows are intersected by raised pathways, on which the workmen stand to skim the surface of the pools with long scrapers; and the salt, when collected, is deposited to drain on circular platforms set at even distances, till it is fit to lay up in heaps. For two hours we skirted this dreary chessboard, where the salt stops the growth of any green thing; occasionally, at long intervals, we came upon one or two *paludiers*, so they call the men who work among the salt marshes. These workers, or it should rather be said, this race apart among the Bretons, wears a special costume, a white jacket rather like those that brewers wear. They marry only among themselves; a girl belonging to this tribe has never been known to marry anyone but a *paludier*. The hideous desolation of those swamps where the boggy soil is scraped up into symmetrical heaps, the grayness of the soil, from which every Breton flower shrinks in disgust, was in keeping with the sadness within us. We reached the spot where you cross an arm of the sea, the channel doubtless through which the salt water breaks in upon the low-lying land and leaves its deposits on the soil, and we were glad to see the scanty plant-life growing along the edge of the sand. As we crossed it, we saw the island in the lagoon where the Cam-bremeres once lived, and turned our heads away.

When we reached our inn we noticed a billiard-table in the room on the ground floor, and when we learned that it was the only public billiard-table in Croisic, we made our preparations for departure that night, and on the morrow we went to Guérande.

Pauline was still depressed, and I myself felt a return of the burning sensation that scorches my brain. I was so grievously haunted by the visions of those three lives that I had conjured up, that Pauline said, "Write the story, Louis, and the fever may take a turn."

So, dear uncle, I have written the story for you; but our adventure has already undone the good effects of repose, the result of our stay here and at the Baths.



