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LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE  
OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

*THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT*  
*A PRINCE OF BOHEMIA*  
*A MAN OF BUSINESS*  
*THE GIRL WITH GOLDEN EYES*  
*SARRASINE*

TRANSLATED BY  
GEORGE BURNHAM IVES

Illustrated by  
A. ROBAUDI

BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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IN the Calmann-Lévy edition of *La Comédie Humaine*, "The Muse of the Department," the longest story in this volume, is placed in "Scenes from Provincial Life" immediately before "The Old Maid." It was written in 1833. The other stories in the volume are all included in "Scenes from Parisian Life." "A Prince of Bohemia" was written in 1840; "A Man of Business" in 1845; "The Girl with Golden Eyes," the third of the "Histoire des Treize" series, in 1834; and "Sarrasine" in 1830.



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### THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT

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THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT.

TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE FERDINAND  
DE GRAMONT.

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MY DEAR FERDINAND, — If the hazards of the world of letters (*habent sua fata libelli*) make of these lines one long reminiscence, it will surely be a small matter compared with the trouble that you have taken — you, the d’Hozier, the Chérin, the king-at-arms of these “Studies of Manners;” you, to whom the Navarreins, the Cadignans, the Langeais, the Blamont-Chauvrys, the Chaulieus, the d’Arthez, the d’Esgrignons, the Mortsaufs, the Valois, the numerous noble families that constitute the aristocracy of the “Comédie Humaine,” owe their fine mottoes and their cleverly devised coats-of-arms. Thus the “Arms of the Studies of Manners, devised by Ferdinand de Gramont, Gentleman,” is a complete history of French heraldry, wherein you have omitted nothing, not even the arms of the Empire, and which I shall cherish as a monument of Benedictine patience and of friendship. What knowledge of the old feudal language in the *Pulchre sedens, melius agens* of the Beauséants! in the *Des partem leonis* of the d’Espards! in the *Ne se vend* of the Vandenesses! And lastly, what charming delicacy in the thousand and one details of that learned iconography which will prove how far I have been true to life in my undertaking, in which, O poet, you will materially have assisted

Your old friend,

DE BALZAC.

# THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT.

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## I.

ON the edge of the province of Berri, on the shore of the Loire, lies a town which, by reason of its situation, inevitably attracts the eye of the traveller. Sancerre is built at the highest point of a chain of small mountains, the last undulation of the rough, hilly region of the Nivernais. The Loire overflows the fields at the foot of these hills, leaving behind a yellowish slime that fertilizes them when it does not bury them forever beneath one of those terrible avalanches of sand which are equally characteristic of the Vistula, that Loire of the North. The mountain on whose summit the houses of Sancerre are grouped lies far enough from the river to leave room for the little port of Saint-Thibault to live on the life of Sancerre. There the wines are shipped, there the lumber for the wine-casks is landed, and, in short, all the produce of the Upper and Lower Loire.

At the period of this narrative the bridge of Cosne and that of Saint-Thibault, suspension bridges both, had been built. Travellers from Paris to Sancerre by the road to Italy no longer crossed the Loire at Cosne by ferry. Is not this equivalent to saying that the cataclysm of 1830 had taken place? For the house of Orléans was everywhere careful of the material inter-

ests of the people, but much after the manner of those husbands who make gifts to their wives with the money of the dowry.

Except in that part of Sancerre that occupies the plateau, the streets are more or less declivitous, and the town is surrounded by slopes called the *Grand Ramparts*, a name which sufficiently describes the main streets of the town. Beyond these slopes lies a belt of vineyards. Vine-growing is the principal industry, and wine the principal article of commerce of the district, which boasts of several native brands, with much *bouquet*, and so like the Burgundian product that untrained palates in Paris are sometimes deceived. Thus Sancerre finds in Parisian wine-shops a quick market, which, indeed, is essential for wines that cannot be kept more than seven or eight years.

Below the town are several villages, — Fontenay, Saint-Satur, — which are like suburbs, and whose situation reminds one of the sunny vineyards of Neuchâtel in Switzerland. The town has retained some features of its ancient aspect: its streets are narrow and paved with stones taken from the bed of the Loire. Some few old houses are still to be seen. The tower, that relic of military rule and of the feudal age, recalls one of the most terrible centres of our religious wars, during which the Calvinists far outdid Sir Walter Scott's savage Cameronians. The town of Sancerre, rich in an illustrious past, shorn of its military power, is in some sort abandoned to an unfruitful future, for commercial activity is confined to the right bank of the Loire. The cursory description that you have read indicates that the isolation of Sancerre will become more and more complete, despite the two bridges that connect it with



Cosne. Saneerre, the pride of the left bank, has at most three thousand five hundred souls, while there are said to be more than six thousand in Cosne. Within a half-century the rôles of those two towns, seated thus face to face, have been completely reversed.

However, the advantage of situation remains with the historic town, from every part of which one may enjoy a fascinating prospect, — where the air is wonderfully pure, the vegetation magnificent, and the people, in full harmony with this cheerful natural environment, are affable, good-humored, and quite without puritanism, although two-thirds of the population are still Calvinists. Under such circumstances, if one must needs submit to the inconveniences of life in small towns, if one finds one's self subjected to that obtrusive surveillance which makes private life practically public, on the other hand, the patriotism of place, which will never replace the bond of family, is displayed to a high degree. Thus the town of Saneerre is very proud of having given birth to one of the glories of modern medicine, Horace Bianchon, and to an author of the second rank, Étienne Lousteau, one of the most distinguished of feuilletonists.

The arrondissement of Saneerre, incensed by its subjection to seven or eight great land-owners, the high and mighty lords of the elections, strove to shake off the electoral yoke of the doctrine, whose "rotten borough" it has become. This conspiracy of a few wounded self-esteems fell through by reason of the jealousy aroused in the conspirators by the prospective elevation of one of their number. When the result disclosed the radical defect of the undertaking, they sought to remedy it by choosing for champion of the district at the next election one of the two men who so gloriously represent Saneerre

in Paris. This idea was tremendously "advanced" for the provinces, where, since 1830, the nomination of neighborhood notabilities has made such progress that statesmen are becoming more and more rare in the elective chamber. So it happened that this plan, the realization of which was decidedly doubtful, was conceived by the superior woman of the arrondissement, — *dux femina facti*, — but with a view to her private advantage. The scheme had so many roots in this woman's past, and had such influence on her future, that, without a rapid and succinct account of her former life, it would be difficult to understand.

Sancerre, then, vaunted itself on the possession of a superior woman, long misunderstood, but who about 1836 enjoyed a very satisfactory departmental renown. This was the time, also, when the two Sancerrois in Paris, each in his sphere, attained the highest degree, the one of glory, the other of fashion. Étienne Lousteau, one of the collaborators in the reviews of the day, signed the feuilleton of a newspaper with eight thousand subscribers; and Bianchon, already first physician of a hospital, officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just obtained his professor's chair.

But for the fact that the word is likely, with many people, to import a sort of reproach, we might say that George Sand created *Sandism*, so true is it that, morally speaking, good is almost always attended by evil. This sentimental leprosy has spoiled many women, who, but for their pretensions to genius, would have been fascinating. Sandism, however, has this merit, that, as the woman who is attacked by it bases her alleged superiorities upon misunderstood sentiments, she is, so to speak,

the *blue-stocking* of the heart; the result therefore is less wearisome, as love neutralizes literature to some extent. Now, the principal result of George Sand's eminence has been to demonstrate that France possesses an extraordinary number of superior women, generous enough to leave the field free thus far to the granddaughter of the Maréchal de Saxe.

The superior woman of Sancerre lived at La Baudraye, a country-house and town-house at once, some ten minutes' walk from the town, in the village, or, if you choose, the suburb, of Saint-Satur. The La Baudrayes of to-day, as has happened in the case of many noble families, have thrust themselves into the place of the La Baudrayes whose name shines resplendent in the Crusades and is mingled with the great events in the history of Berri. This requires explanation.

Under Louis XIV a certain sheriff named Milaud, whose ancestors were frantic Calvinists, became converted at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. To encourage this movement in one of the sanctuaries of Calvinism, the King appointed this Milaud to a high post in the Department of Streams and Forests, gave him a coat-of-arms and the title of Sire de la Baudraye, and bestowed upon him the fief of the old, the genuine La Baudrayes. The heirs of the famous Captain La Baudraye fell, alas! into one of the snares laid for heretics by the royal ordinances, and were hanged — a mode of treatment unworthy of the great King. Under Louis XV Milaud de La Baudraye, a simple esquire, became a knight, and had sufficient influence to obtain for his son a cornetship in the Musketeers. The cornet died at Fontenoy, leaving a son to whom Louis XV later gave a commission as

farmer-general, in memory of the cornet who died on the battle-field. This financier, a *bel esprit* devoted to charades, *bouts-rimés*, and bouquets to Chloris, lived in the fashionable world, frequented the social circle of the Duc de Nivernais, and deemed himself obliged to follow the nobility into exile; but he was careful to take his funds with him. So that the rich émigré supported more than one noble family.

Tired of hoping, and it may be of lending money as well, he returned to Sancerre in 1800, and redeemed La Baudraye, obeying a sentiment of self-esteem and quasi-aristocratic vanity comprehensible enough in the grandson of a sheriff, whose future prospects, however, under the Consulate, were sensibly lessened by the fact that the ex-farmer-general could hardly rely upon his heir to continue the new race of La Baudraye.

Jean-Athanase-Polydore Milaud de la Baudraye, the financier's only son, at birth more than puny, was the due fruit of a blood exhausted betimes by the exaggerated dissipation to which all rich men abandon themselves who marry at the dawn of premature old age, and thus end by debasing the highest social strata.

During the emigration Madame de La Baudraye, a young woman without fortune, who was married because of her noble blood, had had the patience to rear that fallow, sickly child, upon whom she lavished the excessive affection that a mother's heart conceives for a monstrosity. Her death — she was a Castéran la Tour — was instrumental in hastening M. de La Baudraye's return to France. That Lucullus of the Milauds died in 1802, bequeathing to his son the fief, — shorn of its feudal privileges but embellished with weathercocks with his arms, — a thousand louis d'or, — no incon-

siderable sum at that time, — and his claims upon the most illustrious émigrés, contained in the portfolio of his poems, with this inscription: “*Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*”

If the young La Baudraye lived, he owed it to habits of monastic regularity, to that economy of motion which Fontenelle preached as the religion of valetudinarians, and, above all, to the air of Sancerre, to the influence of that admirable site from which a panorama of forty leagues in the valley of the Loire lies spread out before one.

Between 1802 and 1815 young La Baudraye added to his estate several vineyards and devoted himself zealously to the culture of the grape. At the beginning the Restoration seemed to him so shaky that he dared not go too often to Paris to urge his claims; but after Napoleon's death he tried to turn his father's poetry into cash, for he did not understand the profound philosophy disclosed by that mingling of charades and notes of hand. The vine-grower lost so much time in securing recognition from MM. the Dues de Navarreins and others (so he expressed it), that he returned to Sancerre, summoned thither by his beloved harvest, without obtaining aught save offers of service.

The Restoration imparted sufficient lustre to the nobility for La Baudraye to desire to give consequence to his ambition by procreating an heir. Such a conjugal blessing seemed to him decidedly problematical; otherwise he would not have delayed so long. But, toward the end of the year 1823, finding that he was still on his legs at the age of forty-three, an age which neither doctor nor astrologer nor midwife would have dared to predict that he would reach, he hoped to find the reward

of his compulsory virtue. Nevertheless, considering his frail constitution, his choice indicated such a woeful lack of prudence that it was impossible for provincial malice not to discover profound design therein.

At this time his Eminence Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges had recently converted to the true faith a young woman belonging to one of those bourgeois families which were the first buttresses of Calvinism, and which, thanks to their obscure position or to compromises with heaven, escaped the persecution of Louis XIV. Mechanics in the sixteenth century, the Piédefers — one of those extraordinary names which the soldiers of the Reformation took unto themselves — had become worthy drapers. In the reign of Louis XVI Abraham Piédefer was so unsuccessful in business that at his death, in 1786, he left his two children in a state bordering on destitution. One of the two, Silas Piédefer, started for the Indics, abandoning his share of the paltry inheritance to his older brother. Moses Piédefer bought national property, demolished abbeys and churches after the manner of his ancestors, and married, strangely enough, a Catholic, the only daughter of a member of the Convention who died on the scaffold. This ambitious Piédefer died in 1819, leaving his wife a fortune impaired by agricultural speculations and a little girl of twelve years, of surprising beauty.

Brought up in the Calvinist religion, this child had been named Dinah, in accordance with the custom by virtue of which the Reformers took their first names from the Bible in order to have nothing in common with the saints of the Roman church. Placed by her mother in one of the best boarding-schools of Bourges, that of Mesdemoiselles Chamarolles, Mademoiselle Dinah

Piédefer became as famous there for her mental qualities as for her beauty; but she found herself overshadowed by girls of noble birth and rich, who were destined later to play a much more brilliant part in society than that of a *roturière*, whose mother was awaiting the result of the settlement of the Piédefer estate. Having succeeded in raising herself momentarily above her comrades, Dinah was determined to stand on an even footing with them in life. It occurred to her therefore to abjure Calvinism, hoping that the Cardinal would become the patron of his intelligent conquest and would look to her future.

You can appreciate already the superior intelligence of Mademoiselle Dinah, who, at the age of seventeen, became converted solely through ambition. The archbishop, imbued with the idea that Dinah Piédefer was fitted to be an ornament of society, tried to find a husband for her. All the families to which the prelate applied took fright at the suggestion of a young lady with the demeanor of a princess, who was esteemed the cleverest of the young persons at the establishment of Mesdemoiselles Chamarolles, and who, in the somewhat theatrical exercises accompanying the distribution of prizes, always took the leading rôles. Assuredly the three thousand francs a year which the estate of Hautoy, owned in common by the mother and daughter, might be expected to bring in, was a mere trifle compared with the outlay into which the personal attractions of so clever a person would lead a husband.

No sooner did little Polydore de La Baudraye learn these details, of which all ranks of society in the Department of the Cher were talking, than he betook himself to Bourges, at the moment when Madame Piédefer, a



devout person on great occasions, had almost decided, as had her daughter, to take, as they say in Berri, the first bearded dog that might come along. If the Cardinal was very happy to fall in with M. de La Baudraye, M. de la Baudraye was even more happy to accept a wife from the Cardinal's hand. The little man exacted from his Eminence a formal promise of his support with the President of the Council, in his efforts to collect his claims against the Ducs de Navarreins and others by seizing their indemnities. This method seemed a bit too hasty to the minister of the Pavillon Marsan, and he caused the vine-grower to be informed that they would attend to him in due time.

Every one can conceive the turmoil aroused in the Sancerre neighborhood by M. de La Baudraye's insane marriage.

"I can explain it," said President Boirouge; "the little man, they tell me, was greatly incensed to hear handsome Monsieur Milaud, the Deputy Mayor of Nevers, say one day on the Mall to Monsieur de Clagny, pointing to the turrets of La Baudraye: 'That will come back to me!' — 'But,' our procureur du roi replied, 'he may marry and have children.' — 'He can't do it!' — You can imagine the hatred that an abortion like little La Baudraye must have conceived for that giant of a Milaud."

There was at Nevers a plebeian branch of the Milauds who had amassed sufficient wealth in the cutlery trade for its representative to enter the public service, in which he had the protection of the late Marchangy.

Perhaps it will be as well to rid this narrative, in which morals play a leading part, of the base material



affairs by which M. de La Baudraye was exclusively engrossed, by telling in a few words the results of his negotiations at Paris. Indeed, this will explain several mysterious portions of the history of the time, and the underlying difficulties with which ministers during the Restoration were beset in political affairs.

The ministerial promises proved to have so little substance that M. de La Baudraye went to Paris just when the Cardinal was summoned thither by the session of the Chambers. This is how the Duc de Navarreins, the first debtor threatened by M. de La Baudraye, extricated himself from the affair. The man from Sancerre received a visit one morning, at the Hôtel de Mayence on rue Saint-Honoré, near Place Vendôme, where he had put up, from a confidential agent of ministers who was well versed in adjusting such matters. This elegant individual, who came in an elegant cabriolet and was dressed in the most elegant style, was obliged to climb to No. 37, that is to say, to the third floor, where he surprised the provincial in a small room, making himself a cup of coffee over the fire on the hearth.

“Have I the honor of speaking to Monsieur Milaud de La Baudraye?”

“Yes,” the little man replied, wrapping himself in his robe de chambre.

Having scrutinized that incestuous offspring of a multi-colored coat of Madame Piédefer’s and a gown belonging to the late Madame de La Baudraye, the negotiator found the man, the robe de chambre, and the little earthen vessel in which the milk was boiling in a tin saucépan, so decisive of his character that he deemed subterfuge unnecessary.

“I’ll bet, monsieur,” he said boldly, “that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain’s in the Palais-Royal.”

“Why so?”

“Oh! I recognize you from having seen you there,” replied the Parisian, retaining his serious expression. “All the creditors of the princes dine there. You know that one can collect barely ten per cent of a claim against the great nobles. I would n’t give you five per cent for a claim against the late Duc d’Orléans, and even” (he lowered his voice) “against Monsieur —”

“Have you come to buy my notes?” demanded the vinc-grower, thinking himself very clever.

“To buy!” exclaimed the agent; “what do you take me for? I am Monsieur des Lupeaulx, master of requests, secretary-general to the ministry, and I have come to propose a compromise.”

“What is it?”

“You are not unaware, monsieur, of the position of your debtor —”

“Of my debtors?”

“Very good, monsieur — you know the situation of your debtors: they are in the King’s good graces, but they have no money and are compelled to maintain large establishments. You are not ignorant of the difficulties of politics: the aristocracy has to be reconstructed, in the face of a redoubtable third estate. The idea of the King, whom France judges very ill, is to create in the peerage a national institution analogous to that of England. To carry out this great scheme, years are required, and millions of money! Noblesse oblige! The Duc de Navarreins, who is, as you know, first gentleman of the Chamber, does not deny his debt, but he cannot — Be reasonable! Consider the politi-

cal necessity. We are just emerging from the abyss of revolutions. You too are a noble! — As I was saying, he cannot pay you —”

“Monsieur —”

“You are too quick,” said Des Lupeaulx; “listen — He cannot pay you in cash; very good, like the clever man that you are, collect your debt in favors, royal or ministerial.”

“What! my father advanced, in 1793, a hundred thousand —”

“My dear sir, do not recriminate. Listen to a proposition in political arithmetic: the collectorship of Sancerre is vacant; a former paymaster in the army has a claim to it, but he has no chance; you have a chance, and you have no claim; you will obtain the collectorship. You will perform the duties for six months, then you will resign and Monsieur Gravier will give you twenty thousand francs. In addition, you will be decorated with the royal order of the Legion of Honor.”

“That is something,” said the vine-grower, attracted much more by the money than by the ribbon.

“But,” continued Des Lupeaulx, “you will acknowledge his Excellency’s kindness by surrendering to his lordship the Duc de Navarrcins all his notes.”

The vine-grower returned to Sancerre as collector of taxes. Six months later he was replaced by M. Gravier, who was esteemed one of the most amiable agents of the financial administration under the Empire, and who naturally was presented by M. de La Baudraye to his wife.

As soon as he ceased to be collector, M. de La Baudraye went again to Paris to come to terms with his other debtors. This time he was made referendary in

the department of the great seal, a baron, and an officer of the Legion of Honor. Having sold the office of referendary, the Baron de La Baudraye paid a few visits to his remaining debtors, and reappeared at Sancerre with the title of master of requests, with an appointment as king's commissioner to a company without a name, established in the Nivernais, carrying a salary of six thousand francs — a genuine sinecure. Thus goodman La Baudraye, who was considered to have done a crazy thing, financially speaking, did, on the contrary, an excellent piece of business in marrying his wife.

Thanks to his sordid economy and to the indemnity that he collected for his father's property, sold as belonging to the nation in 1793, the little man, about 1827, fulfilled the dream of his whole life. By a payment of four hundred thousand francs down, and by entering into obligations which condemned him to live for six years on air, as he expressed it, he was able to purchase the estate of Anzy, on the bank of the Loire, two leagues above Sancerre, whose superb château, built by Philibert Delorme, is the object of the well-merited admiration of connoisseurs, and which had belonged for five hundred years to the family of Uxelles. At last he was enrolled among the great land-owners of the province.

It is not certain that the joy caused by the constitution of a *majorat* consisting of the estate of Anzy, the fief of La Baudraye, and the domain of Hautoy, by virtue of letters patent dated December, 1829, allayed the vexation of Dinah on finding that she was reduced to secret poverty until 1835. The prudent La Baudraye would not allow his wife to live at Anzy or to make the slightest change there until the final payment of the purchase-money.

This glance at the policy of the first Baron de La Baudraye reveals the man in his entirety. Those to whom the manias of the people of the provinces are familiar will recognize in him the *passion for land*, a devouring, exclusive passion, a sort of avarice displayed in the sunshine, and often leading to ruin through a failure of equilibrium between the mortgage interest and the produce of the soil. The people who from 1802 to 1827 sneered at little La Baudraye, as they saw him trotting to Saint-Thibault and attending to his business with the hard-headedness of a bourgeois who makes his living from his vineyard, those who did not understand his contempt for the favors to which he owed his various offices, no sooner obtained than quitted, learned at last the key to the riddle when that *formicaleo* pounced upon his prey, having waited until the moment when the extravagance of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse brought about the sale of that magnificent estate.

## II.

MADAME PIÉDEFER went to live with her daughter. The combined fortunes of M. de La Baudraye and his mother-in-law, who had contented herself with an annuity of twelve hundred francs and had made over to her son-in-law the estate of Hautoy, produced a visible income of about fifteen thousand francs. During the early days of her marriage Dinah obtained certain alterations which made La Baudraye a very attractive house. She made an English garden of an immense courtyard, by demolishing storehouses, press-houses, and unsightly offices. Behind the manor-house, a small structure with turrets and gables and not without character, she arranged a second garden, with shrubs and flowers and grass-plots, and separated it from the vineyards by a wall which she concealed beneath climbing plants. In short, she made their life as comfortable as the narrowness of their income permitted.

In order not to allow himself to be devoured by a young person so superior as Dinah seemed to be, M. de La Baudraye was shrewd enough to hold his peace as to the collections he made at Paris. This profound secrecy touching his affairs gave an indefinable touch of mystery to his character, and magnified him in his wife's eyes during the first years of their marriage; such majesty is there in silence!

The changes made at La Baudraye aroused a desire to see the young bride, intensified by her determination not to show herself or to receive visitors until she had

made herself entirely at home and had studied the neighborhood and especially the silent La Baudraye. When, on a morning in the spring of 1825, people saw the fair Madame de La Baudraye on the Mall in a blue velvet gown, and her mother in one of black velvet, a great clamor arose in Sancerre. That toilet established the superiority of the young woman, who had been brought up in the capital of Berri. People were afraid, when they received that Berriehon phoenix, that their remarks would not be clever enough, and naturally they put a curb on their tongues before Madame de La Baudraye, who caused a sort of panic among the female persuasion. When, in the salon at La Baudraye, they gazed in admiration at a rug woven like a shawl, a piece of Pompadour furniture in gilded wood, brocatelle curtains at the windows, and a Japanese horn filled with flowers on a round table, surrounded by new books; when they heard the fair Dinah sing at sight without making the least show of reluctance about seating herself at the piano, — the idea that they had conceived of her superiority assumed great proportions.

In order not to allow herself to fall into carelessness and bad taste, Dinah had determined to keep abreast of the fashions and of the slightest changes in matters of luxury, by carrying on an active correspondence with Anna Grossetête, her dear friend at the Chamarolles boarding-school. The only daughter of the collector-general of Bourges, Anna, thanks to her fortune, had married the third son of the Comte de Fontaine. Thus the women, when they came to La Baudraye, were constantly offended by the priority which Dinah was able to claim for herself in respect to the fashions; and, do what they would, they always found them-

selves in the rear, or, as the lovers of horse-racing say, "distanced."

If all these trifles aroused a malign sentiment of jealousy in the women of Sancerre, Dinah's conversational powers and intelligence engendered a veritable aversion. In her desire to keep her intelligence abreast of Parisian progress, Madame de La Baudraye would endure from no one either empty jests, or out-of-date love-making, or meaningless remarks; she refused absolutely to listen to petty gossip, to the low-lived evil-speaking which forms the substance of conversation in the provinces. Loving to talk of new discoveries in science or the arts, of works recently produced on the stage or in poetry, she seemed to stir one's thoughts by her handling of the phrases of the day.

Abbé Duret, curé of Sancerre, an old man of the old race of French clergy, an agreeable companion who did not object to card-playing, dared not give way to his inclination in a neighborhood so imbued with liberalism as Sancerre. He was overjoyed, therefore, by the arrival of Madame de La Baudraye, with whom he got along admirably. The sub-prefect, a Vicomte de Chargebœuf, was delighted to find in Madame de La Baudraye's salon a sort of oasis where one could obtain a respite from provincial life. As for M. de Clagny, the procureur du roi, his admiration for the fair Dinah held him fast in Sancerre. That enamoured magistrate declined all promotion and devoted himself to a pious affection for that angel of grace and beauty. He was a tall, thin man, with a hang-dog face, relieved by two terrible eyes, in fiery orbits, surmounted by enormous eyebrows; their eloquence, very different from his love, did not lack pungency.



M. Gravier was a little man, fat and round, who, under the Empire, sang ballads admirably, and who owed the lofty post of paymaster-general of the army to his talent in that line. Interested in large affairs in Spain, with certain generals then belonging to the opposition, he had the art to make the most of those parliamentary affiliations in his application to the minister, who, in consideration of the loss of his position, promised him the collectorship of Sancerre, and ended by allowing him to buy it. The lightness of touch, the *toue* of the Empire, had become heavy in M. Gravier: he did not comprehend, or did not choose to comprehend, the vast difference between the manners of the Empire and those of the Restoration; but he deemed himself much superior to M. de Clagny; his dress was in the best taste, he followed the fashions, he appeared in yellow waistcoat, gray trousers, and a little close-fitting frock coat; at his neck he wore silk cravats of the latest style embellished with diamond scarf-rings; whereas the procureur du roi never departed from the every-day coat and black trousers and waistcoat, often threadbare.

These four men were the first to become enthusiastic over Dinah's education, good taste, and cleverness, and proclaimed her a woman of the most eminent intellect. Whereupon the women said among themselves:—

“Madame de La Baudraye must be laughing in her sleeve at us.”

This opinion, more or less well founded, resulted in preventing the women from going to La Baudraye. Accused and convicted of pedantry because she spoke correctly, Dinah was dubbed the “Sappho of Saint-Satur.” Every one came in time to sneer openly at the alleged superior talents of her who thus became the

enemy of the women of Sancerre. At last they went so far as to deny a superiority — purely relative, by the way — which made their ignorance the more noticeable and had no pity for it. When everybody is hunch-backed, a fine figure becomes a monstrosity; and so Dinah was considered monstrous and dangerous, and there grew to be a desert about her.

Surprised that she saw no women except at long intervals, despite her advances, Dinah asked M. de Clagny the reason of that phenomenon.

“You are too superior a woman for other women to be fond of you,” replied the procureur.

M. Gravier, when the poor abandoned creature questioned him, required a great deal of urging before he would say: —

“Why, my dear lady, you are not content to be charming — you are clever, you are well-educated, you are up in everything that is written, you love poetry, you ’re a musician, and your conversation is enchanting: women don’t forgive so many points of superiority.”

The men said to M. de La Baudraye: —

“You are very lucky to have such a superior wife.”

And he finally fell into the habit of saying: —

“I have such a superior wife, I am very —” etc.

Madame Piédefer, flattered in the person of her daughter, also allowed herself to say such things as this: —

“My daughter, who is a very superior woman, wrote yesterday to Madame de Fontaine such and such a thing.”

Let those who know the world, France, Paris, say if it is not true that many reputations are founded thus.

After two years, toward the close of the year 1825,

Dinah de La Baudraye was accused of not caring to receive anybody but men; then they made a crime of her alienation from the women. Not a thing that she did, even the most trivial, was allowed to pass without being criticised and distorted. After making all the sacrifices that a well-brought-up woman could make, and having all the right on her side, Madame de La Baudraye made the mistake of replying to a false female friend who deplored her isolation:—

“I prefer to have my bowl empty rather than have nothing in it!”

This retort produced an extraordinary effect in Sancerre, and, later, was cruelly turned against the Sappho of Saint-Satur, when, seeing that she was still childless after five years of wedlock, people made sport of little M. de La Baudraye.

To enable the reader to understand this provincial pleasantry, it is necessary to appeal to the memory of those who knew the Duc d'Hérouville, of whom it was said that he was the bravest man in Europe because he dared to walk on his two legs, and who was accused also of putting lead in his shoes so that he should not be carried away by the wind.

M. de La Baudraye, a yellow, quasi-diaphanous little man, might have been taken by the Duc d'Hérouville for his first gentleman of his chamber if the Grand Equerry of France had been, say, Grand Duke of Baden. M. de La Baudraye, whose legs were so thin that he wore false calves for decency's sake, whose thighs were as large as the arms of a well-formed man, and whose back was not unlike a cockchafer's body, would have been a perpetual source of flattery to the Duc d'Hérouville. When he walked, the little vine-

grower often turned his calves from the back of his legs to the front, he made so little mystery about them; and he would always thank those who told him of that trivial mishap. He retained the short breeches, black stockings, and white waistcoat until 1824. After his marriage he wore blue trousers and high-heeled boots, which caused all Sancerre to say that he had added two inches to his stature in order to reach his wife's chin. For ten years he was seen in the same little frock-coat of bottle-green, with huge buttons of white metal, and a black cravat which set off his lifeless, weasel-like face, lighted by eyes of a grayish blue as sly and placid as a cat's.

Mild of manner, like all those who follow a preconceived plan of action, he seemed to make his wife very happy, never thwarting her, so far as appeared; he would let her talk, and content himself with acting with the moderation, but with the tenacity, of an insect.

Adored for her unrivalled beauty, admired for her wit by the most *comme il faut* men of Sancerre, Dinah kept this admiration alive by her conversation, for which, it was said later, she prepared beforehand. Seeing that she was listened to with delight, she gradually fell into the habit of listening to herself, took pleasure in speechifying, and ended by looking upon her friends as confidential servants in tragedy, whose business it was to give her her cues. She stored away a fine collection of phrases and ideas, partly through her reading, and partly by assimilating the thoughts of her friends, and thus became a sort of bird-organ, which began to play as soon as the hazard of conversation released the spring.

Intensely eager to learn, — let us do her that justice,

— Dinah read everything, even books of medicine, statistics, science, and jurisprudence; for she did not know what to do with her mornings after she had passed her flowers in review and given her orders to the gardener. Blest with an excellent memory, and with the genius that women have for using the apt word, she could talk on any subject with the lucidity of a carefully studied style. And so, from Cosne, La Charité, and Nevers, on the right bank, and from Léré, Vailly, Argent, Blancafort, and Aubigny, on the left bank, people came to be presented to Madame de La Baudraye, as in Switzerland they went to be presented to Madame de Staël. They who heard but once the airs of that Swiss music-box went away bewildered, and told wonderful stories of Dinah, which made the women jealous for ten leagues about.

In the admiration one arouses, or in the acting of a studied rôle, there is an indefinable sort of moral intoxication which prevents criticism from reaching the idol. An atmosphere, produced it may be by a constant nervous commotion, makes a sort of halo through which we see the world beneath us. How explain otherwise the never-failing sincerity which presides over so many fresh exhibitions of the same effects, and the constant disregard of the advice given by children, who are so embarrassing to their parents, or by husbands, who are so accustomed to their wives' innocent tricks?

M. de La Baudraye was as guileless as the man who opens his umbrella with the first drop of rain. When his wife broached the question of the slave trade, or of the amelioration of the condition of the galley-slaves, he would take his little blue cap and disappear noiselessly, with the certainty that he could go to Saint-Thibault to

look after a cargo of puncheons, and return an hour later to find the discussion almost ripe. If he had nothing to do, he would go out to walk on the Mall, whence one may enjoy the lovely panorama of the Loire valley, and would take a bath of fresh air while his wife performed a sonata of words and a duet of dialectics.

## III.

ONCE posed as a superior woman, Dinah chose to give visible pledges of her love for the most noteworthy artistic ereations; she eagerly announced her agreement with the ideas of the romantic school, including in the term art, poetry and painting, prose and statuary, furniture and the opera. She became, too, a worshipper of the Middle Ages. She made inquiries concerning curiosities that might perhaps date from the Renaissance, and made of her trusty friends so many devoted agents. She acquired thus, in the first years of her marriage, the furniture of the Rougets, at Issoudun, at their sale early in 1824. She bought some very beautiful things in the Nivernais and in the Upper Loire. At New Year's and on her birthday her friends never failed to present her with rarities.

These fancies found favor in M. de La Baudraye's eyes; he had the appearance of sacrificing a few francs to gratify his wife's taste, but in reality the man of the soil was thinking of his château of Anzy. In those days "antiques" cost much less than modern furniture. In five or six years the reception-room, the dining-room, the two salons, and the boudoir, which Dinah had arranged on the ground floor of La Baudraye, — all the rooms, even to the staircase, were stuffed with *chefs-d'œuvres* collected in the four adjacent departments. This environment, called abnormal in the neighborhood, harmonized perfectly with Dinah. All those marvellous things, which were just on the point of be-

coming the fashion once more, impressed the imagination of the people who were presented to her; they expected something unusual, and they found their expectation more than fulfilled when they saw, through a whole world of flowers, those catacombs of antique objects arranged as in the establishment of the late du Sommerard, that Old Mortality of furniture! Moreover, those treasures were like so many springs, which, during a discussion, gave forth a constant flow of speeches on Jean Goujon, Michael Columb, Germain Pilon, Boulle, Van Huysium, Boucher, the great Berrichon painter, Clodion, the sculptor in wood, the Venetian veneers, Brustolone, the Italian tenor, the Michael Angelo of the green oak; on the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, the enamels of Bernard Palissy, and Petitot, the engravings of Albrecht Dürer (she pronounced it *Dur*), illuminated parchments, the brilliant, ornate, pure Gothic — until the old men were overwhelmed and the young men carried away with enthusiasm.

Impelled by the desire to rouse Sancerre to life, Madame de La Baudraye tried to form what she called a literary society there. The president of the court, M. Boirouge, who happened at this time to have on his hands a house with a garden belonging to the Popinot-Chandier estate, favored the creation of the society aforesaid. The crafty magistrate agreed beforehand with Madame de La Baudraye about the by-laws; he consented to be one of the founders of the society, and he leased his house to it for fifteen years. In the second year they began to play dominoes and billiards and bouillotte there, and to drink hot sugared wine, punch, and liqueurs. They had dainty little suppers there, and



gave masked balls during the Carnival. By way of literature they read the newspapers, and talked politics and business. M. de La Baudraye was a regular attendant — on his wife's account, he said jocosely.

This result distressed the superior woman beyond words; she despaired of Sancerre, and thenceforth concentrated in her salon all the brains of the district. Nevertheless, despite the good will of MM. de Chargebœuf, Gravier, and de Clagny, of Abbé Duret, the first and second deputy-procureurs, a young physician, and a young substitute magistrate, all blind admirers of Dinah, there were times when, weary of the struggle, they allowed themselves to wander into the domain of the harmless trivialities which form the common basis of the conversations of all the world. M. Gravier called this "passing from the serious to the agreeable." Abbé Duret's whist offered a useful digression from the quasi-monologues of the divinity of the place. The three rivals, exhausted by keeping their minds intent upon "discussions of the most exalted order," — for so they described their conversations, — but not daring to betray the slightest satiety, would sometimes turn with a sly expression to the old priest.

"Monsieur le curé is dying for his little game," they would say.

The clever curé would lend himself gracefully to the hypocrisy of his confederates; he would resist, saying:

"We should lose too much by not listening to our fair prophetess!"

Thus he stimulated Dinah's generosity, and she always ended by taking pity on her poor curé. This bold manœuvre, devised by the sub-prefect, was performed so astutely that Dinah never suspected the escape of her

galley-slaves to the open fields of the card-table: they left her the young substitute or the doctor to torture.

A young landed proprietor, the dandy of Sancerre, forfeited Dinah's good graces by an imprudent demonstration. Having solicited the honor of admission to her circle, flattering himself that he would carry away its prize flower from the constituted authorities who were cultivating it, he had the misfortune to yawn in the course of an interpretation that Dinah condescended to give him — for the fourth time, it is true — of Herr Kant's philosophy. M. de la Thaumassière, the grandson of the historian of Berri, was looked upon as a person completely bereft of soul and intelligence.

The three titular lovers submitted to these unreasonable outlays of wit and attention in the hope of the sweetest of triumphs when Dinah should become humanized; for no one of them had the audacity to suppose that she would lose her conjugal innocence before she should have lost her illusions. In 1826, when Dinah found herself encompassed about with homage, she reached her twentieth year, and Abbé Duret kept her in a sort of Catholic fervor; her adorers therefore contented themselves with loading her with petty attentions and services, happy to be taken for the loyal knights of that enthroned queen by the guests who passed an evening or two at La Baudraye.

“Madame de La Baudraye is a fruit that we must allow to ripen.” Such was the opinion of M. Gravier, who bided his time.

As for the magistrate, he wrote four-page letters, to which Dinah replied by soothing words as she walked about her bowling-green after dinner, leaning on her adorer's arm.

Guarded by these three passions, Madame de La Baudraye, attended, moreover, by her devout mother, avoided all the misfortunes of calumny. It was so evident in Sancerre that none of the three men would ever leave one of their number alone with Madame de La Baudraye, that their jealousy was as entertaining as a play.

From the Porte César to Saint-Thibault there is a road much shorter than that by the Grand Ramparts, of the sort which in the mountainous country is called a *coursière*, but which is known at Sancerre as the "Break-neck." As this last name denotes, it is a path cut on the steepest side of the mountain, strewn with rocks and enclosed by the hedges of the vinyards. By taking the Break-neck one shortens the journey from Sancerre to La Baudraye. The women, jealous of the Sappho of Saint-Satur, walked on the Mall to gaze at that Longchamp of the local dignitaries, whom they often halted, engaging, now the sub-prefect, now the procureur du roi, in conversation; whereupon those worthies would display symptoms of visible impatience or impertinent absent-mindedness. As the turrets of La Baudraye are visible from the Mall, more than one young man used to go thither to contemplate Dinah's abode, envying the privilege of the ten or twelve habitués who passed the evening with the Queen of the Sancerrois.

M. de La Baudraye soon observed the advantage which his title of husband gave him over his wife's adorers, and he made use of it with the utmost freedom. He obtained abatements of taxes, and won two petty lawsuits. In all his litigation he hinted darkly at the authority of the procureur du roi in such wise that no

one cared to contest his claims, and he was hard to deal with and litigious in business affairs, like all dwarfs, but always with a show of mildness.

Nevertheless the more Madame de La Baudraye's innocence made itself manifest, the less possible her situation appeared in the inquisitive eyes of the women. Often, in the salon of Madame Boirouge, the president's wife, the ladies of a certain age discussed during a whole evening — among themselves, be it understood — the La Baudraye household. They all foresaw one of those mysteries the secret of which arouses the keenest interest in women who know what life is. In fact, there was being enacted at La Baudraye one of those long, monotonous marital tragedies which would remain forever unknown, were it not that the greedy scalpel of the nineteenth century, impelled by the craving for something new, has a way of searching the most secret corners of the heart, or, if you prefer, those which the decency of earlier centuries had respected. And this domestic drama sufficiently accounts for Dinah's virtue during the first years of her married life.

A girl whose success at the Chamarolles boarding-school had had pride for its mainspring, whose first scheming had been rewarded by a first victory, was not likely to stop on so promising a road. However insignificant M. de La Baudraye might appear, as a *parti* he was beyond Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer's wildest hopes. What could be the secret purpose of that vine-grower in marrying, at forty-four, a girl of seventeen, and what advantages could his wife derive from him? Such was the first text of Dinah's meditations.

The little man constantly misled his wife's observation. For instance, at the outset, he allowed her to take

the two valuable acres which were thrown away in laying out the grounds of La Baudraye, and he gave almost generously the seven or eight thousand francs required for the interior alterations directed by Dinah, who was enabled to buy the Rouget furniture at Issoudun, and to undertake her scheme of Middle Age, Louis XIV, and Pompadour decoration. So that the young bride found it hard to believe that M. de La Baudraye was a miser, as he was said to be; or she might have thought that she had acquired some ascendancy over him.

This misconception lasted eighteen months. After M. de La Baudraye's second journey to Paris, Dinah detected in him the polar frigidity characteristic of the provincial miser in everything that has to do with money. On her first request for funds she played the most charming of those comedies the secret of which is derived from Eve; but the little man informed her shortly that he gave her two hundred francs a month for her personal expenses, that he paid Madame Piédefer an annuity of twelve hundred francs, so that the three thousand francs of her dowry were exceeded to the amount of six hundred francs a year.

"I say nothing of our household expenses," he said in conclusion; "I allow you to give your friends cakes and tea in the evening, for you must amuse yourself. But, whereas I did n't spend fifteen hundred francs a year before I was married, I am spending six thousand to-day, including taxes and repairs, and that's altogether too much considering the nature of our property. A vine-grower is never sure of anything but his outgo, — cultivation, taxes, casks, — while the income is at the mercy of a hot sun or a frost. The small landowners,

like us, whose incomes are far from being certain, have to figure on the minimum, for they have no way to make up for an excess of outlay or for a loss. What would become of us if a wine-dealer should fail? And so, to my mind, notes to collect are like cabbage-leaves. To live as we do, we must therefore always have a year's outlay to the good, and count on only two-thirds of our income."

Any sort of resistance is enough to make a woman long to overcome it, and Dinah hurled herself against a soul of bronze padded with the mildest manners. She tried to arouse apprehension and jealousy in the little man, but she found him fortified by the most insolent confidence. He left Dinah, to go to Paris, with the assurance that Medor would have had of the fidelity of Angélique. When she assumed a cold and disdainful attitude, in order to wound the dwarf to the quick by the contempt that courtiers affect for their patrons, and that acts upon them with the precision of the screw of a wine-press, M. de La Baudraye gazed at his wife with eyes as expressionless as those of a cat who, in the presence of a domestic broil, waits until she is threatened with a blow before quitting her place. The suggestion of indefinable inquietude which pierced through that mute indifference almost terrified the young woman of twenty. At first she did not comprehend the selfish tranquillity of that man, in appearance not unlike a cracked pot, who had adjusted all the acts of his life with the unerring precision that clock-makers impart to their pendulums. Thus the good man constantly eluded his wife; she always fought ten feet above his head.

It is easier to understand than to describe the fits of rage to which Dinah gave way when she found that she

was doomed never to leave La Baudraye or Sancerre, she who had dreamed of managing the fortune and guiding the actions of that dwarf whom from the beginning she, a giant, had obeyed, the better to command him. In the hope of appearing some day on the great stage of Paris, she accepted the commonplace incense of her knights of honor; she was determined to cause M. de La Baudraye's name to come forth victorious from the ballot-box, for she believed him to be ambitious when she found, on his return from each of his three journeys to Paris, that he had climbed one more rung of the social ladder. But when she questioned that man's heart, it was as if she struck upon marble! The ex-collector, the ex-referendary, the master of requests, the officer of the Legion of Honor, the royal commissioner, was a mole intent upon digging his underground passages about his vineyard! What lamentations were poured into the hearts of the procureur du roi, the sub-prefect, and even M. Gravier, all of whom became the more attached to the sublime victim; for — like all women, indeed — she took care not to mention her projects; and — like all women, again — finding herself in no condition to speculate, she cried shame on speculation.

Buffeted by these domestic tempests, Dinah arrived, in a state of indecision, at the year 1827, toward the close of which came, like a thunderclap, the news of the purchase of the estate of Anzy by the Baron de La Baudraye. Thereupon the little old fellow yielded to an impulse of vainglorious joy which changed his wife's ideas for a few months; she had visions of something indefinably great in his character when she learned that he was soliciting the creation of a *majorat*.

In his triumph the baron cried:—

“Dinah, you ’ll be a countess some day!”

Thereupon there took place, between the husband and wife, one of those reconciliations which do not last, and which must have been no less wearisome than humiliating to a woman whose visible superiorities were false and whose hidden superiorities were genuine. This strange contradiction is more frequent than one thinks. Dinah, who made herself ridiculous by the vagaries of her mind, was really great in respect to the qualities of her heart; but circumstances did not bring those rare qualities into the light, while life in the provinces depreciated from day to day the small change of her wit. By a contrary phenomenon, M. de La Baudraye, who was without heart or wit or strength, was destined some day to appear to be a man of strong character, simply by dint of following quietly a plan of action from which his infirmity would not allow him to depart.



## IV.

SUCH was the first phase in the life of these two; it lasted six years, in the course of which Dinah became, alas! a provincial. In Paris there are several varieties of women: there are the duchess and the financier's wife, the ambassadress and the Consul's wife, the wife of the minister who is and the wife of the minister who was; there is the *comme-il-faut* woman of the right bank and she of the left bank of the Seine; but in the provinces there is but one sort of woman, and that poor creature is the provincial woman. This statement points to one of the great blemishes of our modern society. For we must not forget that the France of the nineteenth century is divided into two great divisions, Paris and the provinces; the provinces jealous of Paris, Paris never giving a thought to the provinces except to ask them for money. Formerly Paris was the first provincial city; the court overtopped the city. Now Paris represents the court, the provinces the city.

However talented, however beautiful, however strong of character a girl born in any department whatsoever may be at the outset, if, like Dinah Piédefer, she marries in the provinces and remains there, she soon becomes a provincial. Despite her most wisely formed plans, the commonplaces of life, the provincial insignificance of ideas, carelessness in manner of dress and sedulous culture of vulgarity, invade the sublime being concealed within that fresh envelope, and it is all over — the lovely plant withers. How could it be otherwise?

From their earliest years the young girls in the provinces see nobody but provincials about them; they conceive nothing better, they have to choose among a parcel of medioerities. Provincial fathers always marry their daughters to provincial husbands; it never occurs to any one to cross breeds, and the intelligence is necessarily deadened; so that in many towns it has become as rare as the blood is thin. Man becomes stunted there in both respects, for the ill-omened idea of suitability of fortune is of the first weight in all matrimonial bargains. Men of talent, artists, superior men, every rooster with feathers, flies away to Paris.

Inferior as a woman, the provincial is inferior also through her husband. Enjoy life if you can with these two crushing thoughts! But the marital inferiority and the racial inferiority of the woman of the provinces are intensified by a third and most distressing sort of inferiority which helps to make that figure angular and forbidding, to contract it, to shrivel it, to give it the appearance of old age before its time.

One of the most soothing flatteries that women apply to themselves is the assurance that they will count for something in the life of a man of superior worth, chosen by them with full knowledge, as if to take their revenge for a marriage in which their tastes were not consulted. Now, in the provinces, while there are no superior men among the husbands, there are still fewer among the bachelors. So that, when the woman of the provinces makes her little mistake, she is always enamoured of some supposititious Apollo or dandy born in the neighborhood, some youth who wears gloves and is supposed to know how to ride; but in her heart she

knows that her fancy is in pursuit of a mere commonplace, more or less well dressed.

Dinah was saved from this danger by the idea that people had given her of her own superior qualities. But even if she had not been as well protected as she was, during the early years of her marriage, by her mother, whose presence was an annoyance to her only when it was to her interest to send her away, she would have been protected by her pride and by the lofty destiny to which she aspired. Flattered as she was to find herself surrounded by admirers, she could see no lover among them. No man realized the poetic ideal that she had sketched long before in conjunction with Anna Grossetête.

When, overcome by the involuntary temptations that homage awoke within her, she said to herself: "Whom should I choose if it were absolutely necessary to give myself to some one?" she was conscious of a preference for M. de Chargebœuf, a gentleman of good family, whose person and manners were agreeable to her, but who disgusted her by his dull wit, his egotism, and his ambition, which was limited to a prefecture and a suitable marriage. At the first hint from his family, who feared that he would ruin his life for a love-affair, the viscount had already left without remorse, in his first sub-prefecture, a woman whom he adored.

On the other hand, the person of M. de Clagny, the only one of the three whose mind spoke to Dinah's, whose ambition had love for its guiding principle, and who knew how to love, was immeasurably repugnant to her. When she was sentenced to remain six years more at La Baudraye, she was on the point of accepting M. de Chargebœuf's attentions; but he was made a

prefect and left the district. To the great satisfaction of the procureur du roi, the new sub-prefect was a married man whose wife became intimate with Dinah. M. de Clagny had no other competition to meet than that of M. Gravier. Now, M. Gravier was of the type of bachelors of forty whom women use and make sport of; whose hopes are shrewdly and remorselessly kept alive by them, just as one takes good care of a beast of burden.

In six years, among all the men who were presented to her, from twenty leagues about, there was not one at the sight of whom Dinah felt the interior flutter caused by beauty, by belief in happiness to come, by contact with a superior mind, or by the presentiment of a passion of any sort, even an unhappy one.

Thus none of Dinah's most precious faculties had any chance to develop; she devoured the wounds inflicted on her pride by its constant humiliation by her husband, who walked about so placidly, like a supernumerary, on the stage of her life. Forced to bury the treasures of her love, she showed only her outer shell to her friends. At times she shook herself and tried to form a determined resolution, but she was held in leash by the question of money. And so, by slow degrees, and despite the protests of her ambition, despite the mournful recriminations of her mind, she underwent the provincial transformation we have described. Each day carried away a fragment of her early resolutions. She had written out for herself a programme of duties relating to the toilet, which she abandoned by degrees. Although at first she followed the moves and kept posted as to the new fantasies of fashion, she was

obliged to keep her purchases within the amount of her allowance. Instead of four hats, six caps, and six gowns, she contented herself with one gown a season. People thought her so pretty in a certain hat that she wore it the next year.

And so it was with everything. Often the artist sacrificed the demands of her toilet to the longing for a piece of Gothic furniture. By the seventh year she had reached the point of finding it convenient to have her morning gowns made under her own eyes by the most skilful dressmaker in the neighborhood; and her mother, her husband, and her friends thought her lovely in those economical costumes wherein, according to her custom, her tastes were clearly manifested. People copied her ideas!

As she had no standard of comparison before her eyes, Dinah fell into the snares laid for provincials. If a Parisian woman's hips are not graceful enough in their outline, her inventive mind and the desire to please enable her to devise some heroic remedy; if she has some defect, a hint of ugliness, a blemish of any sort, she is capable of transforming it into a charm; such things are often seen. But with the woman of the province, never! If she is too short, if her *embonpoint* is in the wrong place, why, she makes the best of it, and her adorers, on pain of being convicted of not loving her, must needs take her as she is, whereas the Parisian always wants to be taken for what she is not. Hence the grotesque figures, the unblushing thinness, the absurd stoutness, the ungraceful lines artlessly displayed, to which a whole town is accustomed, and which cause surprise when a woman from the provinces appears in Paris or in the presence of Parisians.

Dinah, whose figure was slender, displayed her slenderness beyond measure, and did not know when she became ridiculous, when, ennui having reduced her flesh, she seemed to be simply a skeleton in clothes. Her friends, seeing her every day, did not notice the gradual changes in her personal appearance. This phenomenon is one of the natural results of life in the provinces. Despite marriage, a young woman retains her beauty for some time, and the town is proud of her; but every one sees her every day, and when people see one another every day, observation relaxes. If, like Madame de La Baudraye, she loses a little of her brilliancy, people hardly notice it. More than that — a slight flush is understood, it arouses interest. A little negligence is adored. Moreover, the face is so carefully studied, so thoroughly understood, that the slight changes are barely observed, and perhaps we end by looking on them as points of beauty.

When Dinah ceased to renew her wardrobe every season, she seemed to have made a concession to the philosophy of the province. It is the same with speech, with ways of talking and thinking, as with sentiment: the mind grows rusty as well as the body, if it is not refurbished in the Parisian milieu; but the points wherein provincial life betrays itself most completely are the gesture, the gait, the movements, which lose the agility that Paris constantly imparts. The woman of the province is accustomed to walk, to move, in a sphere where there are no sudden changes, no transitions; she has nothing to avoid; she goes forward like the new recruits in Paris, not suspecting that there are obstacles; for there are none for her, in her province, where she is known, where she is always in her place, and

where everybody gives way to her. Thus she loses the charm of the unexpected.

Lastly, have you ever observed the strange phenomenon of the reaction produced in man by life in common? Human beings, by virtue of the ineradicable sense of apish imitation, incline to model themselves upon one another. Insensibly we adopt one another's gestures, tricks of speech, attitudes, manners, features. In six years Dinah pitched herself on the key of her circle of intimates. While adopting M. de Clagny's ideas, she adopted the tone of his voice; unconsciously she copied masculine manners as she saw none but men. She fancied that she guaranteed herself against all their absurdities by making sport of them; but, as often happens with mockers of a certain type, some traces of that mockery remained in her nature. A Parisian woman has so many models of good taste that in her we observe the contrary phenomenon. Thus the women of Paris await the hour and moment to display their charms; whereas Madame de La Baudraye, being accustomed to put herself in evidence, acquired an indefinable air, — a something theatrical and overbearing, as of a prima donna going on the stage, — which mocking smiles would soon have cured in Paris.

When she had acquired her full store of absurdities, and, being misled by her fascinated adorers, deemed herself to have taken on new charms, she had a terrible moment of awakening, which was like an avalanche falling down a mountain side. In one short day Dinah was driven to despair by a most heartrending comparison.

In 1828, after M. de Chargebœuf's departure, she was excited by anticipation of a little pleasure; she was

to see the Baronne de Fontaine once more. On her father's death Anna's husband, having become director-general in the Department of Finance, took advantage of a leave of absence to take his wife to Italy during her period of mourning. Anna determined to stop a day at Saneerre to see her childhood friend. This interview was distressingly painful. Anna, who was much less beautiful than Dinah at the Chamarolles boarding-school, appeared a thousand times lovelier as Baronne de Fontaine, despite her fatigue and her travelling costume, than the Baronne de La Baudraye. She alighted from a dainty travelling eoupé, laden with her boxes; she had with her a lady's maid, whose elegance terrified Dinah. All the points of difference which distinguish the Parisian from the provincial were visible enough to Dinah's intelligent eyes, and she saw herself as she appeared to her friend, who found her unrecognizable.

Anna spent six thousand francs a year on herself — the total outlay of M. de La Baudraye's household. In twenty-four hours the two friends exchanged many confidences, and the Parisian, finding that she overshadowed the phoenix of the boarding-school, showered upon her provincial friend, while explaining certain things to her, kindnesses and attentions of a sort that made Dinah's wounds still deeper; for she saw that the Parisian's superiority was all on the surface, while her own was forever buried.

After Anna had left her, Madame de La Baudraye, then twenty-two years old, fell into bottomless despair.

"What's the matter?" M. de Claguy inquired, seeing how downcast she was.

"Anna," she replied, "was learning to live while I learned to suffer."



In truth there was being played in Madame de La Baudraye's household a tragi-comedy in line with her struggles concerning money and with her successive transformations. M. de Clagny, alone, save Abbé Duret, had knowledge of it, when Dinah, from vanity, perhaps, or because she had nothing else to do, disclosed to him the secret of her anonymous renown.

Although the alliance of verse and prose is a veritable monstrosity in French literature, there are exceptions to this rule. This narrative will present one of those violations of the charter of the short story which may be looked for in these studies; for, in order to give the reader a glimpse of the secret conflicts which may explain Dinah's action without absolving her, it is necessary to analyze a certain poem, the fruit of her profound despair.

Driven to the limit of her patience and resignation by the Vicomte de Chargebœuf's departure, Dinah followed the advice of good Abbé Duret, who told her to translate her evil thoughts into poetry. This may account for certain poets that we know of.

It will be with you as with all those who write epitaphs or elegies upon friends they have lost: grief becomes calm in the heart as the alexandrines simmer and boil in the head.

This extraordinary poem caused a revolution in the departments of the Allier, the Nièvre, and the Cher, which were overjoyed to possess a poet capable of holding her own with the celebrities of Paris. "Paquita of Seville," by "Jan Diaz," was published in the "Écho du Morvan," a sort of review which struggled for eighteen months against provincial indifference. Some clever folk at Nevers declared that Jan Diaz had intended to make fun of the youthful school which was then putting

forth eccentric poems, full of vigor and metaphor, of the sort in which great effects are obtained by doing violence to the muse on the pretext of introducing German, English, and Roman fancies.

The poem began with this song:—

“ ‘ Ah! if your eyes fair Spain had seen,  
Her perfume-laden valleys green,  
Her torrid days and nights sublime,  
Ye sad-faced maids of Neustria  
Would ne'er again have aught to say  
Of love and fatherland and clime.

“ ‘ For there are men of other mould  
Than in this land, so drear and cold!  
The ardent Andalusian maid,  
On the greensward, with grace bedight,  
Dances from morn till dewy night,  
Her feet in satin slippers clad.

“ ‘ You'd blush for very shame, one fancies,  
At thought of your ungraceful dances,  
And of your hideous carnival,  
When every cheek turns blue with cold,  
And through the mire the maskers bold  
Go leaping, clad in skins withal.’

“ To pale-faced maidens, in a hovel dire,  
Paquita sang these verses o'er and o'er,  
In Rouen grim, where many a slender spire  
Defies with gnashing teeth the tempest's roar.  
In Rouen, ugly, noisy, passion-ridden — ”

A grandiloquent description of Rouen, where Dinah had never been, written with that affected brutality which later characterized so many Juvenalesque poems, contrasted the life of manufacturing cities with the indolent life of Spain, the love of the sky and of natural beauty with the worship of machinery — in a word, poetry with

speculation. And Jan Diaz accounted for Paquita's horror of Normandy thus:—

“ In lovely Seville, where blue are the heavens,  
And evenings ambrosial, she first saw the light;  
A slip of a girl, she reigned as a queen there,  
And all burned with love of her, squire and knight.

“ Toreadors three welcomed death in her service;  
For this was the prize to the conqueror given:  
A kiss from the lips of the beauteous maiden,  
Whom all Seville craved as a foretaste of Heaven.”

The portrait of the young Spanish woman has served since then for so many courtesans in so many alleged poems, that it would be tedious to repeat here the hundred or more verses in which it is contained. But to judge of the audacious flights in which Dinah allowed herself to indulge, it is sufficient to give the conclusion of the poem. According to the fervent Madame de La Baudraye, Paquita was so perfectly constituted for love that she could hardly find a cavalier worthy of her; for —

“ In her fiery passion,  
In turn they had all met defeat,  
When she, at love's festival, wild with desire,  
Had no more than taken her seat.

But alas! from gay Seville in time she departed,  
Its woods and its orange groves fair,  
For a soldier, a Norman, who kindled her passion,  
And took her away to his lair.

She shed not a tear for her dear Andalusia,  
For he was her joy and her all!

But one day came the order; he started for Russia,  
In the train of the great Emperor.”

Nothing could be more refined than the description of the parting of the Spaniard and the Norman captain of artillery, who, in the transports of a passion interpreted with a depth of feeling worthy of Byron, exacted from Paquita a promise of absolute fidelity, in the cathedral of Rouen, at the altar of the Virgin,

“ Who, though she’s a virgin, ’s a woman, and never forgives  
Those false to love’s oaths.”

A large part of the poem was devoted to depicting the sufferings of Paquita, alone in Rouen, while she awaited the close of the campaign; she writhed in agony at her windows when she saw happy couples passing, she restrained the love in her heart with an energy that consumed her, she lived on narcotics, she wasted her strength in dreams!

“ She nearly died, but she was true,  
And when her soldier came,  
At the year’s close, he found the maid  
Still worthy of his flame,  
But he, by Russia’s frigid clime  
Congealed to the very marrow,  
Greeted his passion-ridden friend  
But coldly — ”

The poem was written for this final situation, which was treated with a vigor and boldness that confirmed Abbé Duret’s prophecy a little too completely. Paquita, recognizing the bound beyond which love cannot go, did not, like Heloïse and Julie, cast herself into the infinite, the ideal; no, she chose, what is perhaps distressingly natural, the path of vice, but without grandeur, for lack of the elements thereof; for it is difficult to find in Rouen men passionate enough to place a

Paquita in surroundings of luxury and refinement. This shocking reality, heightened by a sombre measure, dictated some of these pages, of which modern poetry makes too free a use, and which slightly resemble what painters call *écorchés* — subjects represented without the skin.

With a truly philosophic touch the poet, after describing the infamous den in which the Andalusian ended her life, returned to the opening song: —

“Paquita now is old and wrinkled,  
And ’t was she who sang: —

‘ Ah! if your eyes fair Spain had seen  
Her perfume-laden valleys green,’” etc.

The sombre energy displayed in this poem of about six hundred lines, which, if we may be allowed to borrow the term from the painting art, formed a vigorous set-off, with two refrains, like that which begins and ends the work — that virile expression of an unspeakable sorrow, terrified the woman whom three departments admired under the black coat of anonymity. While enjoying the intoxicating pleasure of success, Dinah dreaded the malice of the province, where more women than one, in case of the slightest indiscretion, would insist upon seeing a connection between Paquita and the author. Then came reflection. Dinah quivered with shame at the thought that she had exploited some of her own sorrows.

“Don’t do anything more,” said Abbé Duret; “you would no longer be a woman, you would be a poet.”

They sought Jan Diaz at Moulins, at Nevers, at Bourges; but Dinah was impenetrable. In order not to leave a wholly unfavorable impression, in case that

some fatal accident should reveal her name, she wrote a lovely little poem in two cantos on "The Mass by the Oak," founded on this Nivernais tradition. One day the people of Nevers and Saint-Saulge, being at war, went out at dawn to fight a decisive battle, and met in the forest of Faye. Suddenly a priest stood forth between the two forces, from beneath an oak, and his attitude, in the rays of the rising sun, had a something so impressive that both sides, obeying his command, heard Mass which was said under the oak; and, listening to the voice of the Gospel, they became reconciled. An oak is still pointed out in the forest of Faye as the scene of the incident. This poem, which was infinitely superior to "Paquita of Seville," had much less success.

After this twofold trial, when Madame de La Baudraye knew that she was a poet, her brow and her eyes were lightened by sudden flashes which made her more beautiful than before. She cast her eyes upon Paris, she was ambitious of renown, and then she fell back into her hole at La Baudraye, into her daily squabbles with her husband, into her circle of intimates, where everybody's character and purposes and speeches were too well known not to have become wearisome at last. If she found in literary work a distraction from her misfortunes, if, in the emptiness of her life, poetry made a loud reverberation, if she found employment for her powers, on the other hand literature caused her to conceive an intense hatred of the heavy dun atmosphere of the province.

When, after the Revolution of 1830, the fame of George Sand cast its beams upon Berri, many towns envied La Châtre the privilege of being the birthplace

of a rival to Madame de Staël and Camille Maupin and were much inclined to do honor to the most insignificant feminine talents. So that there appeared many tenth muses in France, — young girls or young women led away from a placid life by a false semblance of glory. Strange doctrines were announced concerning the part that women were destined to play in society. Although the common sense that forms the basis of intelligence in France was not perverted thereby, women were absolved for expressing ideas and professing sentiments which they would not have admitted a few years earlier.

M. de Clagny took advantage of that brief period of license to collect the works of Jan Diaz in a small eighteenmo volume, which was printed by Desrosiers at Moulins. He composed concerning that young author, snatched away so prematurely from the world of letters, a notice which seemed very clever to those who knew the key to the riddle, but which had not the merit of novelty at that time. Such jests, excellent as they are while the *incognito* is preserved, become a little flat later, when the author makes himself known. But, so far as that is concerned, the notice concerning Jan Diaz, son of a Spanish prisoner, and born at Bourges about 1807, is likely some day to deceive the compilers of "Universal Biographies." Nothing is lacking: neither the names of the professors at the Collège de Bourges, nor those of the deceased poet's fellow-pupils — such as Lousteau, Bianchon, and other illustrious natives of Berri, who were supposed to have known him as a dreamy, melancholy youth, manifesting a precocious inclination to poetry.

An elegy entitled "Sadness," written at the college, the two poems, "Paquita of Seville" and "The Mass

by the Oak," three sonnets, a description of the cathedral of Bourges and of the house of Jacques Cœur, and lastly a tale entitled "Carola," said to be the work upon which he was engaged when surprised by death, formed the literary luggage of the defunct, whose last moments, oppressed by poverty and despair, were apt to wring the hearts of the sensitive people of the Nièvre, the Bourbonnais, the Cher, and the Morvan, where he had breathed his last, near Château-Chinon, unknown to all, even to her he loved!

Of this little yellow-covered volume two hundred copies were printed, of which a hundred and fifty were sold: say fifty per department. This average of tender-hearted and poetic souls in three departments of France is well adapted to revive the enthusiasm of authors concerning the *furia francese*, which in our day is exhibited in money matters much more than in books.

M. de Clagny's generosity being duly rewarded, for he had signed the notice, Dinah kept seven or eight copies wrapped in those exotic journals which reviewed the publication. Twenty copies sent to Parisian newspapers were lost in the abyss of the editorial offices. Nathan, who was taken in, as were several Berrichons, wrote an article on the great man in which he accredited him with all the qualities which we bestow on those who are dead and buried. Lousteau, rendered prudent by his schoolfellows, who had no recollection of Jan Diaz, awaited news from Sancerre, and learned that Jan Diaz was the pseudonym of a woman.

In the arrondissement of Sancerre there was a growing enthusiasm for Madame de La Baudraye, in whom people insisted upon seeing the future rival of George Sand. From Sancerre to Bourges, they loudly praised



and boasted of the poem, which at any other time would certainly have been tabooed. The provincial public, like all French publics perhaps, seldom adopts the hobby of the King of the French — the *juste milieu*; it either exalts you to the skies or hurls you into the mire.

At this time good old Abbé Duret, Madame de La Baudraye's counsellor, had died; otherwise he would have prevented her from delivering herself to the public. But three years of hard work and of *incognito* weighed heavily on Dinah's heart, and she substituted the hurly-burly of fame for all her disappointed ambitions. Poetry and the visions of celebrity, which had soothed her griefs to sleep after her interview with Anna Grossetête, ceased, after 1830, to satisfy the longing for action of that diseased heart. Abbé Duret, who talked of the world when the voice of religion was powerless, — Abbé Duret, who understood Dinah, who drew for her the picture of a blissful future by assuring her that God would fully recompense all her nobly endured sufferings, — that lovable old man could no longer interpose between his lovely penitent whom he called his daughter and the taking of a false step. The wise old priest had tried more than once to enlighten Dinah touching the character of M. de La Baudraye, warning her that he knew how to hate. But women are not inclined to admit the existence of any sort of force in weak creatures, and hatred is too constantly in action not to be a very living force. Finding her husband profoundly indifferent in love, Dinah denied him the power to hate.

“Do not confuse hatred and vengeance,” the abbé said to her; “they are two quite distinct sentiments; one is the sentiment of small minds, the other is the effect of a law which great minds obey. God avenges

himself, but does not hate. Hatred is the vice of narrow-minded men; they feel it with all their petty instincts, they make it the pretext of their degrading tyranny. So beware of hurting Monsieur de La Baudraye's feelings; he would forgive you a sin, for he would find his advantage in it; but he would be mildly implacable if you should wound him in the spot where Monsieur Milaud of Nevers struck him so brutally, and then life would become impossible for you."

Now, at the moment that the Nivernais, the Sancerrois, the Morvan, and Berri were swollen with pride in Madame de La Baudraye and were singing her praises under the name of Jan Diaz, little La Baudraye received a mortal blow from that renown. He alone knew the secrets hidden in the poem of "Paquita of Seville." When anybody mentioned that heartrending work, every one said of Dinah: "Poor woman! poor woman!" The women were delighted to be able to pity her who had so tyrannized over them, and Dinah never appeared greater than at that moment in the eyes of the province. The little old man, who had grown yellower, more wrinkled, more weakly than ever, gave no sign; but Dinah sometimes surprised in his eyes a venomous glare which gave the lie to his redoubled courtesy and gentleness of demeanor toward her. She ended by divining what she took to be a simple domestic quarrel; but when she attempted to come to an understanding with her insect, as M. Gravier called him, she found in him the coldness, the hardness, the impassiveness of steel. She lost her head; she reproached him with the life she had led for eleven years; she made, purposely, what women call a scene. But little La Baudraye sat in an armchair, with his eyes closed, and listened without losing his

tranquillity. And the dwarf had the better of his wife, as always. Dinah realized that she had done wrong to write; she promised never to make another verse, and she kept her word. Hence desolation throughout the Sancerrois.

“Why does n’t Madame de La Baudraye write any more poetry?” everybody asked.

At this period she had ceased to have enemies; her house overflowed with visitors, and not a week passed without new introductions. The wife of the president of the court, a haughty bourgeoisie, born Popinot-Chandier, had told her son, a young man of twenty-two, to pay his court at La Baudraye, and she flattered herself that she should see her Gatien high in favor with that superior woman. The phrase “superior woman” had replaced the grotesque title, Sappho of Saint-Satur. The president’s wife, who had led the opposition to Dinah for nine years, was so overjoyed to have her son accepted as a friend that she spoke immeasurably well of the Muse of Sancerre.

“After all,” she cried, in reply to a diatribe from Madame de Clagny, who entertained a deadly hatred for her husband’s alleged mistress, “she is the most beautiful and the cleverest woman in all Berri.”

After ploughing through so many thickets, after starting on a thousand different roads, after dreaming of love in all its splendor, after sighing for the sufferings of the most dismal dramas, hoping to find their gloomy pleasures cheaply bought, so wearisome was the monotony of her life, Dinah fell one day into the pit she had sworn to avoid. Seeing that M. de Clagny constantly sacrificed himself, and refused an appointment as *avocat-général* at Paris, whither his family urged him

to go, she said to herself: "He loves me!" She conquered her repugnance and seemed disposed to reward such constancy. It was to this generous impulse of hers that Sancerre owed the coalition which declared itself in favor of M. de Clagny at the elections. Madame de La Baudraye had dreamed of following the Deputy from Sancerre to Paris. But, despite the most solemn promises, the hundred and fifty votes pledged to the adorer of the fair Dinah, whose purpose was to invest that defender of the widow and orphan with the *simarre* of Keeper of the Seals, changed to an *imposing minority* of fifty votes. The jealousy of President Boirouge, the hatred of M. Gravier, who believed that the candidate had prevailed in Dinah's heart, were worked upon by a young sub-prefect, whom, for this feat, the doctrinaires caused to be appointed prefect.

"I shall never be consoled," he said to one of his friends on leaving Sancerre, "for my failure to make myself agreeable to Madame de La Baudraye; my triumph would have been complete."

This life so agitated within presented to all outward appearance a tranquil household — two persons ill-assorted, but resigned; an effect of order and decency — the falsehood which society demands, but which weighed upon Dinah like an unendurable harness. Why did she choose to lay aside her mask after wearing it twelve years? Whence came that lassitude, when every day strengthened her hope of widowhood? If the reader has followed all the phases of her life, he will understand clearly the various illusions in which Dinah, like many other women, had allowed herself to be ensnared. From the wish to prevail over M. de La Baudraye, she had passed to the hope of becoming a

mother. Between the early domestic discussions and the melancholy realization of her fate, a long period had elapsed. Then, when she determined to seek consolation, the consoler, M. de Chargebœuf, had gone. Thus the impulse which causes the errors of most women had hitherto been altogether lacking. Indeed, if there are some women who go straight on to a misstep, are there not many more who cling to one hope after another, and who reach the critical point only after wandering through a labyrinth of secret miseries?

Such was Dinah. She was so little inclined to fail in her duty that she did not love M. de Clagny enough to forgive his failure. Her installation at the château of Anzy, the arrangement of her collections and her curios, which acquired a new value from the superb and imposing framework which Philibert Delorme seemed to have built expressly for that museum, gave her employment for some months, and enabled her to plan one of those resolutions which surprise the public, from whom motives are hidden, but who often discover them by dint of gossip and conjectures.

The reputation of Lousteau, who was deemed a successful rake because of his liaisons with actresses, made an impression on Madame de La Baudraye. She desired to know him; she read his works, and conceived a passionate enthusiasm for him, less because of his talent, perhaps, than because of his success with women. To lure him into the country, she invented the idea that Sancerre was in honor bound to choose at the approaching election one of the two celebrities of the town. She induced Gatien Boirouge, who claimed to be a cousin of Bianchon through the Popinots, to write to the illustrious physician; then she got an old friend of the late

Madame Lousteau to kindle the feuilletonist's ambition by informing him of the avowed purpose of certain people in Sancerre to choose their deputy from among the famous men of Paris. Tired of her insignificant *entourage*, Madame de La Baudraye was at last to meet some really superior men; she could ennoble her fault with all the splendor of worldly renown.

Neither Lousteau nor Bianchon replied; perhaps they were awaiting the vacation. Bianchon, who had obtained his professor's chair the year before, after a brilliant competition, could not leave his classes.

In the month of September, in the middle of the grape-picking, the two Parisians arrived in their native province, and found it plunged in the tyrannical labor of the harvest of 1836; so that there was no manifestation of public opinion in their favor.

"We have made a miss" (*nous faisons four*), said Lousteau to his companion, in the slang of the wings.

In 1836 Lousteau, exhausted by sixteen years of struggle in Paris, worn out no less by dissipation than by poverty, hard labor, and disappointment, looked to be forty-eight, although he was only thirty-seven. Already bald, he had assumed a Byronian manner in harmony with his premature decay and with the ravines drawn on his face by abuse of champagne. He attributed the stigmata of debauchery to the trials of literary life, accusing the press of being a murderer; he gave you to understand that it devoured eminent talents in order to give value to its own indolence. He deemed it necessary to exaggerate on his native soil both his false contempt for life and his sham misanthropy. Nevertheless, his eyes still shot forth flames now and then, like a volcano supposed to be extinct; and he tried to

replace by elegance of costume all that he might lack of youthful charm in the eyes of a woman.

Horace Bianchon, decorated with the Legion of Honor, big and stout, as a popular doctor should be, had a patriarchal aspect with his long, fair hair, his swelling forehead, the frame of the toiler, and the tranquillity of the thinker. His far from poetic face was an admirable foil to his more frivolous compatriot.

These two celebrities remained unknown for a whole morning at the inn at which they had alighted, and M. de Clagny learned of their arrival only by accident. Madame de La Baudraye, in despair, sent Gatien Boirouge, who had no vineyards, to invite the two Parisians to pass a few days at the château of Anzy. For a year past Dinah had been playing the châtelaine, and passed only the winter months at La Baudraye.

M. Gravier, the procureur du roi, the president, and Gatien Boirouge entertained the two famous men at a banquet attended by the most literary persons of the town. On learning that the lovely Madame de La Baudraye was Jan Diaz, the Parisians allowed themselves to be taken to the château of Anzy for three days, in a char-à-banc driven by Gatien himself.

The young man, full of illusions, represented Madame de La Baudraye to his two companions, not only as the loveliest woman in Sancerre, as a most superior woman and quite capable of making George Sand uneasy, but also as one who would produce a profound sensation in Paris. So that the surprise of Doctor Bianchon and the jovial journalist was extreme when they saw the châtelaine on the steps of the château, dressed in a gown of thin black cashmere, with a wimple, like an amazon without a queue; for they detected immeasurable



pretension beneath that simplicity. Dinah wore a black velvet cap à la Raphael, beneath which her hair escaped in great curls. That costume set off a pretty figure, fine eyes, with beautiful lids almost withered by the tedium of the life we have described.

In Berri the strangeness of that *artistic* garb disguised the superior woman's romantic affectations. Observing the *minauderies* of their hostess, which were, so to speak, *minauderies* of the heart and the mind, the two friends exchanged a glance and assumed a deeply serious demeanor to listen to Madame de La Baudraye, who delivered a prepared allocution, thanking them for coming to break the monotony of her life. Then she conducted her friends about the bowling-green, embellished with baskets of flowers, that lay in front of the façade of Anzy.

"How is it," queried Lousteau, the mystifier, "that a woman so beautiful as you are, and who seems so superior, can remain in the provinces? How do you succeed in resisting this sort of life?"

"Ah! there it is," said the châtelaine. "One does n't resist. Profound despair or dull resignation, one or the other, there is no other choice — that is the rock on which our existence rests and on which lie inert a thousand stagnant thoughts, which, without fertilizing the soil, feed the withered flowers of our abandoned minds. Do not believe that we do not care! Heedlessness belongs to despair or to resignation. Each woman therefore devotes herself to what, according to her character, seems to her a pleasure. Some go in for preserves and washing soaps, for domestic economy, for the rural delights of the harvest or the sowing, for embroidering



fichus, for the cares of maternity, for the intrigues of a small town. Others hammer on a stationary piano, which sounds like a tin boiler at the end of the seventh year, and which ends its days, afflicted with asthma, at the château of Anzy. Some, religiously inclined, discuss the different brews of the Word of God: they compare Abbé Fritaud and Abbé Guinard. They play cards in the evening, they dance for twelve years with the same men, in the same salons, at the same seasons. This charming life is interspersed with solemn promenades on the Mall, and with formal calls between women who ask you where you buy your gowns. On the south of the intellect conversation is bounded by remarks about intrigues lying hidden at the bottom of the sleeping water of the province, on the north by contemplated marriages, on the west by jealousy, on the east by spiteful little speeches. Thus, you see," she continued, striking an attitude, "a woman has wrinkles at twenty-nine, ten years before the time fixed by Doctor Bianchon's prescriptions; she gets red-nosed, too, very quickly, and turns yellow as a quince, when it's her destiny to be yellow — we know some who turn green. When we reach that point, we desire to justify our normal condition. So we attack with our teeth, sharpened like a mule's, the awe-inspiring passions of Paris. We have here unwilling puritans, who rend the lace of coquetry and gnaw at the poesy of your Parisian beauties; who mar the happiness of their neighbors by boasting of their nuts and their musty pork, by praising to the skies the holes they live in like economical mice, and the grayish hues and monastic perfumes of our delightful Sancerre existence."

"I admire your courage, madame," said Bianchon.

“When one undergoes such miseries, one should have the wit to make virtues of them.”

Stupefied by the brilliant performance by which Dinah delivered over the province to her guests, whose sarcasms were thus anticipated, Gatién Boirouge touched Lousteau’s elbow, bestowing upon him a glance and a smile which said: “Well, did I deceive you?”

“But, madame,” said Lousteau, “you prove that we are still in Paris. I am going to rob you of that *tartine* (space-filler); it will be worth ten francs to me in my *feuilleton*.”

“O monsieur,” she replied, “distrust the women of the provinces.”

“Why, pray?” said Lousteau.

Madame de La Baudraye had the craft—quite innocent craft, to be sure—to point out to the two Parisians, between whom she proposed to choose a conqueror, the trap into which he was likely to fall, thinking that, when he should cease to see it, she would be the stronger.

“Men laugh at them when they first arrive; then, when they have forgotten the glamour of Paris, when they see the provincial woman in her own sphere, they pay court to her, were it only to pass the time. You, whom your passions have made famous, will be the object of attentions that will flatter you. Beware!” cried Dinah, with a coquettish gesture, and raising herself by these satirical reflections above the absurdities of the province and the ridicule of Lousteau. “When a poor little provincial conceives an abnormal passion for a superior being, for a Parisian lost in the provinces, she makes of it something more than a mere sentiment, she finds occupation in it, and stretches it over her whole life. There is nothing more dangerous than the attachment

of a woman of the provinces ; she compares, she studies, she reflects, she dreams, she does not abandon her dream, she thinks of the man she loves when the man she loves has ceased to think of her. Now, one of the fatalities that press heavily upon the woman of the provinces is this abrupt catastrophe of her passions, which is often observed in England. In the provinces life, being at the Indian stage of observation, compels her to walk straight along her rails, or to leave them suddenly like an engine that meets an obstruction. The strategical conflicts of passion, the coquetries which are half of the Parisian woman's life — nothing of that sort is to be found here."

"It's a fact," said Lousteau, "that there are *surprises* in the heart of a woman of the provinces, as there are in some mechanical toys."

"Oh! mon Dieu!" rejoined Dinah; "a woman has spoken to you three times during a winter, she has locked you up in her heart, unconsciously. Then comes a party in the country, a walk together, and all is said — or, if you choose, all is done. Such conduct, extraordinary in the eyes of non-observers, is in a certain sense quite natural. Instead of speaking evil of the provincial woman and thinking her depraved, a poet like yourself, or a philosopher, an observer, like Doctor Bianchon, would be able to divine the admirable unpublished poems, in short, every page of that beautiful romance the dénouement of which accrues to the profit of some lucky sub-lieutenant or some provincial great man."

"The women from the provinces whom I have seen in Paris," said Lousteau, "were, in truth, decidedly pushing."

“Bless my soul! they are inquisitive,” said the châtelaine, emphasizing the word with a little shrug.

“They are like the playgoers who attend the second performance, sure that the play won’t fail,” retorted Lousteau.

“What is the cause of your ills?” inquired Bianchon.

“Paris is the monster that causes our unhappiness,” replied the superior woman. “The disease has a circumference of seven leagues and afflicts the whole district. The provinces do not exist in themselves. Only when the nation is divided into fifty small states, can each have a physiognomy of its own; in that case a woman reflects the brilliancy of the sphere in which she reigns. This social phenomenon may still be seen, I am told, in Italy, in Switzerland, and in Germany; but in France, as in all countries with a single capital, the flattening out of manners will be the necessary consequence of centralization.”

“In your opinion, then, manners would acquire vigor and originality only through a federation of French states forming a single empire?” queried Lousteau.

“That is hardly desirable, perhaps,” said Bianchon, “for France would have too many districts still to conquer.”

“England knows nothing of this unfortunate state of affairs,” cried Dinah. “London does n’t exercise the tyranny that Paris imposes upon France, and for which French genius will eventually find a remedy; but she has something more horrible in her hypocrisy, which is a far worse disease.”

“The English aristocracy,” observed the journalist, who foresaw a Byronian *tartine* and hastened to take the floor, “has this advantage over ours that it assimilates

all kinds of superiority; it lives in its magnificent parks, it goes to London only for two months, no more nor less; it lives in the country; it thrives there and makes the country thrive."

"Yes," said Madame de La Baudraye, "London is the capital of shops and speculation; the government is carried on there. The aristocracy simply registers its presence there for sixty days, it takes its passwords, it casts a glance at its governmental kitchen, it holds a review of its marriageable daughters and of carriages for sale, it says good-morning, and speedily takes itself away. It is so far from amusing that it cannot endure itself for more than the few days called 'the season.'"

"So that, in the 'Constitutionnel's' 'perfidious Albion,'" cried Lousteau, seeking to check by an epigram that looseness of tongue, "there is a chance of meeting charming women in all parts of the realm."

"But charming Englishwomen!" rejoined Madame de La Baudraye, with a smile. — "Here's my mother, I must present you to her," she added as she saw Madame Piédefer approaching.

As soon as the presentation of the two lions to that ambitious skeleton of a woman called Madame Piédefer — a tall, lank body, with a pimply face, doubtful teeth, and dyed hair — was accomplished, Dinah left the Parisians to themselves for a few moments.

"Well," said Gatien, "what do you think of her?"

"I think that the most intelligent woman in Sancerre is simply the greatest chatterbox," Lousteau replied.

"A woman who means to have you chosen deputy!" cried Gatien; "an angel!"

“I forgot that you are in love with her,” rejoined Lousteau. “You must pardon the cynicism of an old rascal like me. Ask Bianchon; I have no illusions, I say things as they are. That woman is certainly causing her mother to dry up like a partridge exposed to too hot a fire.”

## V.

GATIEN BOIROUGE found an opportunity to repeat the journalist's remark to Madame de La Baudraye during dinner, which was copious if not dainty, and during which the châtelaine was careful to talk very little. This backwardness in conversation betrayed Gatien's indiscretion. Lousteau tried to win his way back into favor, but all Dinah's attentions were for Bianchon. However, in the course of the evening, the baroness became affable to Lousteau once more.

Have you never noticed how many base deeds are done from trivial motives? Thus the noble-hearted Dinah, who refused to give herself to fools, who led in the depths of her province an appalling life of struggles, of repressed rebellion, of unpublished poetry, who had just climbed, in order to be out of Lousteau's reach, the highest and steepest cliff of her scorn, and who would not have come down if she had seen that sham Byron at her feet craving forgiveness — this same Dinah suddenly slid down from the heights on thinking of her album.

Madame de La Baudraye had been attacked by the autograph mania. She possessed an oblong volume which deserved its name the better because two-thirds of the leaves were white. The Baronne de Fontaine, to whom she had sent it for three months, had obtained for her with much difficulty a line from Rossini, six measures from Meyerbeer, the four lines that Victor Hugo writes in all albums, a strophe by Lamartine, a word from

Béranger, "Calypso could not be consoled for the departure of Ulysses," written by George Sand, Scribe's famous lines on the umbrella, a sentence by Charles Nodier, a horizon line by Jules Dupré, the signature of David (of Angers), and three notes by Hector Berlioz. M. de Clagny collected, during a visit to Paris, a ballad by Lacenaire (an autograph in great demand), two lines by Fieschi, and an exceedingly short letter of Napoleon, all three of which were pasted on the leaves of the album. M. Gravier, while travelling, induced Mesdemoiselles Mars, Georges, Taglioni, and Grisi to write in the album, as well as the leading actors, like Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Rubini, Lablache, Nourrit, and Arnal; for he knew a little group of old bachelors "brought up in the seraglio," as they expressed it, who procured these favors for him.

This beginning of a collection was the more precious to Dinah because she was the only person within ten leagues who owned an album. Within two years many young ladies had procured albums in which they induced their friends and acquaintances to indite sentences more or less absurd. O you who pass your lives collecting autographs, you lucky, primitive folk, you tulip-mad Dutchmen, will forgive Dinah when, fearing that she could not keep her guests more than two days, she begged Bianchon to enrich her treasure with a few lines, and placed the volume in his hands.

The physician made Lousteau smile by pointing out to him this sentiment on the first page:—

*"What makes the common people so dangerous is that they carry in their pockets absolution for their crimes.*

*"J.-B. DE CLAGNY."*



“Let us support this man who has the courage to plead the cause of monarchy,” said Desplein’s clever pupil in Lousteau’s ear. And he wrote beneath the other: —

*“What distinguishes Napoleon from a water-carrier is visible only to society, it has no effect on nature. Thus democracy, which denies its assent to inequality of condition, constantly appeals from it to nature.*

“H. BIANCHON.”

“That is what it is to be a rich man,” cried Dinah, dumfounded; “they take a gold piece from their pockets, as the poor take a stiver. — I don’t know,” she added, turning to Lousteau, “if it would be an abuse of hospitality to ask you for a stanza or two — ”

“O madame, you flatter me! Bianchon’s a great man; but I—I am far too obscure! Twenty years hence my name will be harder to explain than that of monsieur le procureur du roi, whose thought inscribed in your album will assuredly suggest an unknown Montesquieu. Besides, I should have to have at least twenty-four hours to improvise some very misanthropic meditation, for I can depict only what I feel.”

“I would be glad to have you ask me for a fortnight,” said Madame de La Baudraye, handing him her album, “for in that ease I should keep you the longer.”

The next morning, at five o’clock, the guests at the château of Anzy were on foot. Little La Baudraye had organized a hunting-party for the Parisians; less with a view to their pleasure than from the vanity of a landed proprietor, he was delighted to take them through his woods and across the dozen hectares of moor which he contemplated turning to cultivation — an undertaking

which would require some hundred thousand francs, but might very well raise the income of Anzy from thirty to sixty thousand.

“Do you know why the procureur would n’t come hunting with us?” Gatien Boirouge asked M. Gravier.

“Why, he told us that he had to be in court to-day, because the tribunal has a criminal session,” replied the collector of taxes.

“And you believe that!” cried Gatien. “Well, my papa said to me, ‘You won’t have Monsieur Lebas with you very early, for Monsieur de Clagny has asked him to attend court for him.’”

“Aha!” said Gravier, and his expression changed. “And Monsieur de La Baudraye going to La Charité!”

“Why on earth do you meddle in these matters?” Bianchon asked Gatien.

“Horace is right,” said Lousteau. “I cannot understand how you can think so much about one another; you waste your time over trifles.”

Horace Bianchon looked at Étienne Lousteau as if to say that journalistic satire, the jests of a cheap newspaper, were not understood at Sancerre. On reaching a clearing M. Gravier let the two illustrious men and Gatien enter a ravine, under the keeper’s guidance.

“Well, let us wait for the financier,” said Bianchon, when they reached another clearing.

“Ah! you may be a great man in medicine,” rejoined Gatien, “but you’re an ignoramus as to provincial life. Wait for Monsieur Gravier, you say? Why, he’s running like a hare, for all his round little paunch; he’s now within twenty minutes of Anzy.” — Gatien drew his watch. — “Good! he’ll arrive just in time.”

“Where?”

“At the château, for luncheon,” said Gaticn. “Do you suppose that I should be easy in my mind if Madame de La Baudraye were to be left alone with Monsieur de Clagny? There are two of them now, and they’ll watch each other; Dinah’ll be well protected.”

“Oho! so Madame de La Baudraye still has to make a choice, ch?”

“Mamma thinks so, but I myself am afraid that Monsieur de Clagny has finally succeeded in fascinating Madame de La Baudraye. If he has been able to convince her that by being elected deputy he has some chance of obtaining the seals, he may well have succeeded in changing into attractions his mole’s skin, his terrifying eyes, his bushy mane, his voice like a bailiff’s with a cold, and the lankness of a mud-besplashed poet. If Dinah sees in Monsieur de Clagny a future procureur-général, she may well see in him a comely bachelor. Eloquence has great advantages. Besides, Madame de La Baudraye is overflowing with ambition, she does n’t like Sancerre, and she dreams of Parisian grandeur.”

“But what interest have you in all this?” queried Lousteau; “for, if she loves the procureur du roi— Ah! I see; you think that she won’t love him long, and you hope to succeed him.”

“You people,” said Gaticn, “meet as many different women in Paris as there are days in the year. But at Sancerre, where there are n’t more than six, and of those six five make unreasonable pretensions to virtue, when the loveliest of them all keeps you at a tremendous distance by disdainful glances, as if she were a princess of the blood, it’s quite allowable for a young man of twenty-two to try to guess that woman’s secrets, for

then she'll be compelled to have some consideration for him."

"It's called 'consideration' here," observed the journalist with a smile.

"I give Madame de La Baudraye credit for too much good taste to believe that she gives a thought to that disgusting monkey," said Horace Bianchon.

"Look you, Horace, learned interpreter of human nature," said the journalist, "let us set a trap for the procureur du roi; we shall do our friend Gatien a service, and we shall have some sport. I don't like procureurs."

"You have a just presentiment of your fate," said Horace. "But what shall we do?"

"Well, after dinner let us tell some stories of women surprised by their husbands, and who were killed, murdered, under appalling circumstances. We will see how Madame de La Baudraye and Monsieur de Clagny behave."

"Not a bad idea," said Bianchon; "it will be hard for one or the other not to betray themselves by a gesture or a comment."

"I know," continued the journalist, addressing Gatien, "the manager of a newspaper who, with the purpose of avoiding a melancholy fate, accepts only stories in which lovers are burned, chopped up, or dissected; in which women are boiled, fried, or roasted; then he takes these ghastly stories to his wife, hoping that she'll be faithful to him from fright; he contents himself with this in lack of anything better, does this modest husband. 'You see, my child, what the slightest misstep leads to!' he says to her, translating Agnes's speech to Arnulf."

“Madame de La Baudraye is absolutely innocent; this young man sees double,” said Bianchon. “Madame Piédefer looks to me much too religious to invite her daughter’s lover to the château of Anzy. Madame de La Baudraye would have to deceive her mother, her husband, her own maid, and her mother’s. That’s too much of a task; so I acquit her.”

“Especially as her husband does n’t quit her,” said Gatien, laughing at his pun.

“We will recall one or two stories that will make Dinah tremble,” said Lousteau. “Young man, and you, Bianchon, be very serious, I beg; show yourself diplomatists, assume an unaffected indifference, watch, without seeming to do so, the faces of the two culprits — you understand? — askance, or in the looking-glass, secretly. This morning we are hunting the hare; to-night we will hunt the procureur du roi.”

The evening began triumphantly for Lousteau, who handed the châtelaine her album in which she found these polished lines.

#### SPLEEN.

Verses from me, from me, poor humble worm,  
Who, lost in this cold world, drag out my term  
Of days, by none held dear;  
Whose slightest hope is never gratified,  
Whose eyes, dimmed by the woes that me betide,  
See evil everywhere!

These album leaves, by taper fingers pressed,  
Should not be darkened by my soul’s unrest;  
All things should have their place;  
With women one should talk of love and pleasure,  
Of silken garb, fêtes splendid beyond measure,  
And e’en of God, His grace.

'T would be, in truth, a ghastly mockery,  
 To say to me, whose wish is but to die,  
 "Your views of joy impart!"  
 To one born blind do we extol the sun,  
 Or prate of mothers to the child who's none,  
 Unless to break his heart?

When cold despair grips you in tender youth,  
 When you no answering heart can find, in sooth  
 No future can there be.  
 If no one weeps with you when you do weep;  
 If, unloved, one needs must sleep the sleep  
 Of death, death summons me.

Oh! pity, pity me! for oft I curse  
 God's name, and thus do I my wrongs rehearse:—  
 "How could I owe Him less?  
 Why should I bless Him? What's He done for me?  
 He might have made me rich and fair to see,  
 Not plain and penniless!"

ÉTIENNE LOUSTEAU.

September, 1836, Château of Anzy.

"And you have written these lines since yesterday?"  
 exclaimed the procureur du roi in a suspicious tone.

"Oh! mon Dieu! yes, while we were hunting; but  
 that is only too evident! I wish that I might have done  
 better for madame."

"The verses are charming," said Dinah, raising her  
 eyes to heaven.

"They give expression to a sentiment that is unhappily  
 too true," Lousteau replied with an air of intense  
 melancholy.

Every one will understand that the journalist had been  
 carrying the verses in his head for at least ten years, for  
 they were inspired during the Restoration by the diffi-  
 culty of making his way. Madame de La Baudraye  
 gazed at him with the compassion to which the misfor-

tunes of genius give birth, and Monsieur de Clagny, who surprised that glance, conceived a fierce hatred of that sham *Jeune Malade*. He sat down to backgammon with the curé of Sanccrrc. The president's son had the exceeding good-nature to place the lamp for the two players so that the light should fall full upon Madame de La Baudraye, who took up her work; she was trimming a waste-paper basket with wool. The three conspirators gathered about the group.

"For whom are you making that pretty basket, madame?" asked the journalist. "For some charitable lottery?"

"No," she replied, "I think that there's altogether too much affectation in charitable work done with a blowing of trumpets."

"You are very inquisitive," said M. Gravier.

"Is it inquisitive," said Lousteau, "to ask who the lucky mortal is at whose house madame's basket will be found?"

"There is no such lucky mortal," rejoined Dinah; "it's for Monsieur de La Baudraye."

The procureur du roi glanced covertly at Madame de La Baudraye and the basket, as if he were saying to himself, "There's my paper basket lost!"

"What, madame! you would not have us call him lucky to have a lovely wife, lucky to have her make him such pretty things as his waste-paper baskets? The design is red and black, *à la Robin Hood*. If I ever marry, I hope that after twelve years the baskets my wife makes will be for me."

"Why should n't they be for you?" said Madame de La Baudraye, raising her lovely gray eyes, full of coquetry, to Étienne's face.

“Parisians don’t believe in anything,” said the procureur du roi bitterly. “The virtue of women is especially brought in question, with shocking audacity. Yes, for some time past, the books you write, messieurs writers, your reviews, your plays, all your infamous literature, is based on adultery.”

“Look you, monsieur le procureur du roi,” retorted Étienne, laughing, “I was allowing you to play your game in peace, I was n’t attacking you, and lo and behold, you bring an indictment against me! On my word as a journalist, I have published more than a hundred articles against the authors you speak of; but I confess that if I attacked them it was with a view of saying something that bore some resemblance to criticism. Let us be just: if you condemn them, you must condemn Homer and his *Iliad*, which is founded on the fair Helen; you must condemn Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, for Eve and the serpent seem to me to be a pretty little symbolical adultery. You must suppress the *Psalms of David*, which were inspired by the outrageously adulterous love-affairs of that Hebrew Louis XIV. You must throw into the fire ‘*Mithridate*,’ ‘*Le Tartuffe*,’ ‘*L’École des Femmes*,’ ‘*Phèdre*,’ ‘*Andromaque*,’ ‘*Le Mariage de Figaro*,’ Dante’s *Inferno*, Petrarch’s *Sonnets*, all of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romances of the Middle Ages, the *History of France*, *Roman history*, etc., etc. I don’t believe that, outside of Bossuet’s ‘*Histoire des Variations*’ and Pascal’s ‘*Provinciales*,’ there are many books to read, if you propose to cut out all those which have to do with women who are loved contrary to law.”

“A sad misfortune, indeed!” said M. de Clagny.

Étienne, annoyed by the magisterial tone assumed by



M. de Clagny, tried to drive him into a passion by one of those cold-blooded mystifications which consist in defending opinions which one does not hold, with the idea of irritating a poor man who is entirely sincere — a typical journalistic joke.

“Placing ourselves at the standpoint at which you are forced to place yourself, on assuming the robe of procureur-général at any epoch — for all governments have their ministries,” he continued, without taking up the magistrate’s exclamation, “the Catholic religion is tainted at its very source with a heinous conjugal illegality. In the eyes of King Herod, in those of Pilate, who defended the Roman government, Joseph’s wife might well seem an adulteress, since, by her own admission, Joseph was not the father of the Christ. The heathen magistrate no more admitted the Immaculate Conception than you would admit a similar miracle if some new religion should spring up to-day resting on a mystery of that sort. Do you think that a police court would recognize a modern achievement of the Holy Spirit? Now, who can venture to say that God will not come again to redeem mankind? Is it any better to-day than it was under Tiberius?”

“Your argument is sacrilegious,” rejoined the procureur du roi.

“Agreed,” said the journalist; “but I don’t offer it with any evil purpose. You cannot suppress historical facts. According to my views, Pilate when he condemned Jesus Christ, and Anytus, the mouthpiece of the aristocratic party at Athens, when he demanded the death of Socrates, represented established societies, which deemed themselves lawfully established, vested with powers freely conferred, and obliged to defend

themselves. Pilate and Anytus were as logical therefore as the procureurs-généraux who demanded the heads of the sergeants of La Rochelle, and who are chopping off to-day the heads of republicans taken in arms against the monarchy of July, and those of the innovators whose aim is to overturn established society to their own advantage, on the pretext of organizing it better. In the eyes of the great families of Athens and of the Roman Empire, Socrates and Jesus were criminals; to those old aristocrats their opinions resembled those of the Mountain. Suppose that those senators had triumphed — they would have had a mild '93 in the Roman Empire or in Attica."

"What are you coming at, monsieur?" queried the procureur du roi.

"At adultery! Thus, monsieur, a Buddhist as he smokes his pipe can logically say that the Christian religion is founded on adultery; just as we believe that Mahomet is an impostor, that his Koran is a reprint of the Bible and the Gospels, and that God never intended to make that camel-driver his prophet."

"If there were many men in France like you, and unfortunately there are too many, all government would be impossible."

"And there would be no religion," said Madame Piédefer, whose face had exhibited extraordinary contortions during this discussion.

"You are causing them unspeakable distress," Bi-anchon whispered to Étienne; "don't talk religion — you tell them things that turn them topsy-turvy."

"If I were a writer or a novelist," observed M. Gravier, "I would take the part of the unfortunate husbands. I, who have seen many things, and strange

things too, — I know that among the deceived husbands there are some whose attitude does n't lack force, and who at the critical moment are very dramatic, to use one of your words, monsieur," he said, looking at Étienne.

"You are right, my dear Monsieur Gravier," said Lousteau; "I have never looked upon deceived husbands as ridiculous; on the contrary, I love them —"

"Don't you consider a husband's confidence sublime?" interposed Bianchon; "he believes in his wife, he has no suspicion of her, he has the faith of a charcoal-burner. If he is weak enough to trust his wife, you laugh at him; if he is distrustful and jealous, you detest him; tell me, what is the middle course for a man of spirit?"

"If monsieur le procureur du roi had not just pronounced himself so decidedly against the immorality of narrations in which conjugal fidelity is outraged, I would tell you about a husband's vengeance," said Lousteau.

M. de Clagny threw down his dice convulsively and did not look at the journalist.

"What — a story of yours!" cried Madame de La Baudraye; "I should hardly have dared to ask for it."

"It is n't mine, madame, I have n't so much talent; it was told me, and in such charming fashion! by one of our most famous writers, the greatest literary musician we have — Charles Nodier."

"Well, tell it," said Dinah; "I have never heard Monsieur Nodier, so you have n't to fear a comparison."

"Not long after the Eighteenth Brumaire," said Lousteau, "there was an uprising, as you know, in Bretagne and La Vendée. The First Consul, being in haste to pacify France, entered into negotiations with the princi-

pal leaders and set on foot the most vigorous military measures. But, while combining plans of campaign with the wiles of his Italian diplomacy, he brought into play the Machiavellian craft of the police, then in charge of Fouché. None of it was unnecessary to stamp out the war that was kindled in the West.

“At that time a young man of the Maillé family was sent by the Chouans from Bretagne to Saumur, to establish communications between certain men in the city or its neighborhood and the leaders of the royalist uprising. Being informed of this journey, the Paris police had sent down officers with instructions to seize the young emissary on his arrival at Saumur. And he was, in fact, arrested the very day that he landed; for he came by water, disguised as a master-mariner. But, like a man of decision, he had calculated all the hazards of his enterprise; his passport and all his papers were so straight that the men sent to seize him were afraid that they had made a mistake. The Chevalier de Beauvoir — I remember the name now — had carefully considered his rôle; he appealed to his borrowed family, gave a false residence, and withstood his examination so boldly that he would have been set at liberty but for the sort of blind faith that the spies had in their instructions, which were unfortunately too precise. Being in doubt, the catchpolls preferred to commit an arbitrary act rather than allow a man to escape to whose capture the minister seemed to attach great importance. In those days of liberty the agents of the national government gave very little heed to what we to-day call *legality*.

“So the chevalier was imprisoned provisionally, until the higher authorities should have made up their minds about him. The bureaucratic sentence was not long

delayed. The minister of police ordered the prisoner to be kept in close confinement, despite his denials. Thereupon, in obedience to new orders, the Chevalier de Beauvoir was transferred to the château de l'Escarpe, whose name sufficiently indicates its situation. That fortress, built upon cliffs of great height, has precipices for moats; it is approached on all sides by steep and dangerous slopes; as in all the old châteaux the principal gate is guarded by a drawbridge and a high wall.

“The governor of the prison, overjoyed to have in his keeping a man of distinction whose manners were most agreeable, who expressed his ideas in the clearest terms, and who seemed well educated, — rare qualities in those days, — accepted the chevalier as a benefaction from Providence; he proposed to him to consider himself at L'Escarpe on parole and to make common cause with him against ennui. The prisoner asked nothing better. Beauvoir was a loyal gentleman; but he was also, unluckily, a very comely youth. He had an attractive face, a determined air, an engaging manner of speaking, and tremendous physical strength. Active, well set up, enterprising, fond of danger, he would have made an excellent chief of outlaws; that's the sort they need.

“The governor gave his prisoner the most comfortable quarters, received him at his table, and at first had no reason to do aught but praise the Vendean. This governor was a Corsican, and married; his wife, a pretty and attractive woman, seemed to him, it may be, hard to keep in order; in short, he was jealous, in his capacity of Corsican and somewhat ill-favored trooper. Beauvoir pleased the lady, and found her much to his taste. Perhaps they loved each other: love moves so

swiftly in prison! Did they commit any imprudence? Did their mutual regard pass beyond the bounds of that superficial love-making which is almost our duty toward the ladies? Beauvoir was never perfectly explicit concerning this rather obscure point in his story; but, all the same, it is a fact that the governor considered himself justified in treating his prisoner with extraordinary harshness.

“Consigned to the donjon, Beauvoir was fed on black bread, had only water to drink, and was entertained in accordance with the unvarying programme of diversions lavished on prisoners. His cell, situated under the platform, had walls of stone of despairing thickness; the tower overhung the precipice. When poor Beauvoir realized the impossibility of escape, he abandoned himself to those reveries which are at once the despair and the consolation of captives. He busied himself about those trifles which became affairs of vast importance; he counted the days and the hours; he served his apprenticeship to the gloomy ‘trade of prisoner’; he fell back upon himself and learned to know the value of air and sunlight. Then, after a fortnight, he had that terrible disease, that fever for liberty which urges prisoners on to those sublime enterprises whose tremendous results seem to us inexplicable, though real, and which my friend the doctor” (he turned to Bianchon) “would attribute doubtless to unknown forces, the despair of his physiological analysis — mysteries of the human will whose immensity appalls science.” (Bianchon shook his head.) “Beauvoir ate his heart out, for death alone could set him free.

“One morning the turnkey whose duty it was to bring the prisoner his food, instead of going away after

giving him his meagre ration, stood in front of him with folded arms and looked at him in a singular way. Ordinarily the conversation between them amounted to very little, and the jailer never began it. So that the chevalier was greatly surprised when the fellow said to him: —

“‘Monsieur, I don’t doubt you have your own idea in always calling yourself Monsieur Lebrun, or Citizen Lebrun. That does n’t concern me — it’s none of my business to find out your name. Whether your name’s Pierre or Paul, it’s all the same to me. But I know,’ he said with a smile, ‘that you’re Monsieur Charles-Félix-Théodore, Chevalier de Beauvoir, and a cousin of Madame la Duchesse de Maillé. — Eh?’ he added triumphantly, after a moment’s pause, looking hard at his prisoner.

“Beauvoir, knowing that he was imprisoned hard and fast, concluded that his position could not be made worse by admitting his real name.

“‘Well, suppose I were the Chevalier de Beauvoir,’ he said; ‘what would you gain by it?’

“‘Oh! it’s all gain,’ rejoined the turnkey in an undertone. ‘Hark ye: I’ve had some money given me to help along your escape. But one minute! If I was suspected of the least thing, I’d be shot off-hand. So I’ve said that I’ll go into the thing just far enough to earn my money. Look, monsieur, here’s a key,’ he said, taking from his pocket a small file; ‘with this you must saw one of your bars. — Gad! it won’t be so easy!’ he added, pointing to the narrow opening through which the daylight entered the dungeon. It was a sort of bay built above the cornice that crowned the donjon on the outside, between the great protruding stones which seem to support the crenelles.

“‘Monsieur,’ said the jailer, ‘you must saw the bar close enough to the wall to let you pass through.’

“‘Oh! never fear, I’ll get through,’ rejoined the prisoner.

“‘And high enough up to leave something to fasten your rope to.’

“‘Where is it?’ asked Beauvoir.

“‘Here,’ said the jailer, tossing him a knotted rope. ‘It’s made of linen so as to make them think you made it yourself, and it’s long enough. When you get to the last knot, let yourself drop gently — the rest is your business. You’ll probably find a carriage all ready in the neighborhood, and friends waiting for you. But I don’t know anything about it! I don’t need to tell you that there’s a sentry on the right of the tower. You can choose a dark night, and watch for the moment when the soldier on guard’s asleep. You may risk getting shot, but —’

“‘All right! all right! I shan’t rot here at least,’ cried the chevalier.

“‘Oh! maybe you will all the same,’ observed the jailer, with a stupid expression.

“Beauvoir took this for one of the idiotic reflections that such fellows are wont to indulge in. The hope of soon being free made him so happy that he could hardly pay attention to the remarks of that man, who was a sort of superior peasant. He set to work at once, and that day sufficed for him to saw the bars. Fearing a visit from the governor, he concealed his work by stuffing the cracks with bread, which he first rolled in the filings to give it the color of iron. He hid his rope and began to look for a favorable night, with the concentrated impatience and intense mental



excitement which give to the prisoner's life so dramatic a quality.

“At last, on a cloudy autumn night, he finished sawing the bars, fastened his rope securely, and crawled out on the stone eoping, clinging with one hand to the piece of the bar left in the opening; in this position he awaited the darkest hour of the night and the moment when the sentinels were likely to be asleep. It was nearly morning. He knew the length of the sentry's tour of duty, when the guard was changed, and all the details to which prisoners turn their attention, even involuntarily. He waited until one of the sentries, about two-thirds of his time having elapsed, went into his box on account of the fog. Sure of having taken advantage of every circumstance favorable to his escape, he began to descend, knot by knot, suspended between earth and sky, clinging to his rope with the strength of a giant. All went well. When he reached the knot before the last, and as he was about to drop to the ground, it occurred to him, as a matter of precaution, to feel for the ground with his feet, and he found nothing! It was a sufficiently embarrassing predicament for a weary, perspiring, bewildered man, in a situation where he must risk his life on a throw of the dice.

“He was on the point of dropping when a trivial reason arrested him: his hat fell. Luekily he listened for the noise it should have made, and he heard nothing! Thereupon he began to be vaguely distrustful of his position; he asked himself whether the governor had not laid a trap for him. But for what motive? Beset by this uncertainty, he almost concluded to postpone the undertaking to another night. Provisionally he determined to await the first dim rays of dawn, a time which might

not be altogether unfavorable for his flight. His tremendous strength enabled him to climb back to the donjon; but he was almost exhausted when he reached the outer ledge of his window, watching everything like a cat on the edge of a gutter. Soon, by the faint light, he discovered, by shaking his rope, that there was a trifling interval of a hundred feet between the last knot and the sharp rocks of the precipice.

“‘Thanks, my good governor!’ he said, with the sang-froid that was characteristic of him.

“Then, after a moment’s reflection upon that ingenious scheme of revenge, he judged it advisable to return to his dungeon. He placed his clothes in full sight on the bed, left the rope hanging outside to make it seem as if he had fallen, crouched calmly behind the door, and awaited the coming of the treacherous turnkey, holding in readiness one of the iron bars he had sawed off. The turnkey, who did not fail to appear earlier than usual in order to collect what the dead man had left behind, opened the door, whistling; but when he was within a convenient distance, Beauvoir dealt him such a savage blow on the head with the bar that the traitor fell like a log, without an outcry; the bar had crushed his skull. The chevalier speedily undressed the dead man, donned his clothes, assumed his bearing and gait, and, thanks to the early hour and the absence of suspicion on the part of the sentries at the main gate, he escaped.”

## VI.

NEITHER the *procurcur du roi* nor Madame de La Baudraye seemed to think that there was in this tale any prophetic suggestion that concerned them. The conspirators exchanged questioning glances, as if they were surprised by the absolute indifference of the supposed lovers.

“Bah! I have something better to tell you,” said Bianchon.

“Let us hear it,” said the audience, at a sign from Lousteau indicating that Bianchon had a reputation of his own as a story-teller.

From the stories included in his stock — for all clever people have a certain number of anecdotes at hand, as Madame de La Baudraye had her collection of phrases — the illustrious physician chose the one known by the title of “*La Grande-Bretèche*,” which has become so celebrated that it has been made into a vaudeville, called “*Valentic*,” at the *Gymnase-Dramatique*. (See “*Another Study of Woman*.”) So that it is unnecessary to repeat it here, although it was new fruit to the guests at the *château* of Anzy. It was told, too, with the same perfection of gesture and intonation that earned the doctor such extravagant praise when he told it first at *Mademoiselle des Touches*. The final tableau of the Spanish grandee dying of hunger and standing erect in the closet in which Madame de Merret’s husband had walled him up, and that husband’s last word in reply to a last appeal from his wife: “You

swore on this crucifix that there was nobody there!" produced their due effect. There was a moment's silence, most flattering to Bianchon.

"Do you know, messieurs," said Madame de La Baudraye at last, "love must be a tremendous thing to induce a woman to put herself in such situations."

"I have certainly seen some strange things in my life," said M. Gravier, "and I was, you might say, a witness of an adventure of the same sort in Spain."

"You come after two great actors," observed Madame de La Baudraye, honoring the Parisians with a coquetish glance; "but no matter — go on."

"Some time after he entered Madrid," said the collector of taxes, "the Grand Duke of Berg invited the principal persons of that city to a banquet proffered by the French army to the newly conquered capital. Despite the magnificence of the feast, the Spaniards were not very gay; their wives danced but little, and most of the guests sat down to cards. The gardens of the palace were illuminated so brilliantly that the ladies could walk there as safely as in broad daylight. The fête was of imperial splendor. Nothing was spared in the attempt to give the Spaniards an exalted idea of the Emperor, if they chose to judge him by his lieutenants.

"In a clump of shrubbery near the palace, between one and two in the morning, several French officers were discussing the chances of the war and the far from promising outlook for the future indicated by the attitude of the Spaniards who were present at that gorgeous affair.

"'Faith,' said the chief surgeon of the corps in which I was paymaster-general, 'I made formal application to Prince Murat yesterday for my recall. Without

being exactly afraid that I shall leave my bones in the Peninsula, I prefer to go and dress the wounds inflicted by our good neighbors the Germans; their weapons don't go so far into the breast as the Castilian daggers. And then, fear of Spain is a sort of superstition with me. In my childhood I read Spanish books, a parcel of dismal adventures and innumerable anecdotes of this country, which prejudiced me strongly against its manners. Well, since we entered Madrid, it has been my fortune already to be, if not the hero, at least the confederate, of a hazardous intrigue, as dark and mysterious as one of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels. I am rather prone to listen to my presentiments, and to-morrow I abscond. Murat surely will not refuse me my leave, for, thanks to the services we render, we always have powerful patrons.'

“‘As you are hoisting your anchor, tell us what happened to you,’ said a colonel, an old republican who cared little for fine language and imperial etiquette.

“The surgeon looked carefully all about, as if to identify the faces of those who surrounded him, and, being satisfied that there was no Spaniard in the vicinity, he said:—

“‘We are all Frenchmen here; I'll do it, Colonel Hulot.

“‘Six days ago, I was returning quietly to my quarters about eleven o'clock at night, just after leaving General Montcornet, whose house is within a few steps of mine. We had both come from the commissary-general's, where we had had a lively game of bouillotte. Suddenly, at the corner of a street, two strangers, two devils rather, threw themselves upon me, and muffled my head and arms in a great cloak. I yelled, as you

may suppose, like a whipped cur, but the cloak stifled my voice, and I was thrust into a carriage with the most dexterous rapidity.

““When my companions relieved me from the cloak, I heard these ominous words in a woman’s voice, in broken French:—

“““If you cry out, if you make a motion to escape, if you venture to make the slightest suspicious gesture, the gentleman opposite you is quite capable of stabbing you without scruple. So keep quiet. Now I am going to tell you why you have been kidnapped thus. If you will take the trouble to put out your hand toward me, you will find between us your surgical instruments, for which we sent to your rooms as from you. You will need them. We are taking you to a certain house, to save the honor of a lady who is on the point of giving birth to a child which she desires to present to this gentleman without her husband’s knowledge. Although monsieur seldom leaves madame, with whom he is still passionately in love, and although he watches her with all the assiduity of a jealous Spaniard, she has succeeded in concealing her condition from him, and he thinks that she is ill simply. So you are to deliver her. The dangers of the undertaking do not concern you: just obey us; otherwise, the lover, who sits opposite you in the carriage, and who does n’t know a word of French, will stab you at the first imprudent gesture.”

“““And who are you?” I said, feeling for the hand of my interlocutor, whose arm was in the sleeve of a military coat.

“““I am madame’s maid, her confidante, and quite ready to reward you by myself if you lend yourself like a gallant man to the necessities of our situation.”

“““Willingly,” I replied, finding myself forcibly embarked upon a perilous adventure.

““Under cover of the darkness I tried to make out whether the damsel’s face and form were in harmony with the ideas which the tone of her voice had aroused in me. Doubtless the good creature had resigned herself beforehand to the hazards of that strange abduction, for she maintained the most obliging silence, and the carriage had not rumbled through the streets of Madrid more than ten minutes before she received and returned a soul-satisfying kiss. The lover, who sat opposite me, did not take offence at a kick or two which I involuntarily administered to him; but, as he did not understand French, I suppose he did n’t notice them.

“““I can be your mistress only on one condition,” said the lady’s maid in reply to the nonsense I poured into her ear, carried away by the ardor of a sudden passion to which everything interposed an obstacle.

“““What is that?”

“““You must never try to find out in whose service I am. If I come to your rooms, it will be at night, and you will receive me without a light.”

“““Very good,” I replied.

““Our conversation had reached this point when the carriage stopped by a garden wall.

“““Let me cover your eyes,” said the lady’s maid; “you can take my arm and I will guide you myself.”

““She put a handkerchief over my eyes and tied it tight behind my head. I heard the sound of a key being cautiously inserted in the lock of a small gate, by the silent lover who had been my vis-à-vis. Soon the lady’s maid, with the willowy figure, who had in her bearing a certain *meneho* —’

“That,” said the collector, assuming an air of superior knowledge, “is a Spanish word, an idiom which describes the convolutions that women know how to impart to a certain portion of their dress, which you will divine.”

““The lady’s maid [I resume the surgeon’s narrative] led me through the gravelled walks of a large garden to a certain point, where she stopped. By the noise that our footsteps made I judged that we were in front of the house.

““Silence now,” she whispered in my ear, “and keep close watch on yourself! Do not miss a single one of my signs; I cannot speak to you any more without danger to both of us, and it’s a question now of saving your life.”

““Then she added, aloud:—

““Madame is in a room on the ground floor; to reach it we must pass through her husband’s room and close to his bed; do not cough, walk softly, and follow me close, lest you stumble over some piece of furniture or put your feet off the carpet that I have arranged.”

““Here the lover uttered a low growl, as if impatient of so many delays. The lady’s maid ceased to speak, I heard a door open, I felt the warm air of a room, and we went forward, with catlike tread, like burglars on an expedition. At last the girl’s soft hand removed my bandage. I found myself in a large room, high-studded, and dimly lighted by a smoking lamp. The window was open; but it had been supplied with stout iron bars by the jealous husband.

““It was as if I had been thrown into the bottom of a bag. On the floor, lying on a mat, was a woman



whose face was covered with a muslin veil, through which, however, her eyes, filled with tears, shone with all the brilliancy of stars; she was forcing a handkerchief into her mouth and biting it so fiercely that her teeth went through it. I had never seen such a lovely body, but it was twisting and writhing in pain like the string of a harp when thrown into the fire. The poor creature had made two bows of her legs by putting them up on a sort of commode; and she was clinging with both hands to the rungs of a chair, stretching out her arms in which all the veins were terribly distended. She resembled a criminal in the agony of torture. But not a cry — no other sound than the cracking of her bones.

““We stood there, we three, silent and motionless. The husband’s snores rang out with comforting regularity. I tried to examine the maid; but she had resumed the mask which, I presume, she had removed *en route*, and I could see only two black eyes and an attractive figure. The lover instantly threw clothes over his mistress’s limbs and doubled the muslin veil over her face. When I had carefully examined the woman, I saw by certain symptoms, formerly observed at a very sad period of my life, that the child was dead. I leaned toward the girl to inform her of this fact. At that moment the suspicious stranger drew his dagger; but I had time to say all I wished to the lady’s maid, who said two words to him in an undertone. When he heard my statement, a slight shudder passed over the lover, from head to foot, like a flash; it seemed to me that I saw his face turn pale under his black velvet mask.

““The maid seized a moment when the desperate

man was gazing at the dying woman, who was beginning to turn purple, and pointed to some glasses of lemonade all ready on a table, shaking her head. I understood that I must abstain from drinking, despite the horrible thirst that parched my throat. The lover was thirsty; he took an empty glass, filled it with lemonade and drank it. At that moment the lady had a violent convulsion which indicated that the time was opportune for the operation. I mustered my courage, and, after an hour's work, succeeded in accomplishing my task.

“The Spaniard no longer thought of poisoning me when he saw that I had saved his mistress. Great tears rolled down over his cloak. The woman did not utter a cry, but she trembled like a beast taken by surprise, and sweated great drops. At a fearfully critical moment she pointed to her husband's chamber: he had turned over, and she alone, of us four, had heard the rustling of the sheets or the curtains. We paused, and through the slits in their masks the lover and the lady's maid exchanged glances of flame, as if to ask each other, “Shall we kill him if he wakes?” Just then I put out my hand to take the glass of lemonade that the stranger had partly emptied. He thought that I was going to take one of the full glasses, and he jumped like a cat, laid his long dagger across the two poisoned glasses, and left his own for me, motioning to me to drink what was left. There were so many thoughts, so much feeling in that sign and in his hasty movement, that I forgave him for the atrocious scheme he had devised to kill me and thus bury all knowledge of the occurrence.

“After two hours of toil and of fears, the maid and

myself put her mistress in bed. The Spaniard, embarking upon this perilous adventure, had brought some diamonds with him, thinking that he might have to fly. Without my knowledge he put them in my pocket. I may say parenthetically, that, as I was unaware of that superb gift, my servant stole it from me two days later and took to his heels, supplied with a veritable fortune.

“I whispered to the lady’s maid what precautions remained to be taken, and proposed to decamp. The girl remained with her mistress, a fact which was not excessively reassuring to me; but I determined to be on my guard. The lover made a bundle of the dead child, tied it securely, put it under his cloak, passed his hand across my eyes as if to bid me close them, and went out first, inviting me by gesture to take hold of the skirt of his coat. I complied, but not without a last glance at my accidental mistress. She tore off her mask when she saw that the Spaniard had left the room, and showed me the most charming face in the world.

“When I found myself in the garden, in the fresh air, I confess that I breathed as if a tremendous weight had been taken off my breast. I walked at a respectful distance from my guide, watching his slightest movement with the utmost attention. When we reached the little gate, he took me by the hand and put to my lips a seal ring which I had noticed on one of the fingers of his left hand; I gave him to understand that I comprehended that eloquent sign. We stood in the street, where two horses awaited us; we both mounted, my Spaniard seized my bridle, held it in his left hand, took his own reins in his teeth (for he had his bundle in his

right hand), and off we rode like lightning. I was unable to observe the least thing which might have helped me to recognize the route we were taking. At day-break I found myself near my own door, and the Spaniard turned and fled in the direction of the Atocha gate.'

"'And you saw nothing to make you suspect who the woman was whom you operated on?' the colonel asked the surgeon.

"'Just one thing,' was the reply. 'When I was working over her, I noticed on her arm, about the middle, a little mole, about as big as a bean and surrounded with brown hair.'

"'At that moment the indiscreet surgeon turned pale; all eyes, being fixed upon his, followed the direction they took, and we saw a Spaniard whose blazing eyes glared at us from a clump of orange trees. When he saw that he had attracted our attention, he disappeared with the agility of a sylph. A captain darted in pursuit.

"'Sarpejeu, my friends!' cried the surgeon, 'that basilisk eye has frozen my blood. I hear bells ringing in my ears! Receive my farewells — you will bury me here!'

"'Are you crazy?' demanded Colonel Hulot. 'Falcon's on the trail of the Spaniard who was listening to us, and he'll bring him to book.'

"'Well?' cried all the officers when they saw the captain returning, breathless.

"'Deuce take him!' replied Falcon; 'I believe he went through the wall. As I don't think he's a magician, he must be in the house! He knows all the passages and windings, and he easily eluded me.'

"'I am lost!' said the surgeon in a gloomy voice.

“‘Nonsense, be calm, Béga,’ — his name was Béga, — I said; ‘we’ll quarter ourselves on you, turn and turn about, till you go. To-night we’ll go with you.’

“And three young officers who had lost their money at cards did, in fact, escort the surgeon to his lodgings, and one of them offered to stay with him. Two days later Béga had obtained his recall to France, and was making his preparations to leave with a lady to whom Prince Murat supplied a strong escort. He was just finishing dinner with his friends, when his servant came to tell him that a young woman wished to speak with him. The surgeon and the three officers went downstairs at once, fearing some trick. The stranger was able only to say to her lover, ‘Beware!’ and fell dead. It was the lady’s maid, who, realizing that she was poisoned, hoped to arrive in time to save the surgeon.

“‘The devil! the devil! that’s what I call love!’ cried Captain Falcon. ‘No woman on earth but a Spaniard could walk with a dose of poison in her bread-basket!’

“Béga was strangely distraught. To drown the dark presentiments that assailed him, he returned to the table and drank immoderately, as did his companions. All of them went to bed early, half drunk. In the middle of the night poor Béga was aroused by the shrill noise made by the curtain-rings being jerked violently along the rod. He sat up in bed, with the instinctive terror that seizes us on such an awakening. He saw standing before him a Spaniard wrapped in his cloak, who cast upon him the same flaming glance that had shot from the thicket during the fête.

“‘Help! help, my friends!’ cried Béga.

“To this cry of distress the Spaniard replied with a bitter laugh.

“‘Opium grows for everybody,’ he muttered.

“Having uttered this sententious remark, the stranger pointed to the three friends sleeping like logs, drew from beneath his cloak a woman’s arm newly cut off, and hastily held it toward Béga, calling his attention to a mark like the one he had so imprudently described.

“‘Is it the same?’ he demanded.

“By the light of a lantern the stranger had placed on the bed, Béga recognized the arm, and his stupefaction answered for him. Without further parley the unknown woman’s husband plunged his dagger into his heart.”

“You should tell that to the marines,” said the journalist, “for one needs their sturdy faith to believe it. Could you tell me, pray, which of the two, the dead man or the Spaniard, told the story?”

“Monsieur,” the collector of taxes replied, “I took care of poor Béga, who died five days later, in horrible agony. That is not all. At the time of the expedition to restore Ferdinand VII, I was appointed to a post in Spain, but luckily I did n’t go beyond Tours, as I had been led to hope that I might obtain the collectorship of Sancerre. On the eve of my departure, I was at a ball at Madame de Listomère’s, at which several Spaniards of distinction were present. On leaving the écarté table I noticed a grandee, an *afrancesado* in exile, who had been in Touraine about a fortnight. He had come to the ball very late, — it was his first appearance in society, — and he walked through the salons accompanied by his wife, whose right arm was absolutely

motionless. We drew aside in silence, to let that couple pass, whom it was impossible to contemplate without emotion. Imagine a living picture by Murillo. The man's flaming eyes were fixed and staring in their deep and black-rimmed sockets; his skin was like parchment, his bald head glistened like ivory, and his whole frame was terrible to look at, so thin and gaunt it was. And the woman! imagine — But no, you could never imagine her as she was. She had that admirable figure which is responsible for the invention of the Spanish word *mencho*; although pale, she was still beautiful; her complexion — a most unheard-of thing in a Spanish woman — was dazzlingly fair; but her glance, full of the sunshine of Spain, fell upon you like a stream of melted lead.

“‘Madame,’ I asked her toward the close of the evening, ‘by what mischance did you lose your arm?’

“‘In the war of independence,’ she replied.”

“Spain is a strange country,” said Madame de La Baudraye; “there is still something there of the Arab morals.”

“Oh!” laughed the journalist, “that fashion of cutting off arms is very old; it reappears at certain periods, as some of our canards do in the newspapers. It furnished subjects for Spanish plays as early as 1570.”

“Do you think me capable of fabricating a story?” demanded M. Gravier, offended by Lousteau's impertinent manner.

“You are incapable of it,” retorted the journalist slyly.

“Bah!” said Bianchon, “the inventions of novelists

and playwrights jump into real life from their books and plays as often as the events of real life go upon the stage and exhibit themselves in books. I have seen the comedy of 'Tartuffe' enacted before my eyes, except the *dénouement*: no one ever succeeded in unsealing Orgon's eyes."

"And Benjamin Constant's tragi-comedy 'Adolphe' is played every hour of every day," added Lousteau.

"Do you think that such adventures as Monsieur Gravier just told us can happen in France to-day?" inquired Madame de La Baudraye.

"Bless my soul!" cried the procureur du roi, "out of the ten or twelve *prominent* crimes committed in France every year, at least half are attended by circumstances no less extraordinary than those of your adventures, and very often surpass them in romantic elements. Is n't this proved by the 'Gazette des Tribunaux,' which in my opinion is one of the greatest abuses of the press? That journal, which dates only from 1826 or 1827, was not in existence when I first entered the government service, and the details of the crime I have in mind were not known outside of the department in which it was perpetrated. In the Faubourg of Saint-Pierre-des-Corps at Tours, a woman whose husband had disappeared when the Army of the Loire was disbanded in 1816, and who naturally was much commiserated, made herself noticeable by her excessive piety. When the missionaries went through the provincial towns to restore the crosses that had been thrown down and to remove the traces of the revolutionary acts of sacrilege, this widow was one of the most fervent proselytes; she carried the cross, she nailed to it a silver heart pierced by an arrow, and,



long after the mission was at an end, she went every night to pray at the foot of the cross set up behind the *chevet* of the cathedral. At last, driven to it by remorse, she confessed a shocking crime. She had killed her husband, as Fualdès was killed, by bleeding, had cut him in pieces, salted him, and put him in two old wine-casks, exactly as if she were dealing with a pig. And for a long, long time, every morning she cut off a piece and threw it into the Loire. The confessor consulted his superiors and warned his penitent that he must give information to the procureur du roi. The woman awaited the visit of the authorities. The procureur and the examining magistrate, on inspecting her cellar, found the husband's head still there, in pickle, in one of the casks.

“ ‘But, miserable creature,’ exclaimed the examining magistrate, ‘as you had enough of barbarism in you to throw your husband's body into the river, as you say, why did n't you put the head out of sight too? Then there 'd have been no evidence at all.’

“ ‘I have very often tried, monsieur,’ she said, ‘but I have always found it too heavy.’”

“Well, what did they do with the woman?” inquired the two Parisians.

“She was convicted and executed at Tours,” replied the procureur; “but her repentance and her devotion had ended by arousing public interest in her favor, despite the enormity of her crime.”

“Ah!” said Bianchon, “who knows all the tragedies that are played behind the curtain of domestic life which the public does n't draw aside! I consider human justice most unfit to pass judgment on crimes between husband and wife; it goes straight as a matter

of police administration, but it is entirely at sea in its pretensions to do equity."

"Very often the victim has been the tyrant for so long," observed Madame de La Baudraye ingenuously, "that the crime might seem excusable if the accused dared tell everything."

This rejoinder, provoked by Bianchon, and the anecdote told by the procureur du roi, perplexed the two Parisians sadly concerning Dinah's situation. And so, when the hour for retiring had arrived, there was one of those conferences that are often held in the corridors of old châteaux, where the bachelors, candle in hand, remain in a group and converse in undertones. M. Gravier learned for the first time the object of that entertaining evening, during which Madame de La Baudraye's innocence had been made manifest.

"After all," said Lousteau, "our hostess's impassibility might indicate the most profound depravity as well as the most childlike guilelessness. The procureur du roi impressed me as entertaining the purpose to put little La Baudraye in piekle."

"He does n't return till to-morrow; who knows what may happen to-night?" cried Gatién.

"We will find out," said M. Gravier.

Château life covers a multitude of wretched practical jokes, among which there are some absolutely disgusting in their perfidy. M. Gravier, who had seen so many things, suggested that they put seals on Madame de La Baudraye's door and the procureur's. The condemnatory cranes of the poet Ibycus were as nothing in comparison with the hair that spies sometimes fasten over the crack of a door with two little flattened balls of wax, either so high or so low that it is impossible to suspect

the snare. If the gallant leaves his own room and opens the other suspected door, the coincidence of the broken hairs tells the whole story.

When every one was supposed to be fast asleep, the physician, the journalist, the collector of taxes, and Gatien assembled with bare feet, like real burglars, to condemn the two doors, and agreed to come at five in the morning to inspect the condition of the seals. Imagine their surprise and Gatien's joy when all four, candle in hand and scantily clad, examined the hairs and found both in a satisfactory state of preservation.

"Is it the same wax?" queried M. Gravier.

"Are they the same hairs?" queried Lousteau.

"Ycs," said Gatien.

"This changes the whole aspect of affairs," cried Lousteau; "you have beaten the forest for Robin Hood."

The collector of taxes and the president's son questioned each other with a glance that said: "Is n't there some dig at us in that remark? Ought we to laugh or be angry?"

"If Dinah is virtuous," whispered the journalist to Bianchon, "she is well worth my taking the trouble to pluck the fruit of her first love."

The idea of carrying in a few moments a citadel that had resisted the assaults of the Sancerrois for nine years smiled upon Lousteau. With that thought in mind he went down first to the garden, hoping to find the châtelaine there. It happened the more opportunely because Madame de La Baudraye also desired to talk with her critic. Most hazards of this kind are sought.

"You hunted yesterday, monsieur," said Dinah. "This morning I am at a loss to offer you some new

distraction, unless you care to go to La Baudraye, where you can observe the province a little more satisfactorily than here; for you made but one mouthful of my absurdities; but the proverb about the loveliest woman in the world applies also to the poor provincial."

"That little fool of a Gatien," Lousteau replied, "must have repeated to you something that I said to make him confess that he adored you. Your silence day before yesterday, during dinner and throughout the evening, was sufficient proof of one of those indiscretions that are never committed in Paris. What would you have? I do not flatter myself that I am unintelligible. So I planned to have all those anecdotes told last night solely to find out whether we should cause you and Monsieur de Clagny any remorse.—Oh! never fear, we are absolutely assured of your innocence. If you had had the slightest weakness for that virtuous magistrate, you would have lost all your value in my eyes. I love what is complete. You do not, you cannot love that cold-blooded, dried-up, dumb little usurer in wine-casks and vineyards who plants you here in order to make twenty-five centimes more from his gleanings! Oh! I soon saw that Monsieur de La Baudraye was on a par with our Paris bill-discounters; he has the same nature. Twenty-eight years old, lovely, virtuous, childless—look you, madame, I never saw the problem of virtue more clearly stated. The author of 'Paquita of Seville' must have dreamed many dreams!—I can talk to you of all these matters without the verbal hypocrisy with which young people approach them. I am old before my time, I have no illusions left. Can one retain such things in the profession that I have followed?"

In beginning thus, Lousteau put aside the whole map

of the district of the Tender Passion, in which true love makes such endless rounds; he went straight to his goal and put himself in a position to induce the free proffer of what women demand that men solicit for years; witness the poor procureur du roi, for whom the highest favor consisted in pressing Dinah's arm to his heart a little more coyly than usual as they walked together, the lucky man!

Wherefore, in order not to belie her reputation as a superior woman, Madame de La Baudraye tried to console the Manfred of the *feuilleton* by predicting a whole future of love such as he had never dreamed of.

"You have sought pleasure, but you have never yet loved," she said. "Believe me, true love often occurs in opposition to the ordinary rules of life. Think of Monsieur de Gentz falling in love, in his old age, with Fanny Ellsler, and abandoning the Revolution of July for that dancer's rehearsals."

"I can't understand it," Lousteau replied. "I believe in love, but I no longer believe in woman. There is some defect in me, I doubt not, which prevents my being loved, for I have often been deserted. Perhaps I have too much of the sentiment of the ideal — like all those who have gone deep into reality."

At last Madame de La Baudraye had the privilege of conversing with a man who, living among the cleverest people in Paris, repeated the bold axioms of his usual milieu, its almost ingenuous depravities, its advanced ideas, and who, if he was not a superior man, feigned superiority remarkably well. Étienne had with Dinah all the success of a first performance. Paquita of Sancerre longed for the tempests of Paris, the atmosphere of Paris. She passed one of the pleasantest days of her

life with Lousteau and Bianchon, who told her the curious anecdotes concerning the great men of the day and the clever remarks which will be some day the *ana* of our age: anecdotes and remarks universally known in Paris, but entirely new to her.

Naturally Lousteau had much evil to say of the great female celebrity of Berri, but with the evident purpose of flattering Madame de La Baudraye and leading her on to the ground of literary confidences by representing that author to her as her rival. This praise intoxicated Madame de La Baudraye, who seemed to M. de Clagny, the collector of taxes, and Gatien, on more friendly terms with Étienne than she had been the night before. Those lovers of Dinah bitterly regretted that they had all gone to Sancerre, where they had prated incessantly of the evening at Anzy. Never, to judge by their reports, had such clever things been said before. The hours had flown so fast that one could not see their winged feet. The two Parisians were lauded by them as two prodigies of wit.

## VII.

THESE exaggerations, trumpeted on the Mall, resulted in the arrival of sixteen persons at the château of Anzy in the evening — some in family cabriolets, others in chars-à-bancs, and some unattached bachelors on hired horses. About seven o'clock these provincials made their entrée, with more or less grace, in the immense salon of Anzy, which Dinah, forewarned of the invasion, had illuminated brilliantly, and to which she had given all the splendor of which it was susceptible by removing the gray coverings from the furniture; for she looked upon that evening as one of her great days.

Lousteau, Bianchon, and Dinah exchanged knowing glances as they scrutinized the poses and listened to the remarks of those curiosity-baited visitors. How many invalid ribbons, hereditary laces, ancient flowers rather fraudulent (*artificieuses*) than artificial, flaunted themselves shamelessly upon two-year-old caps!

The wife of President Boirouge, who was a cousin of Bianchon, exchanged a few sentences with the physician, from whom she obtained a gratuitous consultation, describing to him certain nervous pains in the stomach which he recognized as periodical indigestion.

“Simply take some tea every day, an hour after dinner, as the English do, and you’ll be all right; for your trouble is an English malady,” said Bianchon gravely.

“He is certainly a very great doctor,” said the president’s wife, returning to Madame de Clagny, Madame

Popinot-Chandier, and Madame Gorju, wife of the mayor.

“They say,” replied Madame de Clagny behind her fan, “that Dinah sent for him much less on account of the election than to find out the cause of her sterility.”

In the first flush of their triumph Lousteau presented the learned physician as the only possible candidate at the approaching election. But Bianchon, to the great satisfaction of the new sub-prefect, observed that it seemed to him well-nigh impossible to abandon science for politics.

“There are,” he said, “doctors without patients who can afford to be chosen as deputies. In heaven’s name, elect statesmen, thinkers, men of universal knowledge, who are able to raise themselves to the height on which legislators should stand; that is what our Chambers lack, and what our country must have!”

Two or three young men and all the women scrutinized Lousteau as if he were a prestidigitateur.

“Monsieur Gatien Boirouge declares that Monsieur Lousteau earns twenty thousand francs a year writing,” said the mayor’s wife to Madame de Clagny. “Do you believe it?”

“Is it possible, when the procureur du roi gets only three thousand!”

“Monsieur Gatien,” said Madame Chandier, “pray make Monsieur Lousteau speak up; I have n’t heard his voice yet.”

“What pretty boots he has!” said Mademoiselle Chandier to her brother, “and how they shine!”

“Pshaw! it’s polish!”

“Why don’t you get some?”

Lousteau finally concluded that he was *posing* a little



too much, and he recognized in the expressions of the good people of Sancerre indications of the desire that had brought them thither.

“What trick might we play on them?” he thought.

At that moment M. de La Baudraye’s so-called valet de chambre, a farm-hand dressed in livery, brought in the letters and newspapers, and handed the journalist a package of proofs, which he allowed Bianchon to take; for Madame de La Baudraye said to him at sight of the package, whose shape and the string about it were decidedly typographical:—

“What! does literature follow you even here?”

“Not literature,” he replied, “but the review in which I am finishing a story, and which appears ten days hence. I came here with ‘*Conclusion in our next issue*’ hanging over me, and I had to give the printer my address. Oh! we eat bread sold at a very high price by the speculators in blaekened paper! I will draw a picture for you of the eurious breed of editors of reviews.”

“When is the conversation going to begin?” Madame de Clagny asked Dinah, as one asks, “What time are the fireworks to be set off?”

“I thought that we were going to have some stories,” said Madame Popinot-Chandier to her cousin, Madame la Présidente Boirouge.

At that moment, when, like an impatient pit, the Sancerrois were beginning to mutter, Lousteau saw that Bianchon was lost in a reverie inspired by the wrapper about the proofs.

“What’s the matter?” he inquired.

“Why, here’s the prettiest novel you can imagine on an old press-sheet wrapped round your proofs. Look: ‘*Olympia, or Roman Vengeance.*’”

“Let’s see,” said Lousteau, taking the paper that the doctor handed him; and he read aloud these words:

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OLYMPIA,

Cavern. Rinaldo, indignant at the cowardice of his companions, who had no courage except in the open air, and who dared not risk themselves in Rome, cast a scornful glance at them.

“So I am alone?” he said.

He seemed to reflect, then continued:—

“You are miserable wretches! I will go alone, and alone I will seize that rich prey. You hear me!—Adieu!”

“Captain!” said Lamberti, “suppose you should be taken before you succeed?”

“God protect me!” rejoined Rinaldo, pointing to the sky.

With these words he went forth, and met on the road the steward of Bracciano —

“That’s the end of the page,” said Lousteau, to whom everybody had religiously listened.

“He’s reading us his own book,” said Gatien to Madame Popinot’s son.

“From the first words, mesdames,” said the journalist, grasping the opportunity to mystify the Sancerrois, “it is evident that the brigands are in a cavern. What negligence the novelists of those days displayed in the matter of the details, which are described so minutely

and at such length to-day, on the pretext of 'local color'! If the thieves are in a cavern, we ought to have 'pointing to the ceiling,' instead of 'pointing to the sky.' Rinaldo strikes me as a man of decision, and his apostrophe to God has a savor of Italy. There was a bare suggestion of local color in the novel. The deuce! brigands, a cavern, a Lamberti who can reckon chances — I see a whole vaudeville in that page. Add to these fundamental elements a bit of intrigue, a young peasant girl with her hair up and short skirts, and a hundred or more detestable couplets — Oh! mon Dieu! the public will come. — And then, Rinaldo — how that name fits Lafont! Assuming that he has black whiskers, tight-fitting trousers, a cloak, moustaches, a pistol, and a pointed hat, if the manager of the Vaudeville has the courage to pay for a few newspaper articles, there's a certainty of fifty performances at the Vaudeville, and six thousand francs in royalties to the author if I choose to say a good word for the piece in my *feuilleton*. — Let's go on:—

## OR ROMAN VENGEANCE. 197

The Duchesse de Bracciano found her glove. Adolphe, who had picked it up in the grove of orange trees, might well think that there was a touch of coquetry in that carelessness, for at that time the grove was deserted. The sounds of the fête could be heard vaguely in the distance. The *fantoccini* had drawn everybody into the gallery. Never had Olympia seemed more beautiful to her lover. Their glances, alight with the same fire, understood

each other. There was a moment of silence, delicious to their hearts and impossible to describe. They sat on the same bench where they had previously sat in the presence of the Chevalier de Paluzzi and —

“*Malapeste!* what’s become of our Rinaldo?” cried Lousteau. “But what progress in the comprehension of intrigue might not a man of letters make astride this page! The Duchess Olympia is a lady *capable of purposely leaving her gloves in a deserted grove!*”

“Unless one is placed between the oyster and the deputy-chief of a government bureau, the two creations in the zoölogical world that most resemble marble, it is impossible,” said Bianchon, “not to recognize in Olympia —”

“‘A Woman of Thirty!’” hastily interjected Madame de La Baudraye, apprehensive of a too medical conclusion.

“Adolphe is twenty-two then,” retorted the doctor; “for an Italian woman of thirty is like a Parisian woman of forty.”

“With these two conjectures we can reconstruct the plot,” said Lousteau. “And this Chevalier de Paluzzi — eh? What a man! — In these two pages the style is weak; perhaps the author’s a clerk in the consolidated tax office, and has written the novel to pay his tailor.”

“At that time,” said Bianchon, “there was a censorship, and we must be as indulgent to the man who passed under the censor’s seissors in 1805 as to those who went to the scaffold in 1793.”

“Do you understand any of this?” Madame Gorju, the mayor’s wife, timidly asked Madame de Clagny.

The wife of the procureur du roi, who, as M. Gravier expressed it, could have put to flight a young Cossack of 1814, settled back on her hips as a rider does in his stirrups, and made a face at her neighbor which said: "They're looking at us! let's smile as if we understood."

"It's delightful!" said the mayoress to Gatien. "Pray, Monsieur Lousteau, go on."

Lousteau glanced at the two women, veritable Indian pagodas, and succeeded in maintaining his gravity. He thought it best to call "Attention!" before continuing thus:

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE. 209

dress rustled in the silence. Suddenly Cardinal Borborigano appeared before the duchess's eyes. His face wore a frown, his brow seemed overhung by clouds, and a bitter smile played among his wrinkles.

"Madame," he said, "you are suspected. If you are guilty, fly! If you are not, fly none the less, because, virtuous or criminal, you will be in a much better position to defend yourself at a distance."

"I thank your Eminence for your solicitude," she replied; "the Duke of Bracciano will appear whenever I think it necessary to prove that he still lives."

"Cardinal Borborigano!" cried Bianchon. By the Pope's keys! if you don't agree that that name alone

is a magnificent creation, if you don't see in these words, 'dress rustled in the silence,' all the poetic charm of the rôle of Schcdoni conceived by Mistress Radcliffe in 'The Confessional of the Black Penitents,' you are unworthy to read novels."

"To my mind," observed Dinah, who was moved to pity by the eighteen faces that were gazing at the two Parisians, "the plot progresses. I know it all: I am at Rome, I see the corpse of a murdered husband whose wife, fearless and wicked, has made her bed on a volcano. Every night, at every embrace, she says to herself, 'Everything will soon be discovered!'"

"Can't you see her," cried Lousteau, "embracing this Monsieur Adolphe? She strains him to her heart, she tries to put her whole soul into a kiss! Adolphe impresses me as a young man admirably well built, but devoid of wit — one of the sort that Italian women demand. Rinaldo hovers over the plot, which we do not know, but which must be as Corsican as one of Pixérécourt's melodramas. We can imagine, too, that Rinaldo walks across the back of the stage, like the characters in Victor Hugo's plays."

"And perhaps he's the husband!" added Madame de La Baudraye.

"Can you make anything of it all?" Madame Piédefer asked the president's wife.

"It's fascinating," said Dinah to her mother.

All the good Sancerrois opened their eyes to the size of five-franc pieces.

"Go on, I beg," said Madame de La Baudraye.

Lousteau continued: —

216 OLYMPIA,

“Your key!”

“Have you lost it?”

“It’s in the grove.”

“Let us hasten —”

“Can the Cardinal have taken it?”

“No. Here it is.”

“What a peril we have escaped!”

Olympia looked at the key and thought that she recognized her own; but Rinaldo had changed it: his wiles had succeeded, he had the right key in his possession. A modern Cartouche, he was as adroit as he was brave; and, suspecting that a considerable treasure alone could compel a duchess to carry always in her belt —

“Guess what!” cried Lousteau. “The opposite page is n’t here, and there’s nothing to relieve our anxiety except page 212: —

212 OLYMPIA,

“If the key had been lost —”

“He’d be a dead man.”

“Dead! would you not grant the last prayer that he made to you, and give him his liberty on condition that —”

“You do not know him.”

“But —”

“Hush! I took you for my lover, not for my confessor.”

Adolphe held his peace.

“Then there’s Love galloping on a kid, a vignette drawn by Normand and engraved by Duplat,” said Lousteau. “Oh! the names are here.”

“Well, what next?” queried those of the audience who understood.

“Why, it’s the end of the chapter,” Lousteau replied. “The incident of the vignette completely changes my views regarding the author. To have obtained vignettes engraved in wood under the Empire, the author must have been a Councillor of State, or Madame Barthélemy-Hadot, or the late Desforges or Sewrin.”

“‘Adolphe held his peace.’ Ah!” said Bianchon, “the duchess is less than thirty.”

“If there’s no more, make up a conclusion,” said Madame de La Baudraye.

“But, you see,” replied Lousteau, “the sheet was printed on only one side. In typographical parlance, the ‘second side’ — or, to show you better, look — the reverse, which should have been printed, has received an incalculable number of impressions of all sorts; it belongs to the variety of sheets called the ‘make-ready.’ As it would be a horribly long story to tell you wherein consist the vagaries of a ‘make-ready’ sheet, understand simply that it can no more retain the impression of the first twelve pages that the presses print on it than you could retain a recollection of the first blow dealt you if a pasha had sentenced you to receive a hundred and fifty on the soles of your feet.”

“I am like a crazy person,” said Madame Popinot-Chandier to M. Gravier; “I am trying to understand about the Councillor of State, the Cardinal, the key, and that proof-sheet —”

“You have n’t the key to the joke,” said M. Gravier;



“well, no more have I, fair lady; set your mind at rest.”

“But there’s another sheet,” said Bianchon, looking at the table on which the proofs lay.

“Good!” said Lousteau, “it’s sound and whole! It has the signature ‘IV, J, 2d edition.’ Mesdames, the IV indicates the fourth volume; the J, the tenth letter of the alphabet, indicates the tenth signature. It seems to me to be demonstrated, therefore, that the novel, in four twelvemo volumes, achieved a success, unless the bookseller was crafty, for there were two editions. Let us read on and solve the riddle:—

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE 217

corridor; but realizing that he was pursued by the duchess’s retainers, Rinaldo

“Go to the devil!”

“Oh!” said Madame de La Baudraye, “important events must have happened between your last fragment and this page.”

“Say rather, madame, this precious ‘made-ready sheet’! But the trial sheet on which the duchess forgot her gloves in the grove—does that belong in the fourth volume? Deuce take it! Let us continue:—

can think of no surer refuge than to go at once to the underground passage where the treasures of the house of Bracciano are certain to be. As light of foot as the Camilla of the Latin poet, he hastens to the secret entrance of

the Baths of Vespasian. The torches already shone upon the walls when the adroit Rinaldo, discovering, with the perspicacity with which nature had endowed him, the door concealed in the wall, instantly disappeared. A horrible thought flashed through Rinaldo's mind even as the lightning rends the clouds. He had imprisoned himself!—He felt

“Oh! this perfect sheet, and the fragment of the trial sheet follow each other. The last page of the fragment is 212, and we have here 217. Indeed, if, in the trial sheet, Rinaldo, who has stolen the key to the Duchess Olympia's treasure-chamber, substituting a similar one for it, finds himself in this perfect sheet in the palace of the Dukes of Bracciano, the romance seems to me to be progressing to some sort of a conclusion. I trust it's as clear to you as it's becoming to me. As I look at it, the fête's at an end, the lovers have returned to the Bracciano palace, it's one o'clock in the morning, and Rinaldo is about to do a good stroke of business.”

“And Adolphe?” queried President Boirouge, who was supposed to be a little indecent in language.

“And such a style!” said Bianchon: “Rinaldo, *who thinks of a refuge to go!*”

“Evidently neither Maradan, nor Treuttel and Wurtz, nor Doguereau, printed this novel,” said Lous-teau; “for they had in their employ correctors who revised their proofs — a luxury in which our publishers of to-day ought to indulge themselves; authors would be mightily obliged to them. It must have been some small dealer on the quay.”

“What quay is that?” said a lady to her neighbor.  
“He was talking about baths just now.”

“Go on,” said Madame de La Baudraye.

“In any event, it is n’t by a Councillor of State,” said Bianchon.

“Perhaps it’s by Madame Hadot,” said Lousteau.

“Why do they stick Madame Hadot of La Charité into it?” the president’s wife asked her son.

“This Madame Hadot, my dear présidente,” said the châtelaine, “was a female author who lived under the Consulate.”

“What! did women write under the Emperor?” queried Madame Popinot-Chandier.

“What about Madame de Genlis and Madame de Staël?” said the procureur du roi, hurt for Dinah’s sake by that question.

“Oh!”

“Go on, pray,” said Madame de La Baudraye to Lousteau.

Lousteau resumed his reading:—

“Page 218!”

along the wall with feverish haste, and uttered a cry of despair when he had sought in vain for indications of the secret lock. It was impossible for him to refuse to realize the ghastly truth. The door, skilfully contrived to further the duchess’s vengeance, could not be opened from within. Rinaldo pressed his cheek against the wall at divers places, but could feel nowhere the

warm air from the gallery. He hoped to find a crack which would indicate the spot where the wall came to an end, but nothing, nothing!—The wall seemed to be a single block of marble.

Thereupon he emitted a dull hyena-like roar.

“How now! we thought that we had recently invented hyena-like cries,” said Lousteau; “but the literature of the Empire was familiar with them and brought them into play with some knowledge of natural history, as is proved by the word ‘dull’ (*sourd*).”

“Make no comments, monsieur,” said Madame de La Baudraye.

“There you are!” exclaimed Bianchon; “*interest*, that romantic monster, has taken you by the collar, as it took me just now.”

“Read on,” cried the procureur. “I understand.”

“The conceited ass!” whispered the president to his neighbor the sub-prefect.

“He means to flatter Madame de La Baudraye,” replied the new official.

“Well, I will read the next page,” said Lousteau solemnly.

The journalist was listened to in the most complete silence.

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE 219

A deep groan answered Rinaldo’s cry; but in his bewilderment he took it for an echo, so weak and

faint it was! it could not have come from a human breast.

“Santa Maria!” said the unknown.

“If I leave this place, I shall never be able to find it again!” thought Rinaldo, when he recovered his usual sang-froid.

“Who is there?” asked the voice.

“Hein!” said the brigand, “do the toads talk here?”

“I am the Duke of Bracciano!

220

OLYMPIA,

Whoever you be, if you do not belong to the duchess, come, in the name of all the saints — come to me”

“I must first know where you are, monsieur le duc,” replied Rinaldo, with the impertinence of a man who sees that he is necessary.

“I see you, my friend, for my eyes have become accustomed to the darkness. Look you — walk straight ahead. Good. Turn to the left. Come — this way. Now we are together.”

Rinaldo, putting forth his hands through prudence, touched an iron bar.

“You are deceiving me!” he cried.

“No, you touched my cage — Sit

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE. 221

you down on a block of marble you will find there."

"How can the Duke of Bracciano be in a cage?" asked the bandit.

"My friend, I have been here thirty months, standing upright, unable to sit down. But who are you?"

"I am Rinaldo, Prince of the Campagna, the leader of eighty-four brave fellows whom the law wrongfully calls criminals, whom all the ladies admire, and whom the judges hang according to an ancient custom."

"God be praised! I am saved! An honest man would have been afraid; whereas I am sure that I can

222

OLYMPIA,

very soon come to an understanding with you. O my dear liberator," cried the duke, "you are probably armed to the teeth?"

"*E verissimo!*"

"Have you any —"

"Yes, files and nippers. — *Corpo di Bacco!* I have just borrowed innumerable treasures from the Bracciani."

"You shall have a goodly share of them, my dear Rinaldo, and perhaps I will go hunting men in your company."

“You surprise me, *Excellenza!*”

“Hark ye, Rinaldo! I will say naught to you of the thirst for vengeance that gnaws at my heart. I have been here thirty months — you are an Italian, you will under-

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE 223

stand me! Ah! my friend, my weariness and my horrifying captivity are nothing compared with the suffering that rends my heart. The Duchess of Bracciano is still one of the loveliest women in Rome; I loved her enough to be jealous of her.”

“You — her husband!”

“Yes; I was wrong perhaps.”

“Certes, that sort of thing is not usual,” said Rinaldo.

“My jealousy was aroused by the duchess’s conduct,” continued the duke. The event proved that I was right. A young Frenchman loved Olympia, his love was returned, I had proofs of their mutual affection —

“A thousand pardons, *mesdames,*” said Lousteau, “but, you see, it is impossible for me not to ask you to observe how the literature of the Empire went straight to the fact, without details, — which seems to me characteristic of primitive times. The literature of

that period occupied a middle ground between the summary method of the chapters of 'Telemaque' and the indictments of the Department of Justice. It had ideas, but it did not express them, the disdainful creature! It observed, but did not communicate the result of its observations to any one, the miser! Fouché was the only man who disclosed his observations to any one. 'Literature contented itself then,' according to the expression of one of the most idiotic critics of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes,' 'with a pure sketch and the clean-cut outline of all the figures *à l'antique*; it did not dance on epochs!' I should think not, for it had no epochs, it had no phrases to show in changing colors; it told you: 'Lubin loved Toinette, Toinette did n't love Lubin; Lubin killed Toinette, and the gendarmes took Lubin, who was put in prison, taken before the assizes, and guillotined.' — A pure sketch, a clean-cut outline! What a fine drama! — Well, today the barbarians make phrases (*mots*) assume different colors."

"And sometimes dead men (*morts*)," said M. de Clagny

"Ah!" retorted Lousteau, "so you indulge in those R's, do you?"

"What does he mean?" queried Madame de Clagny, disturbed by the play upon words.

"I seem to be walking in an oven," replied the mayoress.

"His joke would lose by being explained," observed Gatien.

"To-day," continued Lousteau, "the novelists draw characters; and, instead of the clean-cut outline, they



lay bare the human heart and arouse your interest, it may be in Toinette, it may be in Lubin."

"For my part," said Bianchon, "I am alarmed by the education the public is receiving in the matter of literature. Like the Russians who, after being beaten by Charles XII, ended by learning how to fight, so the reader has ended by learning the art. In the old days nobody asked anything of the novel but that it should be interesting; as for style, nobody cared for that, not even the author; as for ideas, zero; as for local color, not a hint of it. By insensible degrees the reader has come to demand style, interest, pathos, and positive knowledge; he has insisted on the literary *five senses*, invention, style, thought, knowledge, sentiment; and then the critic appeared, meddling in everything. The critic, incapable of inventing anything except slander, claimed that every work that is not the output of a complete brain is imperfect. A few charlatans, like Walter Scott, who were able to assemble the literary five senses, thereupon appeared. Those who had only wit, only knowledge, only style, or only sentiment, those maimed, acephalous creatures, those cripples, those literary one-eyed men, began to shriek that all was lost; they preached crusades against the fellows who were ruining the profession, or else they denied their works."

"That's the story of your latest literary quarrels," said Dinah.

"For mercy's sake!" cried M. de Clagny, "let's return to the Duke of Bracciano."

To the great chagrin of the assemblage, Lousteau resumed the reading of the "perfect sheet."

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OLYMPIA,

Thereupon I determined to make certain of my misfortune, so that I might wreak my revenge under the wing of Providence and the law. The duchess divined my plans. We contended in thought before we contended poison in hand. We attempted mutually to inspire each other with a confidence we did not feel: I, in order to induce her to take a draught, she to seize my person. She was a woman, and she carried the day; for women have one snare more to set than we, and I fell into it. I was happy; but the next morning I woke in this iron cage: I roared all day in this dark cavern, which lies

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE. 225

beneath the duchess's bedroom. At night, by a clever arrangement of weights, I was lifted through the floor and saw the duchess in her lover's arms; she threw me a crust of bread, my meagre allowance of every evening.

“Such has been my life for thirty months! In this marble dungeon my cries cannot reach any ear. No chance favors me. I had abandoned hope. You see, the duchess's bedroom is at the extremity of the palace, and when I go thither my voice cannot be heard by any one. Each time that I see my wife she shows me the poison I had prepared

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OLYMPIA,

for her and her lover. I beg her to give it me for myself, but she denies me death, she gives me bread and I eat it! I have done well to eat, to live — I had not reckoned on the bandits.”

“True, Exceellenza, when those fools of honest folk are sleeping, we are awake, we —”

“Ah! Rinaldo, all my treasures are yours; we will share them like brothers; I would gladly give you everything, even my duehy.”

“Exceellenza, obtain for me from the Pope absolution *in articulo mortis*; that will enable me to ply my trade more vigorously.”

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE. 227

“What you will; but file the bars of my eage and lend me your dagger. We have barely time — work quickly. Ah! if my teeth were files! I have tried to gnaw this iron.”

“Exceellenza,” said Rinaldo, in reply to the duke’s last words, “I have already sawed one bar.”

“You are a god!”

“Your lady was at the Princess Villaviciosa’s festa; she has returned with her little Frenchman — she is drunk with love, so we have time enough.”

“Have you finished?”

“Yes.”

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OLYMPIA,

“Your dagger!” demanded the duke eagerly.

“’Tis here.”

“’Tis well. I heard the noise of the secret spring.”

“Do not forget me!” said the bandit, who knew what to expect of gratitude.

“No more than I forget my father,” said the duke.

“Adieu!” said Rinaldo. “How he flies up!” he added, as he watched the duke pass from sight. “No more than he forgets his father, he said! If that is how he proposes to remember me! — Ah! and I swore an oath never to injure a woman!”

But let us for a moment leave

OR ROMAN VENGEANCE. 229

the bandit absorbed in his reflection, and ascend, like the duke, to the apartments of the palace.

“Here’s another vignette — a Cupid riding a snail! Page 230 is blank,” said the journalist. “Then follow two other blank pages, occupied by the legend so delightful to write when one has the lucky ill-luck to be a writer of novels: ‘Conclusion’!”

CONCLUSION.

Never had the duchess been so lovely; she came forth from her bath attired like a goddess, and seeing Adolphe lying voluptuously

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OLYMPIA,

on piles of cushions, —

“You are very beautiful,” she said.

“And you, Olympia!”

“You still love me?”

“Ever more dearly,” he said.

“Ah! only the French know how to love!” cried the duchess. “Will you love me dearly to-night?”

“Yes.”

“Then, come!”

And with a gesture of hatred and love, whether because Cardinal Borborigiano had reinstated her husband more firmly in her heart, or because she felt that she had more love to display to him, she pressed the spring and extended her arms to —

“That’s all!” cried Lousteau; “the printer’s devil tore off the rest when he wrapped up my proofs; but it’s quite enough to show that the author gave hopes.”

“I can’t make head or tail of it,” said Gatien Boirouge, first to break the silence of the Saneerrois.

“No more can I,” rejoined M. Gravier, profoundly exasperated.

“Nevertheless, it’s a novel written during the Empire,” said Lousteau.

“Any one can see,” said M. Gravier, “by the words he puts in the bandit’s mouth, that the author does n’t know Italy. Bandits don’t indulge in such *concetti*.”

Madame Gorju went to Bianchon, seeing that he

was lost in thought, and said, pointing to her daughter, Euphémie Gorju, who had a fine *dot* in prospect: —

“What twaddle! The prescriptions you write are better than such stuff.”

The mayoress had cogitated long upon that sentence, which, in her opinion, indicated a powerful intellect.

“Oh, madame, we must be indulgent, for we have heard only a score of pages out of a thousand,” replied Bianchon, glancing at Mademoiselle Gorju, whose figure threatened to become like that of a woman in her first pregnancy.

“Well, Monsieur de Clagny,” said Lousteau, “we were talking last night of vengeances devised by husbands; what do you say to those that the wives devise?”

“I think,” replied the procureur du roi, “that the novel was n’t written by a Councillor of State, but by a woman. In outlandish conceptions a woman’s imagination goes much further than a man’s; witness Mrs. Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein,’ ‘Leone Leoni,’ Ann Radcliffe’s works, and Camille Maupin’s ‘Nouveau Prométhée.’”

Dinah gazed fixedly at M. de Clagny, giving him to understand, by an expression which froze his blood, that, despite all those illustrious examples, she took that reflection as meant for “Paquita of Seville.”

“Pshaw!” said little La Baudraye, “the Duke of Bracciano, whom his wife put in a cage and whom she compelled to look at her every night in her lover’s arms, is going to kill her. And you call that vengeance? Our courts and society are much more cruel.”

“Wherein?” queried Lousteau.

“Upon my word, there’s little La Baudraye talking!” said President Boirouge to his wife.

“Why, just let the woman live, with a small allowance, and society turns its back on her; she has neither fine dresses nor consideration — two things which, in my judgment, are the whole of woman,” said the little old man.

“But she has happiness,” rejoined Madame de La Baudraye superbly.

“No,” retorted the dwarf, as he lighted his candle preparatory to going to bed, “for she has a lover.”

“For a man who thinks of nothing but vine-cuttings and standels,” said Loustcau, “he has a sharp wit.”

“Surely he must have something,” rejoined Bianchon.

Madame de La Baudraye, the only one who was able to understand Bianchon’s witticism, began to laugh, so knowingly and bitterly at once that the doctor guessed the secret of her private life; indeed, her premature wrinkles had occupied his thoughts since the morning. But Dinah, for her part, did not divine the menacing prophecy which her husband had just hurled at her head in an epigram, and which the late excellent Abbé Duret would not have failed to explain to her. Little La Baudraye had surprised in Dinah’s eyes, when she looked at the journalist as they tossed the ball of pleasantry back and forth, that luminous flash of affection which gilds the glance of a woman at the hour when prudence vanishes and the sway of impulse begins. Dinah no more paid heed to her husband’s hint to observe the proprieties than Loustcau took to himself Dinah’s covert warnings on the day of his arrival. Any other than Bianchon would have been surprised by Loustcau’s speedy success; but he was not even hurt by the preference that Dinah awarded to the *Feuilleton* over the Faculty, so thoroughly was he a

physician! In truth Dinah, having grand qualities herself, was certain to be more accessible to wit than to grandeur. Love ordinarily prefers contrasts to similitudes. The doctor's outspokeeness and bonhomje, his profession, all worked against him. This is why: women who desire to love — and Dinah desired to love as much as to be loved — have an instinctive horror of men devoted to tyrannical occupations; however superior they may be, they are still women in the matter of rivalry. Poet and journalist, Lousteau the rake, embellished by his misanthropy, offered the gaudy tinsel of intellect and the half-idle life which attract women. The four-square good sense, the far-seeing glance of the truly superior man weighed upon Dinah, who did not admit her pettiness to herself.

“The doctor may be more of a man than the journalist,” she said to herself, “but I don't like him so well.”

Then she thought of the obligations of the profession, and wondered whether a woman could ever be anything else than a *subject* in the eyes of a physician, who sees so many subjects during his day! The first branch of the thought written by Bianchon in her album was the result of a professional observation which fell too straight upon womankind for Dinah not to be struck by it. And lastly, Bianchon, whose large practice forbade him to prolong his stay, was to leave on the morrow. What woman, unless with Cupid's fabled arrow quivering in her heart, can make up her mind in so short a time!

These trivial things, which bring about great catastrophes, once seen in bulk by Bianchon, he told Lousteau in four words the strange opinion he had formed concerning Madame de La Baudraye, which caused the





A. Robelin



journalist the keenest surprise. While the two Parisians were whispering together, a tempest arose against the hostess among the Sancerrois, who had no comprehension either of the paraphrase or of Lousteau's comments. Far from seeing therein the romance that the *procurcur du roi*, the sub-prefect, Lebas the first deputy, M. de La Baudraye, and Dinah had deduced from it, all the women gathered about the tea-table could see naught but a mystification, and accused the Muse of Sancerre of having had a share in it. They had all expected to pass a charming evening, and had strained to no purpose their mental faculties. Nothing disgusts the people of the provinces more than the idea of being used as a plaything for Parisians.

Madame Piédefer left the tea-table to say to her daughter: —

“Pray go and speak to those ladies; they're very much offended by your conduct.”

Lousteau could not forbear to remark Dinah's manifest superiority to the *élite* of the women of Sancerre: she was the best dressed, her movements were instinct with grace, her complexion assumed a delicious purity in the lamplight — in a word, she stood out against that tapestry of aged faces, of ill-dressed, shy-mannered girls, like a queen in the midst of her court. The Parisian faces grew indistinct; Lousteau was becoming used to provincial life; and if he had too much imagination to be overpowered by the regal magnificence of that *château*, by its exquisite carvings, by the antique beauties of its interior, he likewise knew too much not to be aware of the value of the furnishings which enriched that gem of the Renaissance. And so, when the Sancerrois had retired, one by one, escorted to the door

by Dinah — for they all had at least an hour's journey; when nobody remained in the salon save M. de Clagny, M. Lebas, Gatién, and M. Gravier, all of whom were to sleep at Anzy, the journalist had already changed his mind about Dinah. His opinion had performed the very evolution that Madame de La Baudraye had had the boldness to outline to him at their first meeting.

"Oh! how they'll talk about us on the way home!" cried the châtelaine, returning to the salon after escorting to their carriages the president and his wife, and Madame and Mademoiselle Popinot-Chandier.

The rest of the evening had its agreeable side. *En petit comité* every one contributed to the conversation his or her share of epigrams concerning the various figures the Sancerrois had cut during Lousteau's comments on the wrapper of his proofs.

"My dear fellow," Bianchon said to Lousteau as they were going to bed (they had been quartered together in a huge room with two beds), "you will be the lucky mortal chosen by this lady *née* Piédefer!"

"You think so?"

"Oh! it's easily explained: you are supposed, here, to have had lots of adventures in Paris, and for a woman there is in a man with that reputation a something or other inflammatory, which attracts her and makes him agreeable to her. Is it the vanity roused by the hope of making her memory triumphant over hosts of others? Does she apply to his experience, as a patient overpays a famous doctor? Or is she simply flattered to arouse anew a blasé heart?"

"The senses and vanity count for so much in love that all your conjectures may be true," Lousteau replied. "But if I stay behind, it's on account of the

certificate of sophisticated innocence that you give Dinah. She is lovely, is n't she?"

"Love will make her charming," said the physician. "And then, after all, she'll be, one day or another, a rich widow! And a child would procure her the enjoyment of the fortune."

"Why, it's a good action to love the woman!" cried Lousteau.

"Once a mother, she will fill out again, the wrinkles will disappear, and she'll not look over twenty."

"Well," said Lousteau, rolling himself in his sheets, "if you care to help me to-morrow, yes, to-morrow, I— However, good-night."

## VIII.

THE next day Madame de La Baudraye, to whom her husband, six months before, had given a pair of horses that he used in ploughing, and an ancient calèche that rattled like old iron, conceived the plan of driving Bianchon to Cosne, where he could take the Lyon diligence as it passed. She took her mother and Lousteau, but she proposed to drop her mother at La Baudraye, to go on to Cosne with the two Parisians, and to return alone with Étienne.

She made a charming toilette, which the journalist scrutinized with interest: bronzed shoes, gray silk stockings, an organdy gown, a green scarf with long ends of a different shade, and a lovely hood of black lace trimmed with flowers. As for Lousteau, the rascal had placed himself on a war footing: varnished boots, trousers of English material creased in front, a waistcoat cut very low, displaying a shirt of superfine linen and the cascades of black *broché* satin of his best cravat, and a black coat, very short and light.

The procureur and M. Gravier exchanged a significant glance when they saw the two Parisians in the calèche, and themselves, like two zanies, at the foot of the steps. M. de La Baudraye, as he waved his little hand in salutation to the doctor from the elevation of the top step, could not help smiling when he heard M. de Clagny say to M. Gravier:—

“You ought to have gone with them on horseback.”

At that moment Gatien, mounted on M. de La

Baudraye's placid mare, ambled along the path leading from the stables and joined the calèche.

"Ah! good!" said the collector of taxes; "the boy has taken his station as orderly."

"What a bore!" cried Dinah, when she spied Gatien. "In thirteen years — for I have been married almost thirteen years — I have never had three hours of liberty."

"Married, madame?" said the journalist, smiling. "You remind me of a remark of the late Michaud, who said so many clever things. He was starting for Palestine, and his friends remonstrated with him about his age and the dangers of such an expedition. 'And then, too,' said one of them, 'you are married.' — 'Oh! but so little!' he replied."

Even the strait-laced Madame Piédefer could not help smiling.

"I should n't be surprised to see Monsieur de Clagny appear on my pony, to complete the escort," cried Dinah.

"Oh! if the procureur du roi does n't join us," said Lousteau, "you can easily get rid of this little youth when we reach Sancerre. Bianchon will find that he has left something on some table or other, — say, the manuscript of the first lecture of his course, — and you must ask Gatien to go back to Anzy and get it."

This ruse, simple as it was, put Madame de La Baudraye in good humor. The drive from Anzy to Sancerre, from which the views are magnificent at certain points, and from which the superb sheet of the Loire often produces the effect of a lake, passed merrily enough, for Dinah was happy to be so well understood. They talked of love from a theoretical

standpoint — which enables those who are friends *in petto* to take the measure of their hearts, so to speak. The journalist adopted a tone of refined corruption to prove that love obeyed no law, that the characters of the lovers varied its hazards *ad infinitum*, that the incidents of social life added still more to the variety of those phenomena, and that everything was possible, everything true, in respect to that sentiment; that a certain woman, after holding out a long while against all sorts of seduction, even against genuine passion, might succumb in a few hours to an idea, to an interior tempest the secret of which God alone knew!

“Tell me, is n’t that the key to all the adventures that we have been telling each other for three days?” he said.

For three days Dinah’s vivid imagination had been engrossed by the most insidious tales, and the conversation of the two Parisians had acted upon her after the manner of the most dangerous books. Lousteau followed with his eye the effect of that clever manœuvre, in order to grasp the moment when the victim, whose inclination was hidden beneath the abstraction born of hesitancy, should be completely dazzled.

Dinah desired to show La Baudraye to the two men, and there was played the comedy previously agreed upon, of the manuscript left by Bianchon in his bedroom at Anzy. Gatien set off at a gallop, in obedience to his sovereign’s command; Madame Piédefer went to make some purchases at Sancerre, and Dinah, alone with the two friends, started for Cosne. Lousteau took his seat beside the châtelaine, and Bianchon sat opposite them. The conversation of the two friends was affectionate and overflowing with pity for the lot of



that elect soul, so little understood, and, above all, placed amid such evil surroundings. Bianchon aided the journalist admirably by making fun of the procureur, the collector, and Gatien; there was a something contemptuous in his remarks, which Madame de La Baudraye dared not forbid her admirers.

"I can understand perfectly," said the physician as they crossed the Loirc, "the state you have been in. It was out of the question that you should be accessible to anything other than a head love, which often leads to love of the heart; and certainly not one of those men is capable of disguising those features of sensual passion which are odious in the eyes of a refined woman at the outset of her life. To-day love has become a necessity to you."

"A necessity!" cried Dinah, staring at the physician. "Must I love by prescription, pray?"

"If you go on living as you are living now," replied Bianchon magisterially, "you will be frightful to look at in three years."

"Monsieur!" said Madame de La Baudraye, almost terrified.

"Pardon my friend," said Lousteau to the baroness in a jesting tone; "he is always a physician, and love is to him a question of hygiene. But he is n't selfish, he is evidently thinking solely of you, since he is going away within an hour."

At Cosne a considerable number of people gathered about the old repainted calèche, on whose panels were emblazoned the arms given to the neo-La Baudraye: *gules: a balance or; on a chief azure three cross-crosslets argent; for supporters, two greyhounds silver, collared of the third and chained gold.* The ironical device,

“*Deo sic patet fides et hominibus*,” had been inflicted on the converted Calvinist by the sarcastic d’Hozier.

“Let’s take a walk, they’ll come and tell us when it’s time for you to go,” said the baroness, leaving her coachman as sentry.

She took Bianchon’s arm, and the physician started along the river-bank at so rapid a pace that the journalist had to remain behind. A significant wink on the doctor’s part sufficed to inform Lousteau that he proposed to forward his cause.

“Étienne has impressed you favorably,” said Bianchon to Dinah; “he has spoken strongly to your imagination. We talked about you last evening, and he loves you. But he is a fickle creature, hard to anchor, and his poverty condemns him to live in Paris, while everything bids you live in Sancerre. Look upon life from a high plane: make Lousteau your friend, don’t be exacting; he will come and pass a few happy days with you three times a year, and you will owe to him beauty, happiness, and fortune. Monsicur de La Baudraye may live a hundred years, but he may also die in nine days, if he should forget to put on the flannel chest-protector he wears; so do nothing to endanger your welfare. Be prudent, both of you. Don’t say a word — I have read your heart.”

Madame de La Baudraye was defenceless against assertions so precise and in presence of a man who posed as physician, confessor, and confidential friend at once.

“How can you believe,” she said, “that a woman can bear to enter into rivalry with a journalist’s mistresses? Monsieur Lousteau seems to me very pleasant; but he is blasé,” etc., etc.

They retraced their steps, and Dinah had to check the flow of words beneath which she was trying to hide her intentions; for Étienne, who seemed absorbed by the material progress of Cosne, was coming toward them.

“Believe me,” said Bianchon, “he needs to be loved — seriously; and if he changes his mode of life his talent will be the gainer.”

Dinah’s coachman came up out of breath to announce the arrival of the diligence, and they quickened their pace. Madame de La Baudraye walked between the two Parisians.

“Adieu, my children,” said Bianchon, as they entered Cosne; “bless you.”

He dropped Madame de La Baudraye’s arm, leaving it to Lousteau, who pressed it to his heart with a fond pressure. What a difference to Dinah! Étienne’s arm caused her the keenest emotion, whereas Bianchon’s had aroused no sensation whatever. There passed between her and the journalist one of those flaming glances which are more explicit than avowals.

“None but a provincial would wear an organdy gown — the only material which can’t be smoothed after it’s tumbled,” said Lousteau to himself. “This woman, who has chosen me for her lover, is going to make difficulties because of her dress. If she had put on a foulard gown, I should be happy. What’s the use of her holding out?”

While Lousteau was wondering whether Dinah had intended to set up against herself an impossible barrier by selecting an organdy gown, Bianchon, assisted by the coachman, was putting his boxes on the diligence. At last he came back to salute Dinah, who seemed excessively affectionate to him.

“Return, madame la baronne, leave me. Gatien will soon be here,” he whispered to her. “It is late,” he added, aloud. “Adieu!”

“Adieu, great man!” cried Lousteau, shaking hands with Bianchon.

When the journalist and Madame de La Baudraye, seated side by side in the old calèche, recrossed the Loire, they both hesitated to speak. In such a position the word by which the silence is broken may have a terrifying significance.

“Do you know how I love you?” said the journalist at last, point-blank.

Victory might flatter Lousteau, but defeat would cause him no chagrin. That indifference was the secret of his audacity. He took Madame de La Baudraye’s hand as he uttered those explicit words, and squeezed it in both of his; but Dinah gently withdrew it.

“Yes, I am quite as well worth while as a grisette or an actress,” she said jokingly, but in a trembling voice; “but do you think that a woman who, despite her absurdities, has some intelligence, has reserved the most precious treasures of her heart for a man who can see in her only a fleeting pleasure? I am not surprised to hear from your lips a word that so many men have said to me before; but —”

The coachman turned.

“Here is Monsieur Gatien,” he said.

“I love you, I want you, you shall be mine, for I have never felt for any woman the passion you have aroused in me!” said Lousteau in Dinah’s ear.

“In spite of myself, perhaps?” was her smiling retort.

“At all events, my honor demands that you should look as if you had been vigorously attacked,” said the Parisian, to whom the ominous propriety of the organdy suggested a most laughable plan.

Before Gatien had reached the end of the bridge, the impudent journalist rumbled the organdy gown so dexterously that Dinah found herself not fit to be seen.

“O monsieur!” she exclaimed majestically.

“You defied me,” was the reply.

But Gatien galloped up with the speed of a hoodwinked lover. To recover Madame de La Baudraye’s esteem in some measure, Lousteau attempted to conceal her tumbled dress from Gatien, by leaning from the carriage, on Dinah’s side, to speak to him.

“Hurry to our inn,” he said; “there’s time enough — the diligence does n’t start for half an hour. The manuscript’s on the table in the room that Bianchon occupied; he must have it, for he could n’t deliver his lecture without it.”

“Pray go, Gatien!” said Madame de La Baudraye, with a most despotie glance at her youthful adorer.

The boy, compelled by her insistence, turned about and rode away at full speed.

“To La Baudraye, quickly!” Lousteau called to the coachman; “Madame la baronne is n’t well. — Your mother alone will be in the secret of my stratagem,” he said, resuming his seat by Dinah.

“Do you call that infamous performance a stratagem?” said Madame de La Baudraye, forcing back a tear which was quickly dried by the flame of mortified pride.

She leaned back in her corner of the calèche, folded her arms across her breast, and gazed at the Loire,

the fields, everything except Lousteau. Thereupon the journalist assumed a caressing tone, and talked all the way to La Baudraye, where Dinah rushed from the calèche into the house, trying not to be seen by any one. In her distress she threw herself on a sofa, to weep.

“If I am an object of horror, of hatred, or of scorn to you,” said Lousteau, who had followed her, “why, I will go.” And the rake knelt at Dinah’s feet.

It was at this critical moment that Madame Piédefer appeared.

“Well, well!” she said to her daughter, “what’s the matter with you? What’s going on?”

“Give your daughter another dress to put on at once,” said the audacious Parisian in the pious lady’s ear.

Hearing the frantic galloping of Gatien’s steed, Dinah rushed into her bedroom, whither her mother followed her.

“There’s nothing at the inn!” said Gatien to Lousteau, who went out to meet him.

“And you did n’t find anything at the château of Anzy, either!”

“You have been making a fool of me,” retorted Gatien sourly.

“To the full,” Lousteau assented. “Madame de La Baudraye thought it very ill-bred of you to attend her without being asked. Take my word for it, it’s a wretched way to seduce women to bore them to death. Dinah hoodwinked you, and you made her laugh; that’s a success that none of you have had with her for thirteen years, and you owe it to Bianchon, for your cousin is the author of ‘the farce of the manuscript’! Will the horse carry you back?” he asked jestingly, while Gatien

asked himself whether or not he ought to lose his temper.

“The horse!” echoed Gatien.

At this moment Madame de La Baudraye appeared, in a velvet dress, accompanied by her mother, who cast an angry glance at Lousteau. In Gatien’s presence it would have been imprudent for Dinah to appear cold or severe with the journalist, who, taking advantage of that circumstance, offered the false Lucrece his arm; but she refused it.

“Are you determined to dismiss a man who has consecrated his whole life to you?” he said, as he walked beside her; “I will stop in Sancerre and go away to-morrow.”

“Are you coming, mother?” said Dinah, thus evading a reply to the direct appeal by which Lousteau tried to force her to make up her mind.

The Parisian assisted the mother into the carriage; next, he assisted Madame de La Baudraye, taking her gently by the arm; then took his seat opposite with Gatien, who left the mare at La Baudraye.

“You have changed your dress,” said Gatien maladroitly to Dinah.

“Madame la baronne was chilled by the fresh wind from the Loire,” Lousteau replied; “Bianchon advised her to dress warmly.”

Dinah turned as red as a poppy, and Madame Piédefer assumed a stern expression.

“Poor Bianchon! he’s on the way to Paris. What a noble heart!” exclaimed Lousteau.

“Oh yes!” assented Madame de La Baudraye; “he’s a great man, and so *gentlemanly!*”

“We were in such high spirits when we started,”

said Lousteau; “and now you are feeling poorly, and you speak to me bitterly — and why? Are n’t you accustomed, pray, to being told that you are lovely and bright? For my part, I make the announcement, before Gatien here, that I abandon Paris, I am going to remain at Sancerre and increase the number of your *cavalières serventes*. I have felt so young here in my native province; I have already forgotten Paris and its corruption and its ennui and its wearisome pleasures. Yes, my life seems to me to be purified, as it were —”

Dinah let Lousteau talk without looking at him; but there was a moment when the serpent’s improvised oration became so clever under the effort he made to counterfeit passion by phrases and suggestions whose meaning, unfathomable to Gatien, was as clear as day to Dinah’s heart, that she raised her eyes to his face. That look seemed to fill Lousteau with joy; he redoubled his efforts and at last made Dinah laugh.

When, at a time when her pride has been wounded so cruelly, a woman laughs, all security is at an end. When they entered the great gravelled courtyard, with its flower-bedecked bowling-green, which sets off the façade of Anzy so effectively, the journalist said: —

“When women love us, they forgive us everything, even our crimes; when they don’t love us, they forgive us nothing, not even our virtues! Do you forgive me?” he continued in Dinah’s ear, pressing her arm against his heart with a tender gesture.

Dinah could not help smiling.

During dinner and throughout the evening Lousteau was charming with his gayety and high spirits; but, while thus depicting his intoxication, he fell a-musing at odd moments, like one absorbed by his good fortune.



After the coffee Madame de La Baudraye and her mother left the men to walk in the gardens.

"Did you notice," M. Gravier asked the procureur du roi, "that Madame de La Baudraye, who went away in an organdy gown, came back dressed in velvet?"

"When she got into the carriage at Cosne, her dress caught on a copper button and was torn from top to bottom," said Lousteau.

"Oho!" exclaimed Gatien, pierced to the heart by the cruel difference between the journalist's two explanations.

Lousteau, who reckoned upon Gatien's surprise, seized his arm and pinched it, to enjoin silence upon him. A few moments later, he left Dinah's three adorers to themselves and took possession of little La Baudraye. Gatien was thereupon questioned concerning the events of the expedition. M. Gravier and M. de Clagny were stupefied to learn that Dinah had been alone with Lousteau on the return from Cosne, but even more stupefied by the Parisian's two versions of the change of dress. The result was that the attitude of the discomfited trio was exceedingly embarrassed during the evening. The next morning each of them had business which compelled him to leave Anzy, where Dinah was left with her mother, her husband, and Lousteau.

The spleen of the three Sancerrois aroused a great outcry in the town. The downfall of the Muse of Berri, the Nivernais, and the Morvan was accompanied by a veritable charivari of calumny and slander and diverse conjectures, among which the story of the organdy gown stood in the front rank. Never had a toilet of Dinah's had so much success or more completely aroused the interest of the young women, who could not under-

stand the connection between love and organdy at which the married women laughed so heartily.

Madame Boirouge, enraged by her Gatiens's misadventure, forgot the eulogiums she had lavished on the poem "Paquita of Seville"; she thundered forth horribly savage criticism of a woman capable of publishing such an infamy.

"The wretch does all that she wrote about!" she said. "Perhaps she'll end like her heroine!"

It was with Dinah in the Sancerre neighborhood as it was with Maréchal Soult in the opposition newspapers: so long as he was a minister, he lost the battle of Toulouse; as soon as he went out of office, he won it! Virtuous, Dinah was deemed a rival of the Camille Maupins, of the most illustrious women; but, happy in love, she was a wretch.

M. de Clagny courageously stood up for Dinah; he went several times to the château of Anzy in order to have a right to contradict the rumors that were current concerning the woman whom he still loved, even though fallen from grace; and he maintained that between her and Lousteau it was a matter of collaboration in a great work. People laughed at the procureur du roi.

The month of October was delightful. Autumn is the loveliest season in the valleys of the Loire, but in 1836 it was especially magnificent. Nature seemed to be an accomplice in Dinah's happiness, as she, verifying Bianchon's prediction, arrived by degrees at a violent passion of the heart. Within a month she changed completely. She was amazed to find in herself so many faculties that had hitherto been asleep, inert, of no avail. Lousteau was an angel in her eyes, for love of the heart,

a real necessity of great souls, made of her an entirely new woman. Dinah lived! she found employment for her powers, she discovered unforeseen perspectives in her future, — in a word, she was happy, happy without anxieties, without obstacles. That immense château, the gardens, the park, the forest, were so favorable to love!

Lousteau found in Madame de La Baudraye a naïveté of sensation, an innocence if you please, which made her unique; there was in her much more that was piquant and unexpected than in a young girl. Lousteau was readily accessible to a flattery which in most women is a comedy, but in Dinah was genuine: she was learning love from him, he was in very truth the first to enter that heart. Indeed, he took the trouble to be excessively lovable. Men have — as have women for that matter — a stock of recitatives, cantilena, nocturnes, *motifs*, cues (shall I say of receipts, although we are talking of love), which they consider their exclusive property. People who have reached Lousteau's age try to distribute skilfully the various portions of that treasure in the opera of a passion; but, seeing in his adventure with Dinah only an ordinary love-intrigue, the Parisian determined to engrave his image in ineffaceable lines upon that heart; and during that lovely month of October he lavished his most beguiling melodies and his most scientific barcarolles. In short he exhausted the resources of the *mise-en-scène* of love, — to make use of an expression borrowed from theatrical slang which admirably describes this performance.

“If the woman forgets me,” he said to himself sometimes, on returning with her to the château from a long walk in the woods, “I shall not bear her a grudge, for she will have found a better man!”

When two people have sung together the duos of that fascinating score, and are still attractive to each other, we may say that they really love each other. But Lousteau could not take the time to rehearse, for he proposed to leave Anzy early in November; his *feuilleton* summoned him to Paris.

Before breakfast, on the day preceding that fixed for his departure, the journalist and Dinah saw La Baudraye appear with an artist from Nevers, restorer of sculpture.

“What’s in the wind?” queried Lousteau; “what do you propose to do to your château?”

“This is what I propose,” replied the little old man, leading his wife, the journalist, and the provincial artist to the terrace. He pointed out to them on the façade over the main door a beautiful cartouche supported by two sirens, not unlike that which adorns the archway, now condemned, under which one used to pass from the Quai des Tuileries into the courtyard of the old Louvre, and over which are the words: “Library of the King’s cabinet.” This cartouche contained the ancient coat-of-arms of the d’Uxelles, who bore: *Par fesse or and gules: for supporters, two lions, to dexter gules, to sinister or; the shield ensigned with a knight’s helmet, mantled of the field, and surmounted with a ducal coronet.* And for motto: *Cy paroist!* a haughty and loud-sounding phrase.

“I propose to substitute my arms for those of the house of Uxelles; and as they are repeated six times on the two façades and the two wings, it’s no small matter.”

“Your arms of yesterday!” cried Dinah, “and after 1830!”

“Have n’t I created a majorat?”

“I could understand it if you had children,” said the journalist.

“Oh!” rejoined the little old man, “Madame de La Baudraye is still young, there’s no time lost yet.”

This fatuity made Lousteau smile, for he did not understand La Baudraye.

“Well, *Didine*,” he whispered in Dinah’s ear, “what’s the use of your remorse?”

Dinah pleaded for one more day, and the two lovers exchanged farewells after the manner of the theatres which give ten times in succession the last performance of a successful play. But how many promises exchanged! how many solemn compacts demanded by Dinah and concluded without hesitation by the impudent journalist!

With the superior tact of the superior woman, Dinah drove Lousteau to Cosne, in the sight and with the knowledge of the whole district, accompanied by her mother and little La Baudraye.

When, ten days later, MM. de Clagny and Gravier and Gatien were in her salon at La Baudraye, she made an opportunity to say boldly to each of them:—

“I owe to Monsieur Lousteau the knowledge that I was not loved for myself.”

And such fine discourses as she delivered concerning men, the nature of their sentiments, the object of their base love, etc.! Of her three lovers M. de Clagny alone said to her: “I love you, *notwithstanding!*” So Dinah took him for her confidant, and poured out upon him all the sweets of friendship which women concoct for the Gurths who wear the collar of adored slavery.

## IX.

ONCE more in Paris, Lousteau lost in a few weeks the memory of the pleasant days at the château of Anzy. For this reason: Lousteau lived by his pen. In this century, and especially since the triumph of a bourgeoisie which has no purpose to imitate François I or Louis XIV, to live by one's pen is a task a galley slave would refuse — he would prefer death. To live by one's pen — does not that mean, to create? — to create to-day, to-morrow, all the time; or at least to seem to create? Now, the seeming costs as much as the reality. In addition to his *feuilleton* in a daily paper, which was like Sisyphus's rock and fell back every evening on the shaft of his quill, Étienne worked for three or four literary journals. But be not alarmed! he did not employ an artist's conscientiousness in his productions. The Sancerrois, by virtue of his facility, his indifference if you choose, belonged to that group of writers called *faiseurs*, or "men of the trade." In literature, in the Paris of our day, "the trade" means the renunciation of all pretension to any sort of rank. When a man of letters no longer has the power or the desire to be of any consequence, he becomes a *faiseur*. In that capacity one leads rather an agreeable life. Débutants, blue-stockings, actresses who are beginning or closing their careers, authors and booksellers, coddle or flatter these pens-of-all-work.

Lousteau, having become a high-liver, had almost nothing but his rent to pay by way of expense. He had

boxes at all the theatres. The sale of the books which he reviewed or did not review paid his glover, so that he was accustomed to say to authors who printed at their own expense:—

“I still have your book on my hands.”

He levied a commission on the self-esteem of artists. All his days were taken up by dinners, his evenings by the theatre, his mornings by friends, by visits, by sauntering. His *feuilleton*, his articles, and the two novels that he wrote each year for the weekly journals, were the impost levied on that pleasant life. But Étienne had struggled for ten years to reach that position. Known at last by the whole literary world, liked for the good as for the evil things that he did with unexceptionable bonhomie, he let himself go with the current, heedless of the future. He reigned amid a group of new-comers; he had friendships—that is to say, habits—which had lasted fifteen years: people with whom he supped, dined and indulged his propensity for jesting. He earned some seven or eight hundred francs a month, which amount the extravagance peculiar to the poor made altogether insufficient. So that Lous-teau was really as destitute as he was on his first arrival in Paris, when he had said to himself:—

“If I had five hundred francs a month, I should be rich!”

This is the explanation of that phenomenon. Lous-teau lived on rue des Martyrs, in a pretty little ground-floor suite with a garden, magnificently furnished. At the time of his installation, in 1833, he had made an arrangement with an upholsterer which impaired his well-being for a long time. The rent of the apartment was twelve hundred francs. Now, the months of

January, April, July, and October were, in his phrase, poverty-stricken months. The rent and the concierge's little accounts wrought havoc. But Lousteau did not cease to ride in cabriolets, or to spend a hundred francs or more in breakfasts; he smoked thirty francs' worth of cigars, and was unable to refuse one of his chance mistresses a dinner or a new gown. He anticipated so completely the earnings, always uncertain, of the following months, that he no more frequently had a hundred francs on his chimney-piece, now that he was earning seven or eight hundred, than when he earned barely two hundred in 1822.

At times, wearied of these ups and downs of literary life, sated with pleasure as a courtesan sometimes is, Lousteau stepped out of the current, seated himself on the bank, and said to certain of his intimate friends, — Nathan or Bixiou, — as he smoked a cigar in his little garden, beside a lawn, still green, about the size of a dining-table: —

“How shall we end? Our gray hairs are serving their respectful summons<sup>1</sup> upon us!”

“Bah! we shall marry when we choose to pay as much attention to that question as we do to a drama or a book,” said Nathan.

“What about Florinc?” said Bixiou.

“We all have a Florinc,” said Étienne, throwing the end of his cigar on the grass and thinking of Madame Schontz.

Madame Schontz was pretty enough to be able to sell very dear the usufruct of her beauty, while reserving

<sup>1</sup> A *somation respectueuse* is the demand made upon the parent by a son or daughter on coming of age, to consent to his or her marriage.



the equity therein for Lousteau, the friend of her heart. Like all those women who have been dubbed "lorettes" from the name of the church about which they have grouped themselves, she lived on rue Fléchier, within two steps of Lousteau. This lorette gratified her self-esteem by laughing at her friends, saying that her lover was a man of intellect.

These details concerning Lousteau's life and financial position are necessary; for his penury and his Bohemian existence, to which Parisian luxury is indispensable, were destined to have a cruel influence upon Dinah's future.

Those who know the Bohemian of Paris will understand that after a fortnight the journalist, plunged anew in his literary milieu, was able to laugh about his baroness with his friends and even with Madame Schontz. As for those who will consider such conduct shameful, it is well-nigh useless to offer them excuses that they will not accept.

"What have you been doing at Sancerre?" Bixiou asked Lousteau when they met.

"I conferred a favor on three worthy provincials, — a collector of taxes, a little cousin, and a procureur du roi, — who have been revolving for ten years about one of the hundred and one Tenth Muses who cast lustre on the departments, without touching a finger to her any more than one touches an ornamental dish at dessert until some strong-minded person has thrust a knife into it."

"Poor boy!" said Bixiou; "I said you were going to Sancerre to put your wit out to grass."

"Your joke is as detestable as my muse is beautiful, my dear fellow," retorted Lousteau. "Ask Bianchon."

“A muse and a poet,” said Bixiou; “so your adventure was a sort of homœopathic treatment, eh?”

On the tenth day Lousteau received a letter post-marked Sancerre.

“Bah! bah!” he exclaimed. “‘Dear friend, idol of my heart and soul!’ — Twenty pages of it! two a day, and dated midnight! She writes me when she is alone. Poor woman! — Aha! a postscript: ‘I dare not ask you to write, as I do, every day; but I hope to have a line from my beloved every week, to set my mind at rest.’ — What a pity to burn it! it’s written with an air!” said Lousteau to himself, as he threw the ten sheets into the fire after reading them. “That woman was born *to make copy*.”

Lousteau had little fear of Madame Schontz, who loved him “for himself”; but he had supplanted one of his friends in the heart of a marchioness. The marchioness, who was decidedly free with her person, came sometimes to his rooms unexpectedly, heavily veiled, in a *fiacre*, and took the liberty, as a literary woman, of looking through his drawers. A week later Lousteau, who had almost forgotten Dinah, was overwhelmed by a second package from Saneerre: eight leaves! sixteen pages! He heard a woman’s step, supposed that it was a domiciliary visit from the marchioness, and threw those delicious and fascinating evidences of love into the fire — without reading them.

“A letter from a woman!” cried Madame Schontz, as she came in; “the paper and the wax smell too good.”

“Here you are, monsieur,” said a messenger from the express office, depositing two huge game-baskets in the reception room. “All paid. Will you please sign my book?”

“All paid!” exclaimed Madame Schontz. “That can’t come from anywhere but Sancerre.”

“Yes, madame,” replied the messenger.

“Your Tenth Muse is a woman of exalted intelligence,” said the lorette, unpacking a basket while Lousteau signed his name; “I love a muse who knows how to keep house, and who makes game-pies (*patés*) as well as blots (*patés*) of ink. — Oh! what lovely flowers!” she cried, when she uncovered the second basket. “Why, there are no finer in Paris! What’s this? What! a hare, partridges, half a kid! We’ll invite your friends and have a famous dinner, for Athalie has a peculiar talent for cooking kid.”

Lousteau answered Dinah; but, instead of responding with his heart, he displayed his wit. The letter was all the more dangerous — it was like one of Mirabeau’s to Sophie. The style of true lovers is clear as air. It is like pure water, and reveals the depths of the heart between two banks lined with the trifles of life, bedecked with those flowers of the soul which are born every day and whose loveliness is intoxicating, but to two mortals only. And so, when a love letter is capable of affording pleasure to a third person, it is sure that it comes from the head and not from the heart. But women will always be deceived by such letters: they believe themselves to be the only source of the wit they contain.

Toward the end of December Lousteau ceased to read Dinah’s letters, which accumulated in a drawer of his bureau that was always open, under his shirts, which they perfumed.

There came to him one of those lucky chances which Bohemians ought to seize by all their hair. In the middle of that month Madame Schontz, who was deeply

interested in his welfare, begged him to call upon her one morning, on business.

“My dear, you can marry,” she said.

“Often, my dear, luckily!”

“When I say marry, I mean make a fine match. You have no prejudices, so I need n’t mince matters; this is the case. A young woman has made a misstep, and her mother does n’t know of the first kiss. The father’s an honest notary, a most honorable man, and he has been sensible enough not to let any suspicion get abroad. He wants to marry his daughter in a fortnight; he’ll give her a dowry of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, for he has three other children. But — he’s no fool! — he adds a bonus of a hundred thousand, cash in hand, to cover the stain. It’s an old family of the Parisian bourgeoisie, in the Quartier des Lombards.”

“Well, why does n’t the lover marry her?”

“Dead.”

“How romantic! rue des Lombards is the only place where such things happen.”

“But don’t you go and think that a jealous brother killed the seducer. The young man died stupidly of pleurisy, caught on leaving the play. He was the notary’s chief clerk, without a sou, and he seduced the daughter in order to succeed to the business. ’T is a vengeance from heaven!”

“How do you know about it?”

“From Malaga; the notary’s her lord and master.”

“What! it’s Cardot, eh! the son of that little old man with a cue and powdered hair, Florentine’s first protector?”

“Precisely. Malaga, whose lover is a little insect of a

musician of eighteen, can't in good conscience let him marry the girl at that age; she has no reason to bear him ill-will. Besides, Monsieur Cardot wants a man of at least thirty. In my opinion the notary'll be highly flattered to have a celebrity for a son-in-law. So, feel your pulse, my good man! You pay your debts, you come into an income of twelve thousand francs, and you have n't to bore yourself by making yourself a father: there are advantages for you! After all, you will marry a consolable widow. There's fifty thousand francs a year in the family, besides the office; so that some day you can't fail to have fifteen thousand more a year, at least, and you'll belong to a family that's in an excellent position politically. Cardot's a brother-in-law of old Camusot the deputy, whose liaison with Fanny Beaupré lasted so long."

"Yes," said Lousteau, "Camusot the elder married the daughter of the late little Père Cardot, and the two went on their sprees together."

"Well," continued Madame Schontz, "Madame Cardot the notaress is a Chiffreville, manufacturers of chemicals — the aristocracy of to-day, I tell you, those potash people! That's the bad side of the business; you'll have a terrible mother-in-law — oh! the very woman to kill her daughter if she knew she was *in the state in which* — She's very pious, she has lips like the petals of a wilted rose. A rake like you would never be accepted by that woman, who with the best intentions would set a watch on your bachelor establishment and find out all about your past; but Cardot will employ his paternal authority, he says. The poor man will be compelled to be amiable to his wife for a few days — a wooden woman, my dear! Malaga, who

has met her, calls her a penitential brush. Cardot's forty years old, he'll be mayor of his arrondissement, and he may be a deputy. He offers, in place of the hundred thousand francs, to give you a nice little house on rue Saint-Lazare, with courtyard and garden, which cost him only sixty thousand in the crash of July; he will pretend to sell it to you, just to give you an excuse to go in and out of his house, to see the girl and make yourself agreeable to the mother. That would make Madame Cardot think that you have property. Truly you'd live like a prince in that little house. You will be able through Cardot's influence to get appointed librarian to some ministry where there are n't any books. Then, if you invest your cash in a newspaper, you will get ten thousand francs from that, you earn six, your library will be worth four more! — Find anything better. If you should marry a spotless lamb, she might change into a wanton in two years! What is there against it? An anticipated dividend. That's the fashion! — If you take my advice, you'll go with me and dine at Malaga's to-morrow. You'll see your father-in-law there; he will learn of the indiscretion supposed to have been committed by Malaga, with whom he cannot afford to be angry; and thus you will have the whip-hand of him. As for your wife — why, her misstep makes you a bachelor."

"Gad! your language is no more hypocritical than a cannon-ball."

"I love you for yourself, — that's the whole story, — and I argue my best. Well, what makes you sit there like an Abd-el-Kader in wax? There's no need to reflect. It's a matter of heads or tails, is marriage. Have you drawn a tail?"

“You shall have my reply to-morrow,” said Lousteau.

“I should much prefer to have it now; Malaga would do the business for you to-night.”

“Well — yes.”

Lousteau passed the evening writing the marehioness a long letter in which he set forth the motives that compelled him to marry: his constant poverty, the slothfulness of his imagination, his gray hairs, his mental and physical fatigue — in a word, four pages of reasons.

“As for Dinah, I’ll send her wedding-eards,” he said to himself; “as Bixiou says, I have n’t my equal for skill in cutting the tail of a passion.”

Although at first he made a show of remonstrating with himself, Lousteau had arrived the next morning at the stage of fearing that the match would fall through; so that he was charmingly affable with the notary.

“I knew your late father,” he said, “at Florentine’s, and I was destined to know you at Mademoiselle Turquet’s. Like father, like son. He was an exceedingly good fellow and a philosopher, was little Père Cardot, for — by your leave — so we used to call him. In those days Florine, Florentine, Tullia, Coralie, and Mariette were like the five fingers of a hand. That was fifteen years ago. You understand that my follies are all behind me. In those days pleasure carried me away, to-day I am ambitious; but we live in an age when, in order to succeed, one must be free from debts, have money, a wife, and children. If I pay taxes, if I am owner of my newspaper instead of being one of the editors, I may get to be a deputy as so many others have done!”

Maitre Cardot relished this profession of faith. Lousteau had put himself under arms; he pleased the

notary, who, as will readily be understood, was more unreserved with a man who had known the secrets of his father's life than he would have been with another. The next day Lousteau was introduced, as the purchaser of the house on rue Saint-Lazare, into the bosom of the Cardot family, and three days later he dined there.

Cardot lived in an old house near Place du Châtelet. Everything was very substantial in his establishment. Economy placed gauze protectors on every tiny bit of gilding. The furniture was shrouded in gray covers. If one felt no uneasiness concerning the fortunes of the family, one felt a desire to yawn after the first half-hour. Ennui sat upon every chair. The draperies hung in melancholy fashion. The dining-room resembled Harpagon's. If Lousteau had not known Malaga beforehand, the mere inspection of that establishment would have satisfied him that the notary's life was passed on another stage.

The journalist was presented to a tall, fair young woman, with blue eyes, both timid and languishing in manner. He made himself agreeable to the elder brother, fourth clerk in the office, whom literary glory was luring into its pitfalls, and who was destined to be Cardot's successor. The younger sister was twelve years old. Lousteau, arrayed in a jesuitical demeanor, played the religious man and monarchist with the mother; he was sedate, honeyed, and complimentary.

Twenty days after the introduction, at the fourth dinner, Félicie Cardot, who had been studying Lousteau out of the corner of her eye, took his eup of coffee to him in a window-recess, and said in an undertone, with tears in her eyes: —



“My whole life, monsieur, will be devoted to thanking you for your kindness to a poor girl.”

Lousteau was touched, there was such a wealth of meaning in her glance, her tone, her whole attitude.

“She would make a good man happy,” he said to himself, pressing her hand for all reply.

Madame Cardot looked upon her son-in-law as a man with a most promising future; but among all the excellent qualities which she attributed to him, she was especially enchanted by his morality. Prompted by the crafty notary, Étienne had pledged his word to have no natural child and no liaison that might endanger dear Félicie’s future.

“You may think me a little exacting,” said the devout creature, “but, when one gives a pearl like my Félicie to a man, one must look out for her future. I am not one of those mothers who are overjoyed to get rid of their daughters. Monsieur Cardot hurries on, he urges his daughter’s marriage, he would like to have it over with. We differ only in this. Although, with a man like you, a literary man whose youth was preserved from the prevailing demoralization by hard work, one may be perfectly safe, nevertheless you would despise me if I should marry my daughter with my eyes shut. I am well aware that you are no innocent, and I should be very sorry for my Félicie if you were” (this was said in his ear); “but if you should have one of those liaisons — Say, monsieur, you have heard of Madame Roquin, the wife of a notary, who had, unfortunately for our profession, such a painful notoriety. Madame Roquin has had an intrigue since 1820 with a banker —”

“Yes, du Tillet,” interposed Étienne, biting his

tongue the next moment, as he realized the imprudence of admitting that he knew du Tillet.

“Well, monsieur, if you were a mother, would n't you tremble at the thought that your daughter may have the fate of Madame du Tillet? At her age, and born a Granville, to have for her rival a woman of fifty past! — I should prefer to see my daughter lying dead rather than give her to a man who had relations with a married woman. A grisette, an actress — those women a man can take up and lay aside! In my opinion they're not dangerous at all; love's a trade with them, they don't really care for anybody; one lost, two others found! But a woman who has been false to her vows ought to hold fast to her sin; she's excusable only by virtue of her constancy, if such a crime is ever excusable. At all events, that's how I understand the fall of a *comme il faut* woman, and that is what makes her so dangerous.”

Instead of seeking the significance of these words, Étienne joked about them at Malaga's, where he went with his future father-in-law; for the notary and journalist were on the best of terms. Lousteau had already posed before his close friends as a man of importance; at last his life was to have a definite aim, chance had smiled upon him, he should be within a few days the owner of a delightful little house on rue Saint-Lazare; he was going to marry a charming woman; he would have about twenty thousand francs a year; he could give the rein to his ambition; he was beloved by the young woman; he would become allied to several honorable families. In short he was flying under full sail over the blue lake of hope.

Madame Cardot had expressed a wish to see the en-

gravings of "Gil Blas," one of those illustrated publications which the French book-trade was just beginning to issue, and Lousteau had handed her the first numbers. The notiaress had a plan of her own: she borrowed the books only in order to return them, for she wanted an excuse for an unexpected call upon her future son-in-law. A glance at that bachelor establishment, which her husband described as charming, would tell her more than she had yet been told, she said, concerning Lousteau's morals. Her sister, Madame Camusot, from whom the fatal secret was hidden, was horrified at the thought of such a match for her niece. M. Camusot, councillor at the royal court, the son of a former marriage, had told his stepmother, Madame Camusot, sister to Madame Cardot, some far from flattering things about the journalist.

Lousteau, clever man as he was, saw nothing extraordinary in the fact that a rich notary's wife should want to see a volume worth fifteen francs before buying it. The clever man never stoops to scrutinize the bourgeois, who elude him by favor of that inattention; and while he makes sport of them, they have time to strangle him.

In the early days of January, 1837, then, Madame Cardot and her daughter took a cab and drove to rue des Martyrs to return the numbers of "Gil Blas" to Félicie's intended, — enchanted, both, to see Lousteau's apartment. Domiciliary visits of this sort are usual in the old middle-class families. Étienne's concierge was not in; but his daughter, on learning from the stately bourgeoisie that she was speaking to Lousteau's future mother-in-law and bride, handed them the key of the apartment, all the more readily because Madame Cardot slipped a gold piece into her hand.

It was then about noon, the hour at which the journalist returned from his breakfast at the Café Anglais. As he walked from Notre-Dame de Lorette to rue des Martyrs, he happened to glance at a cab coming through rue du Faubourg Montmartre, and thought that he must be dreaming when he saw Dinah's face therein! He stood stock-still, as if turned to stone, when he did in fact find his Didine at the door.

"Why have you (*tu*) come here?" he cried.

It was impossible to say *vous* to a woman whom he must send away again.

"Why, my love!" she cried, "have n't you read my letters?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"You are a father," replied the woman from the provinces.

"Bah!" he cried, heedless of the barbarity of the exclamation. "However," he said to himself, "I must prepare her for the catastrophe."

He motioned to the cabman to wait, gave his hand to Madame de La Baudraye, and left the man with the cabful of trunks, promising himself to send the woman and her bundles back where she came from, *illico*.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!" called little Paméla.

The child was sharp and knew that three women should not meet in a bachelor's apartment.

"All right! all right!" said the journalist, leading Dinah in.

Paméla thereupon concluded that the stranger was a kinswoman; but she said:—

"The key's in your door; your mother's there."





In his confusion, and listening to a flood of words from Madame de La Baudraye, Étienne understood her to say, "My mother's there," the only thing that he believed possible, and he went in. The future bride and her mother, who were then in the bedroom, hid in a corner when they saw Étienne with a woman.

"At last, my Étienne, my angel, I am yours for life," cried Dinah, leaping on his neck and embracing him while he put the key on the inside of the door. "Life was a never-ending agony to me in that château of Anzy; I had ceased to care for it, and on the day when it was necessary to announce the fact that makes me so happy, I did n't feel the strength to do it. I bring you your wife and your child! Oh! the idea of not writing to me! of leaving me two months without a word!"

"But, Dinah, you place me in an embarrassing position."

"Do you love me?"

"How could I help loving you? But would n't it have been better to stay at Sancerre? I am in the most complete destitution, and I dread to have you share it."

"Your destitution will be paradise to me. I want to live here and never go out."

"Mon Dieu! that's very pretty to say, but —"

Dinah sat down and burst into tears upon hearing those words, spoken in a sharp tone. Lousteau could not resist that explosion: he took the baroness in his arms and kissed her.

"Don't cry, Didine!" he exclaimed.

As he uttered this sentence, the journalist saw in the looking-glass the spectre of Madame Cardot, who was glaring at him from the bedroom.



"Come, Didine, go yourself with Paméla to see about unloading your boxes," he whispered in her ear. "Go and don't cry any more; we shall be very happy."

He led her to the door and returned to the notiaress, to turn aside the tempest.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cardot, "I congratulate myself upon having desired to see for myself the home of the man who was to be my son-in-law. Though Félicie should die of the blow, she shall not be the wife of such a man as you. You owe yourself to your Didine's happiness, monsieur."

And the pious lady swept from the room with Félicie, who wept, also, for she had become accustomed to Lousteau. The redoubtable Madame Cardot entered her eab, gazing with an insolent stare at poor Dinah, who still felt in her heart the dagger-stroke of that "It's very pretty to say," but who, like all loving women, trusted nevertheless to the "Don't cry, Didine!"

Lousteau, who was never lacking in that sort of resolution born of the hazards of a tumultuous life, said to himself: —

"Didine has a noble heart; once advised of my proposed marriage, she will sacrifice herself to my future, and I know how to manage to inform her of it."

Enchanted to have invented a ruse whose success seemed to him beyond question, he began to dance to a popular air: *Larifla fla fla!*

"Then, when Didine is safely packed off," he continued, talking to himself, "I will go to pay Madame Cardot a visit and make up a romanee: I'll say that I seduced her Félicie at Saint-Eustache. Félicie, being guilty through her love, bears in her bosom the pledge of our happiness, and — *larifla fla fla!* — the father



cannot contradict me — *fla fla* — nor the girl — *larifla!* Ergo the notary, his wife, and his daughter are in the trap — *Larifla fla fla!*”

To her unbounded amazement, Dinah found Étienne dancing a prohibited dance.

“Your arrival and our happiness make me drunk with joy,” he said, to explain his outbreak.

“And I thought you no longer loved me!” cried the poor woman, dropping the night-bag she carried, and weeping with happiness in the chair into which she threw herself.

“Make yourself at home, my angel,” said Étienne, laughing in his sleeve; “I have a note to write to excuse myself from a bachelor party, for I propose to be all yours. Command — you are at home here.”

Étienne wrote to Bixiou: —

“MY DEAR FELLOW, — My baroness has fallen upon my shoulders and will cause me to miss my marriage if we don't bring into play one of the most familiar stratagems of the innumerable vaudevilles at the Gymnase. So I rely on you to come, like one of Molière's old men, and scold your nephew Léandre for his idiocy, while the Tenth Muse is hidden in my bedroom. It's a question of attacking her through her sentiments; so strike hard, be nasty, wound her. As for me, you understand, I shall display a blind devotion, and I shall be deaf in order to give you an excuse for shouting. Come, if you can, at seven o'clock.

“Yours ever,

“E. LOUSTEAU.”

## X.

THIS letter despatched by messenger to the man who, in all Paris, took the keenest enjoyment in those pleasantries which are called "practical jokes," Lousteau made a show of great eagerness to install the Muse of Sancerre in his apartment. He busied himself in arranging all the things she had brought, he instructed her concerning the persons and things in the house, with such entire good faith, with a pleasure which overflowed so abundantly in caresses and endearing words, that Dinah might well believe herself the most dearly loved woman on earth. The apartment, in which the slightest things bore the stamp of fashion, pleased her much more than her château of Anzy.

Paméla Migeon, the intelligent child of fourteen, was questioned by the journalist as to whether she would like to be lady's maid to the imposing baroness. Paméla, wild with delight, entered instantly on her duties by going out to order dinner at a restaurant on the boulevard. Dinah realized the poverty concealed beneath the purely external luxury of that bachelor establishment, when she found there none of the utensils essential to life. Upon taking possession of the closets and the commodes, she formed the most delightful plans: she would alter Lousteau's habits, she would make him a home body, she would arrange for his comfort and well-being in the apartment. The novelty of her position concealed its distressing features from Dinah, who

found in mutual love absolution for her sin and who did not as yet look beyond the room she was in.

Paméla, whose shrewdness equalled that of any lorette, went straight to Madame Schontz to ask her to lend some silverware, and told her what had happened to Lousteau. Having placed all that she had at Paméla's service, Madame Schontz hastened to Malaga, her closest friend, in order to warn Cardot of the misfortune that had befallen his future son-in-law.

Without anxiety touching the crisis which threatened his marriage, the journalist was more and more charming to the provincial. The dinner afforded opportunity for the captivating child's play of lovers who have become free and who are happy in being at last by themselves. They had taken their coffee, and Lousteau was sitting before the fire with Dinah on his knees, when Paméla appeared in dire dismay.

"Monsieur Bixiou's here! What shall I tell him?"

"Go into the bedroom," the journalist said to his mistress; "I will soon send him away; he is one of my most intimate friends, and I must inform him of my new scheme of life."

"Oho! two covers and a bright blue velvet hat!" cried the new-comer; "I'll take to my heels. This is what it is to marry — one has one's adieux to say. How rich we feel when we are moving, eh?"

"Do you mean that I am going to be married?" said Lousteau.

"What! have you given up the idea of marrying now?"

"Yes."

"Yes! Look here! what's happened to you? It

can't be that you're going to make a fool of yourself? What! you, who by the blessing of heaven have stumbled upon twenty thousand francs a year, a house, a wife belonging to the first families of the upper middle class — in fact, a wife from rue des Lombards — ”

“Enough, enough, Bixiou, it's all over; off you go!”

“Off I go! I have the privileges of friendship and I abuse them. What has happened to you?”

“The young lady from Sancerre has arrived; she is a mother, and we are going to live happily together the rest of our days. You would learn of it to-morrow, so I might as well tell you to-day.”

“A lot of chimney-pots falling on my head! as Arnal says. But if this woman loves you for yourself, my dear fellow, she'll go back where she came from. Was a woman from the provinces ever known to get her sea-legs in Paris? She'll wound you in every part of your sensitive self-esteem. Do you forget that she's from the provinces? Why, her happiness will be as great a bore as her unhappiness; she'll display more talent in avoiding charm than the Parisian woman in inventing it. Hark ye, Lousteau! that your passion can cause you to forget the times we are living in — I can imagine that; but I, your friend, have no mythological bandage over my eyes. Well, look over your position. For fifteen years you've been moving in literary society, you are no longer young, you're walking on your stumps, you've walked so much! Yes, my good fellow, you are like the Paris *gamins*, who stuff the holes in their stockings, to hide them, and you wear your calves on your heels. And lastly, your joke is older than the hills. Your words are better known than a secret remedy.”

“I will say to you as the Regent said to Cardi-

nal Dubois: 'Enough kicks like that!' " exclaimed Lousteau in an undertone.

"O my old young man," rejoined Bixiou, "you feel the operator's knife in your wound. You have worn yourself out, have n't you? Well, what have you earned in the flush of youth, under the pressure of want? You are not in the front rank, and you have n't a thousand francs of your own. There's your situation figured out. Will you be able, in the decline of your strength, to support a family by your pen, when your wife, if she is virtuous, will not have a lorette's resource of extracting 'a note for a thousand' from the depths where man keeps it. You bury yourself in the *third underground* of the social stage. All this on the financial side. Now let's look at the political side. We are cruising in an essentially bourgeois age, in which honor, virtue, refinement, talent, knowledge, — genius, in a word, — consists in paying one's notes of hand, in owing nothing to anybody, and in managing one's little affairs successfully. Be orderly, be respectable, have a wife and children, pay your rent and your taxes, do your turn of guard-duty, be like all the fusiliers in your company, and you may aspire to everything — to become a minister; and you have a good chance, not being a Montmorency! You were about to fulfil all the conditions precedent to becoming a politician; you could do all the dirty things demanded for the job, even play at mediocrity — it would have come almost natural to you. And for a woman who will leave you in the lurch, at the end of all such eternal passions, in three or five or seven years, after consuming your last powers, physical and intellectual, — for such a woman you turn your back on the sacred ties of family, on rue des Lom-

bards, on an eminent political future, on thirty thousand francs a year, on public consideration. Is that the way a man should end who has ceased to entertain illusions? You might take pot-luck with an actress who would make you happy — that is what's called a cabinet question; but to live with a married woman! that is drawing at sight on unhappiness! it is swallowing all the serpents of vice without having any of its pleasures."

"Enough, I tell you; one word settles it all: I love Madame de La Baudraye, and I prefer her to all the fortunes on earth, to any position, however high. I was capable of abandoning myself to a puff of ambition; but everything gives way to the joy of being a father."

"Ah! so you are lured by the idea of paternity? But, you poor fool, we are the fathers of only the children of our lawful wives. What is a little brat who does n't bear our name? — the last chapter of a novel. They'll take your child away from you! We have seen that happen in twenty vaudevilles within ten years. Society, my dear fellow, will weigh heavily upon you, sooner or later. Read 'Adolphe' again. Great Heaven! I see you when you come really to know each other; I see you, unhappy worms, without consideration or fortune, fighting like the shareholders of a company fooled by their manager! Your manager is happiness."

"Not another word, Bixiou."

"But I have hardly begun. Listen, my dear fellow. Marriage has been much attacked of late; but, aside from the advantage that it has of being the only way of arranging for a lawful succession, as it offers to charming youths without a sou a means of making their fortune in two months, it outlives all its drawbacks! And there's not a bachelor who does n't repent sooner or

later having missed by his own fault a marriage to thirty thousand francs a year."

"In heaven's name do you refuse to understand me?" cried Lousteau in a tone of exasperation; "go, I say. She is here."

"I beg your pardon! why did n't you tell me sooner? You're of age — and so is she," he added in a lower tone, but still loud enough to be overheard by Dinah. "She'll make you repent your happiness jolly well!"

"If it is a foolish thing, I propose to do it. Adieu!"

"A drowning man!" cried Bixiou.

"The devil take the friends who think they have a right to lecture you!" said Lousteau, opening the door of his bedroom, where he found Madame de La Baudraye half lying in an armchair, wiping her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief.

"What did I come here for?" she exclaimed. "Oh! mon Dieu! why did I come? Étienne, I am not so provincial as you think. You are playing with me."

"My dear angel," Lousteau replied, taking Dinah in his arms, lifting her out of the chair, and carrying her inert body into the salon, "we have both changed our futures, sacrifice for sacrifice. While I was loving you at Sancerre, my marriage was being arranged at Paris; but I resisted — I was most unhappy, I promise you!"

"Oh! I am going back!" cried Dinah, springing to her feet like a mad woman and rushing toward the door.

"No, you will stay, my Didine; it's all over. Bah! that fortune — do I get it so cheap, after all? Have n't I to marry a tall blonde, with a red nose, the daughter of a notary, and to take on my back a mother-in-law who

would give Madame Piédefer points in the way of piety!"

Paméla rushed into the salon, and whispered in Lousteau's ear: —

"Madame Schontz!"

Lousteau rose, leaving Dinah on the divan, and went out.

"It's all over, my love," said the lorette. "Cardot does n't want to quarrel with his wife on account of a son-in-law. The bigot made a scene — a glorious scene! And the present chief clerk, who has been second clerk two years, takes the girl and the business."

"The dastard!" cried Lousteau. "What! he could make up his mind in two hours?"

"Mon Dieu! it's simple enough. The rascal, who knew the deceased chief clerk's secrets, guessed at the position of affairs by overhearing a few words of the dispute with Madame Cardot. The notary relies on your honor and your sense of decency, for it's all settled. The clerk, who is behaving very well, — he adopted the scheme of going to mass, the shrewd little hypocrite! — is in favor with the notaress. Cardot and you will remain friends. He's going to be made manager of an enormous financial company, and he'll be able to do you a favor. — Well! you're waking from a fine dream!"

"I have lost a fortune, a wife, and —"

"A mistress," said Madame Schontz, smiling; "for here you are, more than married; you'll be a terrible bore, you'll be always wanting to go home, you won't be the least little bit out of order, either in your clothes or your actions. However, my Arthur does things handsomely, and I must be true to him and break with



Malaga. — Let me look at her through the keyhole," continued the lorette. "There is n't a more beautiful animal in the desert!" she cried; "you've been cheated! She's stately and tiresome and teary; she lacks Lady Dudley's turban."

And the lorette fled.

"What more is there?" asked Madame de La Baudraye, who had heard the rustling of a silk dress and the murmuring of a woman's voice.

"This, my angel," cried Lousteau, "that we are indissolubly united. I have just had a verbal reply to the letter you saw me write, in which I broke off my marriage."

"That is the party from which you wrote to excuse yourself?"

"Yes."

"Oh! I will be more than your life; I give you my life, I will be your slave!" said the poor deceived creature. "I did n't think it was possible for me to love you any more! And I shall not be simply an accident in your life, I shall be your whole life!"

"Yes, my beautiful, my noble Didine!"

"Swear," she continued, "that we shall not be parted except by death!"

Lousteau chose to embellish his oath with his most seductive cajoleries. For this reason: between the outer door of his apartment, where he had received the lorette's farewell kiss, and that of the salon, where the Muse was lying, bewildered by so many successive shocks, Lousteau had remembered little La Baudraye's precarious state of health, his fortune, and Bianchon's remark about Dinah: "She'll be a rich widow!" And he said to himself: —

“I’d a thousand times rather have Madame de La Baudraye for a wife than Félicie!”

So that he at once decided upon his course of action. He decided to counterfeit love with the utmost perfection. His dastardly scheming and his pretended violent passion had deplorable results.

During the journey from Sancerre to Paris Madame de La Baudraye had proposed to live in an apartment by herself, within a few steps of Lousteau. But the proof of affection that her lover gave her by renouncing that promising outlook for the future, and, above all, the absolute happiness of the first days of their illegitimate marriage, kept her from speaking of a separation. The next day was appointed to be, and was, a festal occasion, during which such a suggestion to her “angel” would have caused a shocking discord. For his part, Lousteau, wishing to keep Dinah in subjection, kept her in a state of constant excitement by fête after fête. Such conditions prevented those two clever creatures from avoiding the cesspool into which they fell, — a senseless cohabitation of which there are so many examples in the literary world at Paris.

Thus was accomplished in every detail the programme of love in the provinces so jestingly drawn for Lousteau by Madame de La Baudraye, but which neither of them remembered. Passion is deaf and dumb at birth.

This winter, then, was to Madame de La Baudraye in Paris all that the month of October had been to her in Sancerre. Étienne, to introduce *his wife* to the life of the capital, interspersed their second honeymoon with visits to the theatre, where Dinah would sit only in a screened box. At the outset she retained some traces of her provincial prudery, she was afraid of

being seen, she concealed her happiness. She said: "Monsieur de Clagny and Monsieur Gravier are capable of following me!" In Paris she feared Sancerre.

Lousteau, whose self-esteem was inordinate, undertook Dinah's education: he took her to the best dress-makers, and pointed out to her the young women who were then the fashion, bidding her follow them as models. So that Madame de La Baudraye's provincial exterior was speedily transformed. Lousteau was complimented by his friends on his conquest.

During that season Étienne produced little in the way of literature and got considerably in debt, although the sensitive Dinah used all her savings on her dress and thought that she had not caused her darling any outlay at all. At the end of three months she had become acclimated; she had gone wild over music at the Italiens, she knew the repertoires of all the theatres and their actors, the newspapers and the jests of the moment; she had become accustomed to that life of continual excitement, to that swift current in which everything is forgotten. She had ceased to stretch out her neck, to stare about her like a statue of Astonishment, apropos of the endless surprises that Paris offers to the stranger. She had learned how to breathe the air of that intellectual, lively, fertile environment, where clever people feel in their element, and which they never want to leave.

One morning, as he was reading the newspapers, all of which he received, two lines recalled to Lousteau Sancerre and his past, — two lines which were of deep interest to Dinah: —

"M. le baron de Clagny, procureur du roi at the tribunal of Sancerre, is appointed deputy procureur-général to the royal court at Paris."

“How he loves you, the virtuous magistrate!” said Lousteau with a smile.

“Poor man!” she replied. “What did I tell you? he’s following me.”

At that moment Étienne and Dinah were in the most brilliant and most perfect phase of passion, at that period when they had become completely accustomed to each other, and when, nevertheless, love still retained its savor. They knew each other, but had not yet understood each other, had not passed through the same recesses of each other’s hearts, had not studied each other in such wise as to know, as they would later, each other’s thoughts and words and gestures apropos of the most momentous as of the most trivial incidents. They were still under enchantment; there were no collisions, no differences of opinion, no indifferent glances. Their minds took the same direction on every subject. Thus Dinah said to Lousteau those magical words, accompanied by an expression still more magical, which come to all women’s mouths at this period:—

“Kill me when you cease to love me. — If you did n’t love me, I believe I should kill you and then myself.”

To these charming exaggerations Lousteau would reply:—

“All that I ask of God is that you may be constant. You are the one who will abandon me.”

“My love is absolute.”

“Absolute?” Lousteau would say. “Let us see. I am enticed to a party of bachelors; I find one of my old mistresses, she makes fun of me, and from vanity I play the free man and don’t come home till the next morning. Would you still love me?”

“A woman is sure of being loved only when she is

preferred, and if you came back to me, if — Oh! you show me what bliss it would be to forgive an offence to the man one adores.”

“Then I am really loved for the first time in my life!” cried Lousteau.

“You realize it, at last!”

Lousteau proposed that each should write a letter setting forth the reasons which compelled him or her to end by suicide; and, with these letters in their possession, either of them could without risk kill the other if unfaithful. But despite their mutual promises neither of them wrote the letter. Happy for the moment, the journalist proposed to himself to deceive Dinah whenever he should be weary of her, and to sacrifice everything to the necessities of that deception. In his eyes Dinah was a fortune. Nevertheless he was subjected to a yoke. By entering into that union, Madame de La Baudraye made manifest both the elevation of her ideas and the power born of respect for one's self. In that complete intimacy, wherein both laid aside their masks, the young woman retained her modesty and displayed her manly probity and that force peculiar to the ambitious which formed the foundation of her character. So that Lousteau involuntarily conceived esteem for her. Moreover, having become a Parisian, Dinah was superior to the most fascinating lorette: she could be amusing, could make bright remarks like Malaga; but her education, her mental habits, and her vast reading enabled her to generalize her ideas, whereas the Schontzes and Florines exercise their minds on narrowly circumscribed territory.

“There is in Dinah,” said Étienne to Bixiou, “the making of a Ninon and a de Staël.”

“A woman in whom one finds both a library and a seraglio is a dangerous person,” retorted that joker.

When her condition had become visible, Dinah resolved not to leave her apartment; but before shutting herself up therein, not to go out except into the country, she proposed to attend the first performance of a drama by Nathan. That literary solemnity, so to speak, engrossed the thoughts of the two thousand persons who consider themselves all Paris. Dinah, who had never seen a first performance, felt a very natural curiosity. Moreover, she had arrived at such a degree of affection for Lousteau that she was proud of her fault; she displayed a sort of savage force in defying the world, she longed to look it in the face without turning her head.

She made a most fascinating toilet, suited to her invalid aspect, to the unhealthy flaccidity of her figure. Her pale face gave her a distinguished expression, and her black hair arranged in *bandeaux* intensified her pallor. Her sparkling gray eyes seemed even lovelier when ringed by fatigue.

But a horrible penance awaited her. By a not uncommon accident the box given to the journalist, in the first tier, was beside the one hired by Anna Grossetête. The two once intimate friends did not bow, and did not choose to recognize each other. After the first act Lousteau left his box, leaving Dinah alone, exposed to the fire of all eyes, to the scrutiny of all the opera-glasses, while the Baronne de Fontaine and Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who had come with her, received some of the most distinguished men of the first society.

The solitude in which Dinah was left was the more distressing because she had not the art of keeping herself in countenance by examining the other boxes with her opera-glass; in vain did she assume a dignified and pensive air, looking vaguely into space, — she was too conscious that she was the cynosure of every eye. She could not conceal her embarrassment; she relapsed a little into provincialism, spreading out her handkerchief and convulsively making gestures which she had forbidden herself to make. At last, in the interval between the second and third acts, a man opened the door of Dinah's box: M. de Clagny appeared, respectful but depressed.

"I am delighted to see you, to tell you what pleasure your promotion gave me," she said.

"Eh! for whose sake have I come to Paris, madame?"

"What!" said she; "can it be that I have anything to do with your appointment?"

"Everything. As soon as you ceased to live in Sancerre, Sancerre became intolerable to me; I was dying there."

"Your sincere friendship does me good," she said, offering him her hand. "I am in a position to cherish my real friends; I know now what their value is. I thought that I had lost your esteem; but the proof of it that your visit gives me touches me more than your ten years of attachment."

"You are the object of the curiosity of the whole theatre," rejoined the magistrate. "Ah! my dear, was this your proper rôle? Could you not be happy and continue to be held in honor? I have just heard that you are Monsieur Étienne Lousteau's mistress, that

you are living together as husband and wife. You have broken forever with society, even for the time when, if you should marry your lover, you would need the consideration that you scorn to-day. Ought you not to be at home, with your mother, who loves you enough to shield you with her ægis? In that case appearances would be kept up, at least."

"I made a mistake in coming here," she replied, "that is all. I have said farewell forever to all the privileges that the world grants to women who are able to reconcile their happiness with the proprieties. My renunciation is so complete that I would have liked to tear down everything about me, to make of my love a vast desert full of God, of *him*, and of myself. We have made too many sacrifices for each other not to be united; united by shame, if you please, but indissolubly united. I am happy, and so happy that I can love you without a qualm, as a friend, and give you my confidence more fully than in the past; for now I need a friend!"

The magistrate was truly great, even sublime. To this declaration, in which Dinah's heart spoke eloquently, he replied in a heartrending tone: —

"I would like to call on you, to make sure that you are loved. Then my mind would be at rest, your future would no longer terrify me. Will your friend realize the extent of your sacrifices, and is there gratitude in his love?"

"Come to rue des Martyrs and you will see!"

"Yes, I will come," he said. "I have already passed your door, but have n't dared to ask to see you. You do not know literature yet," he continued. "Assuredly there are some glorious exceptions; but these men of



letters draw incredible evils in their train, among which I place in the front rank publicity, which brands everything! A woman is guilty of a fault with —”

“A procureur du roi,” interposed the baroness with a smile.

“Well, after a rupture, there is some resource — the world has known nothing of it; but with a man more or less famous, the public learns the whole story. Why, see what an example you have here before your eyes. You are back to back with Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who came near committing the last of follies for a man more famous than Lousteau — for Nathan; and now they are so far asunder that they don’t recognize each other. After she had gone to the very brink of the abyss the countess was saved, no one knows how — she left neither her husband nor his house; but as there was a celebrated man involved, people talked about her one whole winter. But for her husband’s great fortune, great name and position, but for the adroit management of that statesman, who, they say, behaved excellently to his wife, she would have been lost; no other woman, in her place, could have continued to be esteemed as she is.”

“How was Sancerre when you left?” inquired Madame de La Baudraye, to change the subject.

“Monsieur de La Baudraye says that your delayed confinement demanded that you should be confined in Paris, and that he wanted you to come here so that you could have the services of the princes of medicine,” replied the deputy, shrewdly divining what Dinah wanted to know. “And so, notwithstanding the sensation caused by your departure, you were until this evening within the limits of legality.”

“Ah!” she cried, “so Monsieur de La Baudraye still has hopes?”

“Your husband, madame, has done as he always does: he has reckoned up the chances.”

The magistrate left the box as the journalist entered, saluting him with dignity.

“You are more of a success than the play,” Étienne said to Dinah.

That brief moment of triumph caused her more pleasure than she had had in all her life in the province; but, when they left the theatre, she was thoughtful.

“What’s the matter, my Didine?” queried Lousteau.

“I am wondering how a woman can conquer society.”

“There are two ways: to be a Madame de Staël, or to have two hundred thousand francs a year!”

“Society,” she rejoined, “holds us fast by our vanity, by the desire to make a fine appearance. Bah! we will be philosophers.”

## XI.

THAT evening was the last ray of the factitious prosperity in which Dinah had been living since her arrival in Paris. Three days later, she espied a cloud on Lousteau's brow as he walked round and round his little garden, smoking a cigar. Dinah, who had acquired from little La Baudraye's mode of life, the habit of never owing anything, and the pleasure due to that habit, learned that her establishment was without funds, when two quarters' rent was due — in short, on the eve of a *summons*. This harsh reality of Parisian life pierced Dinah's heart like a thorn; she repented of having tempted Lousteau into the extravagances of love. It is so hard to go from pleasure to toil, that happiness has devoured more poesy than unhappiness has caused to gush forth in luminous streams.

Happy to see Étienne free from care, smoking a cigar after his breakfast, with beaming face, and stretched out like a lizard in the sun, Dinah lacked the courage to play the part of proprietor of a review. She conceived the idea of pawning, through the medium of Père Migeon, Paméla's father, the few jewels she possessed, on which "my aunt" — she was beginning to speak the slang of the quarter — lent her nine hundred francs. She kept three hundred for her *layette* and for the expenses of her confinement, and joyously handed the balance to Lousteau, who was ploughing, furrow by furrow, or, if you prefer, line by line, a novel for a review.

“My little cat,” she said, “finish your novel without sacrificing anything to necessity: polish your style, go to the bottom of your subject. I have played the fine lady too long; now I am going to play the bourgeoisie and keep the house.”

For four months Étienne had taken her to the Café Riche to dine, in a private room which was reserved for them. The provincial was appalled when she learned that he had spent five hundred francs in the last fortnight.

“What! we have been drinking wine at six francs a bottle! A Normandy sole costs four francs! a small loaf twenty centimes!” she cried, as she read the bill which the journalist handed her.

“It makes little difference to us whether we’re robbed by a restaurant-keeper or a cook,” he replied.

“Hereafter you shall live like a prince for the price of your dinner.”

Having obtained through the landlord a kitchen and two chambermaids, Madame de La Baudraye wrote to her mother, asking for some linen and a loan of a thousand francs. She received two trunks of linen, some silverware, and two thousand francs, brought by an honest and devoutly inclined cook whom her mother sent her.

Ten days after the performance at which they had first met, M. de Clagny called on Madame de La Baudraye at four o’clock, on leaving the Palais de Justice, and found her embroidering a little cap. The sight of that woman, so proud, so ambitious, with such a cultivated mind, who reigned so majestically in the château of Anzy, reduced to keeping house for herself and sewing for the expected child, deeply moved the

poor magistrate, who was just from the court of assize. Seeing the needle-pricks on the tapering fingers that he had kissed, he realized that in her case that occupation was not mere play of the mother-love.

During this interview the magistrate read Dinah's heart. This perspicacity in a man so enamoured required a superhuman effort. He divined that her purpose was to be the journalist's good genius, to start him upon a noble path; she had reasoned back from the difficulties of material life to something out of joint morally. Between two persons united by a love so genuine on the one side and so well feigned on the other, many confidences had been exchanged in four months. Despite the care with which Étienne concealed his thoughts, more than one remark of his had enlightened Dinah concerning the antecedents of that celibate whose talent was so held in check by want, so perverted by evil examples, so thwarted by obstacles superior to his courage. "He will grow great in affluence," she said to herself. And she determined to give him happiness, the security of a comfortable home, by dint of the economy and orderly living that are familiar to people born in the provinces. She became a housekeeper as she had become a poet, by an upward flight of her soul toward the mountain-tops.

"His happiness will be my absolution."

These words, extorted from Madame de La Baudraye by the magistrate, explained the then state of affairs. The publicity given by Étienne to his triumph on the day of the first performance of Nathan's play had disclosed the journalist's intentions clearly enough in the magistrate's eyes. Madame de La Baudraye was rather a fine feather in Étienne's cap, as the English

say. Far from relishing the charm of a shy, mysterious love, far from concealing so great happiness from all the world, he felt the delight of a parvenu in adorning himself with the first *comme il faut* woman who had honored him with her love.

Nevertheless, the deputy procureur-général was deceived by the attentions which every man lavishes on a woman in Madame de La Baudraye's situation, and which Lousteau rendered charming by cajoleries peculiar to men whose manners are instinctively agreeable. There are, in truth, men who are born more or less ape-like, in whom the imitation of the most fascinating shades of sentiment is so natural that the actor ceases to be visible; and the natural inclinations of the native of Sancerre had been developed to a high degree on the stage whereon he had lived.

Between April and July, when Dinah was to be confined, she divined why Lousteau had failed to triumph over poverty; he was lazy and lacking in will-power. To be sure, the brain obeys only its own laws, it recognizes neither the necessities of life nor the dictates of honor; one does not produce a fine work because a wife is dying, or to pay shameful debts, or to support one's children; none the less, great talent does not exist without a powerful will. These twin forces are essential for the construction of the vast edifice of a glorious name. The elect few keep their brains in condition to produce, as, in the old days, a gallant knight always had his weapons in readiness. They conquer sloth, they deny themselves enervating pleasures, or yield to them only in a degree indicated by the extent of their powers. Thus are explained such men as Scribe, Rossini, Walter Scott, Cuvier, Voltaire,

Newton, Buffon, Bayle, Bossuet, Leibnitz, Lope de Véga, Calderon, Boccaccio, Aretino, Aristotle — in short, all those men who amuse or instruct or lead their age. Will can and should be a source of pride, much more than talent. If talent has its germ in a carefully nurtured predisposition, will is a victory, renewed every moment, over one's instincts, over one's tamed, subjugated tastes, over fancies and obstacles overcome, over difficulties of every sort heroically surmounted.

Abuse of the smoking habit fostered Lousteau's slothfulness. If tobacco soothes chagrin, it inevitably deadens energy. All that his excessive indulgence in cigars weakened in his physical organization, criticism annihilated in the moral organization of that man so accessible to dissipation. Criticism is as harmful to the critic as the habit of arguing on both sides is to the advocate. At that trade the mind belies itself, the intelligence loses its upright lucidity. The writer exists only by means of preconceived opinions. Thus we should distinguish two sorts of criticism, just as in painting we distinguish the *art* from the *trade*. To criticise in the style of most feuilletonists of the present day is to express opinions of one sort or another in a more or less witty fashion, as an advocate argues at the Palais the most contradictory causes. The penny-aliners always find a theory to develop in the work they analyze. Thus carried on, the trade is suited to slothful minds, to men devoid of the sublime faculty of imagination, or who, if they have it, lack the courage to cultivate it. Under their pens, every play, every book, becomes a subject which costs their imagination no labor, and the review of which, whether flippant or serious, is written in obedience to the passion of the

moment. As for the judgment, whatever it may be, it is always justifiable to French minds, which lend themselves so admirably to the *pro* and *con*. So little is the conscience consulted, these *bravi* hold so little to their own opinions, that they laud in the *foyer* of the theatre the very work that they tear to pieces in their articles. They have been known to go, on occasion, from one newspaper to another, without taking the trouble to observe that the opinions of the new *feuilleton* were dramatically opposed to those of the former one.

Nay, more — Madame de La Baudraye smiled when she saw Lousteau compose an article on the legitimist side and one on the Orléanist side concerning the same occurrence. She applauded the maxim enunciated by him: “We are the solicitors of public opinion!”

The other sort of criticism is a genuine science: it requires a full comprehension of the works in question, a lucid view of the tendencies of a period, the adoption of a system, and faith in certain principles; that is to say, a body of laws, a report, and a decree. The critic then becomes the magistrate of ideas, the censor of his time; he holds a priestly office; whereas the other sort is an acrobat who does tricks to gain a livelihood, so long as he has legs.

Between Claude Vignon and Lousteau lay the interval that separates the trade from the art. Dinah, whose mind speedily lost its rust and whose intelligence was far-sighted, soon judged her idol from the literary point of view. She saw that he worked only at the last moment, under the most degrading necessity; that he “cut his cable,” as the painters say of a work that lacks *faire*; but she justified him by saying to herself, “He’s



a poet!" so earnestly did she desire to justify herself in her own eyes. Divining this secret of the literary life of many men, she suspected that Lousteau's pen would never be a reliable resource. Thereupon love led her to take steps to which she would never have descended for herself. Through her mother she entered into negotiations with her husband to obtain an allowance, but unknown to Lousteau, whose sense of delicacy she deemed it best, under the circumstances, to spare.

A few days before the end of July, Dinah crumpled angrily in her hands the letter in which her mother reported little La Baudraye's final reply:—

"Madame de La Baudraye needs no allowance in Paris when she can lead the happiest life imaginable at her château of Anzy. Let her come there."

Lousteau took up the letter and read it.

"I will avenge you," he said to Madame de La Baudraye in that menacing tone which is so pleasant to a woman when you flatter her antipathies.

Five days later Bianchon and Duriiau, the famous *accoucheur*, were installed in Lousteau's apartment. Since La Baudraye's reply, the journalist had made a parade of his good fortune and prepared everything on a grand scale for Dinah's confinement. M. de Clagny and Madame Piédefer, who had hurried to her daughter, were the godfather and godmother of the expected child, for the prescient magistrate feared that Lousteau would be guilty of some serious false step.

Madame de La Baudraye gave birth to a boy fit to arouse the envy of a queen who desires an heir presumptive. Bianchon, accompanied by M. de Clagny, went to the mayor's office to have the child registered as the son of M. and Madame de La Baudraye, un-

known to Étienne, who hastened to a printing-office to have this announcement printed: —

*“Madame la baronne de La Baudraye is safely delivered of a boy.*

*“M. Étienne Lousteau has the pleasure to inform you of the fact.*

*“The mother and child are well.”*

A first batch of sixty copies had been despatched by Lousteau, when M. de Clagny, calling to inquire for the invalid, saw the list of people in Sancerre to whom the journalist proposed to send that curious circular written below the names of sixty Parisians who were to receive them. The magistrate seized the list and the rest of the papers; he showed them first to Madame Piédefer, bidding her not to allow Lousteau to continue that infamous pleasantry; then he jumped into a cab, hurried to the same printer, and ordered another announcement, in these words: —

*“Madame la baronne de La Baudraye is safely delivered of a boy.*

*“M. le baron de La Baudraye has the honor to inform you of the fact.*

*“Mother and child are well.”*

Having seen to it that the proofs, type, and everything that could attest the existence of the former document were destroyed, M. de Clagny set about intercepting those copies that had already been sent. In many cases he substituted his own at the porter's lodge; he obtained restitution of some thirty or more; and after three days of journeying about Paris, there was but one copy of the first announcement in existence — the one sent to Nathan. The magistrate had been five times to call upon that illustrious man, but was unable to find

him. When, after asking for an appointment, M. de Clagny was at last admitted, the anecdote of the announcement had become current in Paris. Some saw therein one of those clever bits of calumny — a sort of sore to which all reputations are subject, even temporary ones. Others declared that they had read the announcement and had returned it to a friend of the La Baudraye family.

Many people inveighed against the immorality of newspaper men, so that the last specimen of the announcement had become a curiosity. Florine, with whom Nathan was living, had shown it with the cancelled postage stamp on the envelope, which bore the address written by Étienne. And so, when the magistrate mentioned the document, Nathan began to smile.

“Return that monument of childishness and folly!” he exclaimed. “That autograph is one of those weapons of which an athlete in the circus should not divest himself. This note proves that Lousteau is lacking in delicacy, good taste, dignity, that he knows neither the world nor public morality, that he insults himself when he does n’t know whom else to insult. Nobody but the son of a bourgeois who came from Sancerre to be a poet, and who hires himself out as the bully of the first review that comes to hand, could send such an announcement! You must agree, monsieur, that this is an essential document for the archives of our epoch. To-day Lousteau fawns on me; to-morrow he may demand my head. — Pardon me the jest — I forgot that you are a deputy procureur-général. I once had in my heart a passion for a great lady, as far above Madame de La Baudraye as your delicacy, monsieur, is above Lousteau’s monkey-tricks; but I would have died

before I would have uttered her name. A few months of her pretty ways and her cajoleries cost me a hundred thousand francs and my future; but I don't consider that I paid too high a price for them. And I have never complained! — Let women betray the secret of their passion — it is their last offering to love; but that we should be the ones — One must be a Lousteau for that! No! I would n't give up that paper for a thousand crowns!"

"Monsieur," said the magistrate at last, after an oratorical contest of half an hour, "I have seen fifteen or sixteen men of letters on this subject, and you are the only one inaccessible to a sense of honor. It is not a question here of Étienne Lousteau, but of a woman and child, neither of whom is aware of the wrong that has been done them in their fortune, in their future, in their honor. Who knows, monsieur, that you may not be obliged some day to ask of the law some favor for a friend, a person whose honor you hold dearer than your own? the law may remember that you were without pity to-day. — Can such a man as you are hesitate?" added the magistrate.

"I simply wanted to have you realize the full value of my sacrifice," said Nathan; and he handed over the announcement, reflecting upon the magistrate's official position, and acceding to that species of bargain.

When the journalist's folly had been repaired, M. de Clagny went to sermonize him in presence of Madame Piédefer; but he found Lousteau much irritated by his proceedings.

"What I did, monsieur," said Étienne, "was done with a purpose. Monsieur de La Baudraye has sixty thousand francs and refuses his wife an allowance; I

desire to make him understand that I am in control of this child."

"O monsieur, I guessed your purpose," replied the magistrate. "For that reason I made haste to accept the godfathership of little Polydore; he is entered on the civil register as the son of the Baron and Baronne de La Baudraye, and, if you have a father's heart, you should rejoice to know that the child is heir to one of the finest *majorats* in France."

"But, monsieur, should the mother die of hunger?"

"Never fear, monsieur," rejoined the magistrate bitterly; he had at last extorted from Lousteau's heart an expression of the sentiment the proof of which he had so long awaited; "I will undertake the negotiation with Monsieur de La Baudraye."

And M. de Clagny took his leave, with death in his heart. Dinah, his idol, was loved from selfish motives! Would she open her eyes too late?

"Poor woman!" he said to himself as he walked away.

Let us do him this justice: — to whom should we do justice if not to a deputy procureur? — he loved Dinah too sincerely to see in her degradation a possible means of triumphing over her some day; he was all sympathy, all devotion; he loved her.

The hubbub necessitated by the nursing of the child, the child's crying, the repose required by the mother during the first days, the presence of Madame Piédefer — all conspired so powerfully against literary labors that Lousteau installed himself in the three rooms on the first floor that had been hired for the old lady. Being obliged to attend first performances without Dinah, and being separated from her most of the time,

he found I know not what attraction in making use of his liberty. More than once he allowed himself to be taken by the arm and led away to join a merry party. More than once he found himself in the midst of Bohemia at the house of a friend's lorette. He came in contact once more with women of radiant youth, splendidly dressed, to whose eyes economy appeared a denial of their youth and their power. Despite the marvellous beauty she displayed after the third month of nursing her child, Dinah could not sustain a comparison with those flowers, so soon faded, but so lovely during the brief moment that they live with their feet in opulence.

Nevertheless, domestic life had great attractions for Étienne. In three months the mother and daughter, assisted by the cook from Saneerre and by little Paméla, gave an entirely different aspect to the apartment. The journalist found his breakfast and dinner served with a sort of luxury. Dinah, lovely and well dressed, was careful to cater to her dear Étienne's tastes, and he felt that he was the king of the little abode where all things, even the child, were subordinated to his selfishness, so to speak. Dinah's affection showed itself in the most trifling things, so that it was impossible for Lousteau not to continue the charming deceptions of his pretended passion.

Meanwhile Dinah saw, in the exterior life into which Lousteau was allowing himself to be drawn, a source of ruin both for her love and for her home. After nursing the child ten months, she weaned him, put her mother back in Étienne's apartment, and began once more that intimate association which binds a man indissolubly to a woman when the woman is intelligent and loving. One of the most notable features of the novel written

by Benjamin Constant, and one explanation of the desertion of Ellénore, is the lack of daily (or nightly, if you prefer) privacy between her and Adolphe. Each of the lovers has his own sanctum; they have both obeyed the world and kept up appearances. Ellénore, being periodically deserted, is forced to enormous outlays of affection, to dispel the thoughts of liberty which assail Adolphe from without. The constant exchange of glances and of thoughts in life in common gives a woman such powerful weapons that, to justify him in abandoning her, a man must offer stronger reasons than she will ever afford him so long as she loves him.

This was a wholly new epoch both for Étienne and for Dinah. Dinah was determined to make herself necessary, to arouse energy in that man whose weakness was attractive to her, for she saw guaranties therein: she found subjects for him, she sketched them in outline; at need, she wrote whole chapters; she refreshed the veins of that dying talent with fresh blood; she gave him her ideas and her opinions. In short, she made two books, which were successful. More than once she rescued Étienne's self-esteem, when he was in despair at finding himself without an idea, by dictating to him, by revising or completing his *feuilletons*. The secret of this collaboration was inviolably kept. Madame Piédefer knew nothing of it.

This mental galvanism was rewarded by an increase of receipts which enabled the household to live comfortably down to the end of the year 1838. Lousteau became used to having his work done by Dinah, and he paid her, as the common people say in their vigorous language, *in monkey's money*. Such an outlay of devotion becomes a treasure to which generous hearts

cling fondly, and the more she gave the more dearly Dinah loved Lousteau; so that there came a time when he cost her too much for her ever to give him up.

But she bore him a second child. That was a terrible year to live through. Despite the labors of the two women, Lousteau contracted debts; he exceeded his strength in order to pay them during Dinah's lying-in, and she looked upon him as a hero, she knew him so well! After this effort, dismayed at having two women, two children, and two servants on his hands, he deemed himself incapable of struggling with his pen to support a family, when he had not been able to make a living for himself alone. So he let things go as they would. The pitiless schemer exaggerated the comedy of love at home, in order to have more liberty elsewhere. The proud Dinah maintained alone the burden of that existence. The thought, "*He loves me!*" gave her superhuman strength. She worked as the most powerful talents of that time worked. At the risk of destroying her freshness and her health, she was to Lousteau what Mademoiselle Delachaux was to Gardane in Diderot's magnificent true tale. But, while sacrificing herself, she made the sublime mistake of sacrificing her toilet. She had her dresses dyed, and wore nothing but black. "She smelt black," as Malaga said, who made much fun of Lousteau.

Toward the close of the year 1839, Étienne, like Louis XV, had reached, by insensible capitulations of conscience, the point of making a distinction between his purse and that of the family, as Louis XV distinguished between his secret treasure and his public purse. He deceived Dinah concerning the amount of his receipts. When she detected these cowardly manœu-



vres, Dinah suffered tortures from jealousy. She tried to lead a worldly life and a literary life side by side: she went with the journalist to all the first performances and detected in him indications of offended self-esteem; for the black of her costume reflected upon him, darkened his features, and at times made him brutal. Playing in his household the rôle of the woman, he displayed the savage exigence of that rôle; he reproached Dinah for the shabbiness of her garb, while taking full advantage of that sacrifice which costs a mistress so dear; absolutely like a woman who, after ordering you to crawl through a sewer to save her honor, says to you, "I detest mud!" when you come out.

Dinah was compelled therefore to gather up the slack reins of the domination which all clever women exert over men without force of will. But in that manœuvre she lost much of her moral lustre. The suspicions which she allowed to become visible were of those that bring upon women quarrels in which lack of respect begins, because they themselves descend from the height upon which they originally took up their position. Then she made concessions. Thus Lousteau was permitted to receive several of his friends, — Nathan, Bixiou, Blondet, Finot, — whose manners, whose speech, whose very touch, were degrading. They tried to persuade Dinah that her principles, her repugnances, were a relie of provincial prudery. In short, they preached to her the code of female superiority.

Erelong her jealousy supplied weapons against her. During the Carnival of 1840 she disguised herself, went to the ball at the Opéra, and attended several suppers, at which lorettes were present, in order to follow Étienne in all his diversions. On *Mi-Carême*, or, rather, on the

following day, at eight in the morning, Dinah, in disguise, came home from the ball to go to bed. She had been spying upon Lousteau, who, thinking that she was ill, had disposed of his *Mi-Carême* in favor of Fanny Beaupré. The journalist, warned by a friend, had so conducted himself as to deceive the poor woman, who asked nothing better than to be deceived.

On alighting from her cab, Dinah met M. de La Baudraye, to whom the concierge pointed her out. The little old man said to his wife, coolly, taking her by the arm:—

“Is it you, madame?”

This apparition of marital authority, in presence of which she felt herself to be so insignificant; and, above all, that question, almost froze the blood of the poor creature, surprised in the costume of a bargeman. The better to escape Étienne’s notice, she had assumed a disguise in which he was not likely to look for her. She took advantage of the fact that she was still masked, to fly without answering; she hastened to change her dress and went up to her mother’s room, where M. de La Baudraye was awaiting her.

Despite her dignified bearing, she blushed in presence of the little old man.

“What do you want with me, monsieur?” she said. “Are we not separated forever?”

“In fact, yes,” replied M. de La Baudraye, “but legally, no.”

Madame Piédefer made signs to her daughter, which she finally saw and understood.

“It can be nothing but your personal interest that brings you here,” she said bitterly.

“*Our* interests,” retorted the little man coldly, “for

we have children. Your uncle, Silas Piédefer, has died at New York, where, after making and losing several fortunes in various countries, he has left something like seven or eight hundred thousand francs, some say twelve hundred thousand; but it's a question of realizing on merchandise. I am the head of the partnership; I exercise your rights."

"Oh!" cried Dinah, "in everything connected with business, I have no confidence in anybody but Monsieur de Clagny; he knows the law — consult with him; whatever he does will be well done."

"I've no need of Monsieur de Clagny," said M. de La Baudraye, "to take my children out of your hands."

"Your children!" cried Dinah; "your children, to whom you have never sent a sou! your children!" She added nothing but a loud burst of laughter; but little La Baudraye's impassive bearing threw cold water on that explosion.

"Madame your mother has just shown them to me; they are lovely; I don't propose to part with them, and I am going to take them to our château of Anzy, if it were for nothing more than to spare them the sight of their mother disguised as —"

"Enough!" said Madame de La Baudraye imperiously. "What did you want of me when you came here?"

"A power of attorney to receive the inheritance of our Uncle Silas."

Dinah seized a pen, wrote a few lines to M. de Clagny, and told her husband to return in the evening. At five o'clock the avocat-général — for M. de Clagny had been promoted — enlightened Madame de La Baudraye concerning her position; but he took it upon himself to

adjust the whole matter by making a compromise with the little old man, whom avarice alone had brought to Paris. M. de La Baudraye, who required a power of attorney from his wife to enable him to do whatever he wished, purchased it by the following concessions: first, he agreed to make her an allowance of ten thousand francs, so long as it should be her pleasure — so the agreement read — to live in Paris; but as each of the children reached the age of six, he should be given into the custody of M. de La Baudraye. Lastly, the magistrate obtained the payment of a year's allowance in advance.

Little La Baudraye, who came courteously to bid his wife and children adieu, appeared in a white, india-rubber coat. He was so firm on his legs and so like the La Baudraye of 1836, that Dinah despaired of ever burying the terrible dwarf.

From the garden, where he was smoking a cigar, the journalist saw M. de La Baudraye during the time it took him to cross the courtyard; but that was enough for Lousteau; it seemed perfectly plain to him that it was the little man's purpose to dispel any hopes that his wife might have built upon his death. This brief scene changed materially the journalist's secret projects. As he smoked a second cigar, he reflected seriously concerning his position. The life that he had been leading in common with the Baronne de La Baudraye had cost him thus far quite as much money as it had cost her. To use a commercial expression, the accounts balanced to a sou. In view of his own small means, and of the difficulty with which he earned his money, Lousteau considered himself morally the creditor. Surely, it was a favorable moment to leave the woman. Tired out

with playing for about three years a comedy which had never become a habit with him, he was forever dissembling his ennui. He who was accustomed to conceal nothing forced himself at home to assume a smile like that the debtor wears before his creditor. This obligation became more burdensome to him day by day. Hitherto the tremendous stake that the future held before him had given him strength; but when he saw little La Baudraye starting for the United States as briskly as if he were going to Rouen by steamboat, he no longer had faith in the future.

He went from the garden to the dainty salon, where Dinah had received her husband's adieux.

"Étienne," she said, "what do you suppose my lord and master just proposed to me? In case I should choose to live at Anzy during his absence, he has given orders to that effect, and hopes that my mother's good advice will induce me to go there with my children."

"It's excellent advice," replied Lousteau coolly, knowing Dinah well enough to know the passionate reply that she craved, and, indeed, solicited by a glance.

The tone, the accent, the indifferent expression of his features, all combined to deal so severe a blow to that woman, who lived solely in her love, that she allowed two great tears to roll down her cheeks without replying; but Lousteau did not notice them until she took out her handkerchief to wipe away those two pearls of grief.

"What is it, Didine?" he asked, touched to the heart by her keen sensitiveness.

"Just when I was congratulating myself on having won our freedom forever," she said, "at the cost of my fortune — by selling — a mother's — most precious

treasure — her children! — for he takes them from me — when they are six years old — and if I — want to see them — I must go to Sancerre! — a perfect torture! — O my God! what have I done?”

Lousteau knelt at her feet and kissed her hands, lavishing upon her his most caressing cajoleries.

“You don’t understand me,” he said. “I judge myself, and find myself unworthy of all these sacrifices, my dear angel. I am, from a literary standpoint, a decidedly second-rate man. On the day when I am no longer able to make a display at the foot of a newspaper page the managers of the public journals will drop me, like an old slipper thrown behind a fence. Think of it! we rope-dancers have no retiring pension! There would be altogether too many men of talent to pension if the State should enter upon that charitable pathway! I am forty-two years old; I have grown as lazy as a ground-hog. I feel sure that my love” (here he kissed her hand affectionately) “cannot fail to be most injurious to you. At twenty-two, as you know, I lived with Florine; but a thing that is exexcusable in youth, that seems then to be very pretty and delightful, is degrading at forty. Thus far we have shared the burden of our life together; it has not been pleasant for the past eighteen months. From devotion to me, you go about dressed all in black, which does n’t reflect credit on me.”

Dinah gave one of those superb shrugs of the shoulders which say more than all the speeches in the world.

“Yes,” Étienne went on, “I know that you sacrifice everything to my tastes, even your beauty. And I, with my heart worn out in constant struggles, with my mind full of evil presentiments concerning my future, I do not

reward your consoling love by equal love. We have been very happy, without a cloud, for a long while, and I don't want to have so sweet a poem end badly. Am I wrong?"

Madame de La Baudraye loved Étienne so dearly that this display of wisdom, worthy of M. de Clagny, delighted her and dried her tears.

"So he does love me for myself!" she said, looking at him with a smile in her eyes.

After four years of intimate union her love had finally come to include all the gradations discovered by our present-day spirit of analysis, and created by modern society. One of the most noteworthy men of our day, whose recent loss is still mourned in the world of letters, Beyle (Stendhal), was the first to distinguish them clearly. Lousteau caused in Dinah that intense agitation, explicable by magnetism, which throws out of gear all the powers of mind and body, and which destroys all strength of resistance in women. A glance from him, the placing of his hand on hers, made her all obedience. A soft word, a smile, from that man shed balm upon the poor woman's heart, who was so readily touched or saddened by the warmth or the coldness of his glance. When she took his arm and kept in step with him on the street or the boulevard, she was so entirely blended with him that she lost the consciousness of her *ego*. Fascinated by his wit, and magnetized by his manners, she looked upon his vices as trivial shortcomings. She loved the puffs of cigar-smoke that the wind brought from the garden to her bedroom; she inhaled them eagerly, she made no wry face, but led herself to enjoy them.

She detested the publisher or newspaper-manager

who refused Lousteau money because of the large amounts already advanced. She went so far as to understand that the Bohemian wrote novels for cash, instead of giving them in payment for the money advanced him long before.

Such, doubtless, is the nature of true love; it includes all ways of loving: "love of the heart, love of the head, passionate love, love that's a mere whim, love as a delicacy,"<sup>1</sup> according to Beyle's definition. Didine was so deeply in love that, at certain times, when her unerring critical sense, which had been brought into play so constantly during her life in Paris, forced her to read Lousteau's mind, passion carried the day over reason, and suggested excuses to her.

"And I," she replied, "what am I? a woman who has put herself outside the social pale. When I fail in womanly honor, why should you not sacrifice your honor as a man in some degree? Are we not living outside of all social conventions? Why not accept from me what Nathan accepts from Florine? We will settle our accounts when we part, and, as you know, death alone will part us. You honor, Étienne, is my bliss; just as mine is my constancy and your happiness. If I don't make you happy, it's all over. If I cause you a pang, condemn me. Our debts are paid, we have ten thousand francs a year, and we can easily earn together eight thousand francs. *I will write plays!* With fifteen hundred francs a month, shan't we be as rich as the Rothschilds? Never fear. Hereafter I will have lovely dresses, and I will gratify your vanity every day as I did the day of Nathan's first performance."

<sup>1</sup> *Amour de cœur, amour de tête, amour-passion, amour-caprice, amour-goût.*



“And what about your mother, who goes to Mass every day and wants to bring a priest here and make you give up this kind of life?”

“Every one to his own vice. You smoke, she preaches at me, poor soul! But she looks after the children, she takes them to walk, she is devotion itself, she idolizes me; would you forbid her to weep?”

“What will people say about me?”

“But we are not living for the world!” she cried, raising Étienne from his knees and making him sit beside her. “Besides, some day we will be married. We have the perils of the sea on our side.”

“I did n’t think of that!” exclaimed Lousteau ingenuously; and he said to himself: “It will be time enough to break with her when La Baudraye comes back.”

## XII.

FROM that day Lousteau lived luxuriously, and Dinah was able to hold her own at first performances with the most handsomely dressed women in Paris. Flattered by this domestic well-being, Lousteau played with his friends, from mere fatuous self-conceit, the rôle of a man tormented, bored to extinction, ruined, by Madame de La Baudraye.

“Oh! how I would love the friend who should deliver me from Dinah! But no one could do it,” he said, “for she loves me so that she would throw herself out of the window if I told her to.”

The journalist appealed for sympathy, he took precautions against Dinah’s jealousy when he accepted an invitation. In due time he was unfaithful to her without shame. When M. de Clagny, in veritable despair to see Dinah in so debasing a situation when she might have been so rich and in so eminent a position socially, and that, too, at the moment when his own early ambition was about to be fulfilled, ventured to say to her: “He is deceiving you!” she replied: “I know it.”

The magistrate was dumfounded. He recovered his speech sufficiently to make some remark.

“Do you still love me?” Dinah asked, interrupting him at the first word.

“Enough to ruin myself for you!” he cried, springing to his feet.

The poor man’s eyes glowed like torches, he trembled like a leaf, his vocal chords seemed paralyzed,

every hair on his head quivered at its root; he thought that it was his blessed privilege to be taken by his idol for her avenger, and that *pis aller* drove him almost wild with joy.

“Then why are you surprised?” she said, motioning to him to resume his seat; “that is how I love him.”

The magistrate felt the full force of that argument *ad hominem*. And the tears came to his eyes — his eyes who had lately sentenced a man to death! Lousteau’s satiety — the unfailing ghastly dénouement of concubinage — manifested itself in a thousand trifles, which are like grains of sand thrown against the windows of the magic pavilion wherein one dreams when one is in love. Those grains of sand became pebbles, and Dinah had not discovered them when they were good-sized stones. She had ended by judging Lousteau truly.

“He is,” she said to her mother, “a poet with no defence against ill-fortune, cowardly from laziness and not from lack of courage, a little too susceptible to luxury; in short, he’s a pet that one cannot hate. What would become of him without me? I prevented his marriage, and he has no prospects for the future. His talent would perish in want.”

“O my Dinah!” cried Madame Piédefer, “what a hell you are living in! What is the sentiment that gives you strength to persist?”

“I will be his mother!” was the reply.

There are horrible situations in which we do not make up our minds until our friends perceive our dishonor. We compromise with ourselves so long as we escape a censor who plays the part of prosecuting

attorney. M. de Clagny, as great a bungler as a *patito*, had made himself Dinah's executioner!

"In order to retain my love, I will be what Madame de Pompadour became in order to retain her power," she said to herself when M. de Clagny had gone.

These words make it sufficiently clear that her love was becoming a heavy burden to bear, and that it was destined to be a task instead of a joy.

The new rôle assumed by Dinah was terribly painful, and Lousteau did not make it easy to play. When he wanted to go out after dinner, he would play captivating little scenes of affection, he would make speeches really overflowing with love, he would lead his companion by her chain, and when he had pressed the links into the wounds made by them, the royal ingrate would ask: "Did I hurt you?" These lying carresses, this dissembling, sometimes had shameful results for Dinah, who thought that they indicated a return of affection. Alas! the mother gave way with disgraceful readiness to "Didine." She felt that she was a mere plaything in that man's hands, and she at last ended by saying to herself, "Well, I am willing to be his plaything!" finding therein an agonizing pleasure, the enjoyment of one damned.

Courageous as she was, when she imagined herself in solitude she felt her courage vanish. She preferred the known, inevitable torture of that domestic savagery to the deprivation of joys that were the more exquisite in that they were tasted in the midst of remorse, of terrible combats with herself, of *noes* changing to *yes*. It was like the drop of brackish water found in the desert and drunk with a keener delight than the travel-

ler would feel in sipping the most exquisite wines at a prince's table.

When Dinah said to herself at midnight, "Will he come home or will he not?" she did not come to life again until she heard the familiar sound of Étienne's boots and recognized his manner of ringing. Often she made trial of pleasures as a eurb, she took delight in contending with her rivals, in leaving nothing for them in that surfeited heart. How many times did she play the tragedy of "The Last Day of a Condemned," saying to herself, "To-morrow we will part!" And how many times did a word, a glance, a caress instinet with sincerity, cause her to fall baek into love! Often it was terrible. She revolved more than once about the thought of suicide as he circled about that bit of Parisian turf in which palled flowers grew. But she had not exhausted the vast treasure of devotion and love that loving women have in their hearts.

The novel, "Adolphe," was her Bible; she studied it carefully; for, above all things, she did not mean to be an Ellénore. She avoided tears, refrained from all the outbursts of bitterness so knowingly described by the critic to whom we owe the analysis of that painful work, and whose commentary seemed to Dinah almost superior to the book itself. So she often re-read the magnificent article of the only critic the "Revue des Deux Mondes" has ever had, which is printed at the beginning of the new edition of "Adolphe."

"'No,'" she said to herself, repeating its ominous words, "'no, I will give to my entreaties the form of a command, I will not rush to tears as to revenge, I will not condemn aets that I formerly approved without reserve, I will not follow his steps with a prying eye; if he

escapes, he shall not find on his return an imperious mouth whose kiss is an irrevocable command. No! my silence shall not be a complaint, and my words shall not be a dispute.' I will not be vulgar," she continued, placing on the table the little yellow-covered volume which had already caused Lousteau to say to her, "Ah! you're reading 'Adolphe,' are you?" — "If I might but see the day when he will acknowledge my worth, when he will say to himself, 'The victim never once cried!' that would be enough! However, the others have only moments, and I shall have his whole life."

Deeming himself authorized by his wife's conduct to punish her in the domestic tribunal, M. de La Bau-draye had the delicacy to rob her in order to complete his great undertaking of bringing under cultivation some twelve hundred hectares of furze-bushes, to which he had been devoting his income since 1836, living like a rat the while. He handled so skilfully the property left by M. Silas Piédefer, that he was able to reduce the ostensible amount of the estate to eight hundred thousand francs, while he actually realized twelve hundred thousand. He did not announce his return to his wife; but while she was suffering untold misery, he was building farm-houses, digging ditches, planting trees, and making audacious experiments in the way of clearing wild land, which caused him to be esteemed one of the most distinguished agriculturists in all Berri. The four hundred thousand francs pilfered from his wife were expended in three years in these operations, and the estate of Anzy was destined to bring in, within a short time, seventy-two thousand francs a year, clear of taxes.

The eight hundred thousand francs he invested in the four-and-a-half per cents, at eighty, thanks to the financial crisis brought about by the ministry of the first of March. By thus procuring an income of forty-five thousand francs for his wife, he considered himself quits with her. Would it not represent the whole twelve hundred thousand francs as soon as the four-and-a-half per cents should go above a hundred? His importance at Sancerre was thenceforth surpassed only by that of the richest landed proprietor in France, whom he assumed to rival. He had an income of a hundred and forty thousand francs, of which ninety thousand was in the landed estates that made up his *majorat*. Having calculated that, outside of his net income, he paid ten thousand francs in taxes, three thousand in expenses, ten thousand to his wife, and twelve hundred to his mother-in-law, he said at a meeting of the Literary Society:—

“They say I’m a miser, and don’t spend anything. My expenses amount to twenty-six thousand five hundred francs a year; and I’m going to have to pay for the education of my two children! That does n’t please the Milauds of Nevers, I suppose, but the second family of La Baudraye will have as fine a career, perhaps, as the first had. I shall probably go to Paris to solicit the title of count (Monsieur Roy is a count) at the hands of the King of the French; it will please my wife to be called ‘madame la comtesse.’”

This was said with such admirable sang-froid that no one dared to sneer at the little man. President Boirouge alone replied.

“In your place,” he said, “I should n’t think myself happy until I had a daughter.”

“Oh!” said the baron, “I shall go to Paris soon.”

At the beginning of the year 1842 Madame de La Baudraye, feeling that she still served as a *pis aller*, had reverted to her plan of sacrificing herself to Lous-teau's comfort: she had resumed her black dresses; but this time she was really in mourning, for her pleasure was changing to remorse. She was ashamed of herself too often not to feel at times the crushing weight of her chain, and her mother surprised her now and then in moments of profound reflection, when the vision of the future plunges the unfortunate into a sort of torpidity. Advised by her confessor, Madame Piédefer watched for the moment of weariness which the priest prophesied as certain to come, and then her voice pleaded for the children. She contented herself with asking for a separate domicile, and did not insist upon a separation of hearts.

In nature critical situations of this sort do not end, as in books, in death or skilfully arranged dénouements; they end much less poetically, in disgust, in the withering of all the flowers of the heart, in the commonplaces of habit, and very often, too, in another passion, which deprives a woman of the interest with which women are by tradition encompassed. Now, when common sense, the laws of social propriety, family interest — all the elements of what was called under the Restoration “public morality,” in detestation of the phrase “Catholic religion,” are supported by the smarting of wounds that are a little too painful; when the weariness caused by unrequited devotion has almost reached the swooning point, and at that juncture a too violent blow, one of those dastardly acts which men never commit except with women of whom they deem themselves still



the masters, caps the climax of disgust and disenchantment — then the hour has come for the friend who seeks to cure.

So that Madame Piédefer had little difficulty in removing the film from her daughter's eyes. She sent for the *avocat-général*. M. de Clagny completed the work by promising Madame de La Baudraye that if she would give up living with Étienne, her husband would leave her children with her, would allow her to live in Paris, and would place her property at her own disposal.

"What a life!" he said. "By taking precautions, with the aid of devout and charitable people, you can have a salon, and reconquer a position in society. Paris is not Saneerre!"

Dinah entrusted to M. de Clagny the task of arranging a reconciliation with the little old man. M. de La Baudraye had sold his mines to advantage, he had sold his wool, he had cut down trees, and he had come to Paris, without a word to his wife, to invest two hundred thousand francs in a beautiful house on *rue de l'Arcade*, sold in liquidation of a large aristocratic estate that had fallen into difficulties. A member of the General Council of his department since 1826, and paying ten thousand francs in taxes, he satisfied twice over the conditions required by the new law concerning the peerage. Some time before the general election of 1842, he announced his candidacy for a seat as deputy, in case he should not be made a peer of France. He applied at the same time to be given the title of count, and to be promoted to commander of the Legion of Honor.

In the matter of elections, whatever would lead to

strengthen the dynasty was just and right in the eyes of ministers. Now, in case M. de La Baudraye should be won over to the government side, Sancerre would become more than ever the rotten borough of the Orleanist doctrine. M. de Clagny, whose talents and modesty were more and more justly appreciated, supported M. de La Baudraye. He declared that the elevation to the peerage of that daring agriculturist would be giving securities to the material interests of the kingdom.

When he was finally made a count, a peer of France, and commander of the Legion of Honor, M. de La Baudraye desired to gratify his vanity by having a wife and a well-kept establishment to represent him: he wanted to enjoy life, he said. So he begged his wife, in a letter dictated by the *avocat-général*, to occupy his house, to furnish it, to display there that fine taste so many evidences of which had delighted him long before at the *château* of Anzy. The new count called his wife's attention to the fact that his interests in the department compelled him to remain at Sancerre, whereas the education of their sons demanded that she should stay in Paris. So the complaisant husband instructed M. de Clagny to deliver to madame la comtesse sixty thousand francs for the interior arrangement of the *hôtel* de La Baudraye, directing that a marble tablet be set into the wall over the *porte cochère*, with the inscription "Hôtel de La Baudraye." Then, while advising his wife of the result of the settlement of Silas Piédefer's estate, he informed her of the investment in the four-and-a-half per cents of the eight hundred thousand francs collected in New York, and allotted that investment to her for her expenses, including the education of the children. Being obliged, in a measure, to come

to Paris for a part of the session of the Chamber of Peers, he asked his wife to reserve for him a small apartment on the entresol over the offices.

“Heavens! he’s growing young, he’s becoming a gentleman, he’s getting to be magnificent! What else is he going to do? It’s enough to make one shiver,” said Madame de La Baudraye.

“He has gratified all the longings that you had at twenty years of age,” replied the magistrate.

The comparison of her future with her present was intolerable to Dinah. Again, only the day before, Anna de Fontaine had turned her head to avoid seeing her beloved friend of the Chamarolles boarding-school.

“I am a countess,” she said to herself, “I shall have in my carriage the blue mantle of the peerage, and in my salon the greatest literary celebrities. I will look at *her!*”

This petty gratification had its full weight at the moment of her elevation, as the scorn of the world had formerly weighed upon her happiness.

One fine day in May, 1842, Dinah paid all the debts of the household, and placed three thousand francs on top of the package of receipted bills. Having sent her mother and children to the hôtel de La Baudraye, she waited for Lousteau, dressed as if to go out. When the ex-king of her heart came in to dinner, she said to him:—

“I have upset the kettle, my dear. Madame de La Baudraye invites you to dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*. Come.”

She led Lousteau away, stupefied by the careless air assumed by one who had only that morning been obe-

dient to his lightest whim; for she too had been acting a part for two months.

"Madame de La Baudraye is trussed up as if for a *première*," he said, using the journalistic abbreviation for a first performance.

"Do not forget the respect you owe to Madame de La Baudraye," said Dinah gravely. "I do not want to know the meaning of the word trussed up (*ficelée*)."

"Is Didine rebelling?" he queried, putting his arm about her.

"There is n't a Didine any more. You have killed her, my dear," she replied, extricating herself from his embrace. "And I am giving you the first performance of Madame la Comtesse de Baudraye."

"So it's true — our insect is a peer of France?"

"The appointment will be in the 'Moniteur' to-night, so I learn from Monsieur de Clagny, who goes himself to the Court of Cassation."

"In truth," said the journalist, "social entomology ought to be represented in the Chamber."

"My friend, we are parting forever," said Dinah, trying to keep her voice from trembling. "I have dismissed the two servants. When you go home, you will find your house in order and out of debt. I shall always have for you, but secretly, the heart of a mother. Let us part quietly, calmly, like *comme il faut* folk. Have you anything to reproach me for in my conduct during these six years?"

"Nothing, unless for having shattered my life and destroyed my future," he replied bitterly. "You have read Benjamin Constant's book a good deal, and you have even studied the last article written about it; but you have read it only with a woman's eyes. Although

you have one of those fine intellects which would make a poet's fortune, you have not dared to place yourself at the view-point of men. That book, my dear, has both sexes. Do you know it? We have proved that there are male and female books, fair books and dark ones. In 'Adolphe' the women see only Ellénore, the young men see only Adolphe, grown men see both Ellénore and Adolphe, and politicians see social life! You have refrained from entering into Adolphe's heart, — like your critic, indeed, who saw only Ellénore. What kills that poor fellow, my dear, is the having thrown away his future for a woman; and being unable to be any of the things he might have been — ambassador, minister, chamberlain, poet, or rich. He gave six years of his energy, from the moment in life when a man can accept the hardships of any sort of apprenticeship, to a petticoat whom he anticipates in the career of ingratitude — for a woman who could make up her mind to leave her first lover is sure to leave the second, sooner or later. In short, Adolphe is a sandy-haired German who does n't feel capable of deceiving Ellénore. There are Adolphes who spare their Ellénores degrading quarrels and lamentations, and who say to themselves: 'I will not speak of what I have lost! I will not forever point out my hewn-off hand to the selfishness on which I have set the crown,' as Ramorny says in 'The Fair Maid of Perth.' But such fellows, my dear, are the ones that are deserted. Adolphe is a youth of good family, an aristocratic heart who wishes to return to the path of honor, and to recover his social dowry, his compromised place in men's esteem. At this moment you are playing both parts at once. You feel the grief caused by the loss of your position, and

you think yourself entitled to abandon an unhappy lover who has had the misfortune to believe that you were enough above the ordinary run of women to admit that, although a man's heart should be constant, his sex may follow the bidding of caprice."

"Do you suppose that I shall not devote myself to restoring to you what I have caused you to lose?" rejoined Dinah, thunderstruck by this outburst. "Have no fear, your Ellénore is not dying, and if God lets her live, if you change your mode of life, if you give up lorettes and actresses, we will find you something better than a Félicie Cardot."

Both of the two became sombre: Lousteau feigned melancholy and tried to be harsh and cold; whereas Dinah, who was really distressed, listened to the reproaches of her heart.

"Why not," said Lousteau, "go on as we should have begun: conceal our love from all eyes, and meet in secret?"

"Never!" said the new countess, assuming a frigid expression. "Don't you see that we are, after all, finite creatures? Our sentiments seem infinite to us, because of the presentiment we have of heaven; but they are limited here on earth by the strength of our characters. There are yielding and cowardly natures that can receive an indefinite number of wounds and persist in loving; but there are others of more delicate temper which at last break under the blows. You have —"

"Oh, enough!" he said; "*let's not make any more copy!* Your article seems to me unnecessary, for you can justify yourself with a single phrase: 'I no longer love!'"

“Ah! so it is I who no longer love?” she cried, dumfounded.

“To be sure. You have concluded that I caused you more chagrin, more annoyance, than pleasure, and you leave your partner.”

“I leave him?” she cried, throwing up her hands.

“Did n’t you just say, ‘never’?”

“Well, yes — never!” she repeated with energy.

This last “never!” impelled by the fear of falling again under Lousteau’s domination, was interpreted by him as meaning the end of his power, as soon as Dinah showed herself unmindful of his scornful sarcasms. He could not restrain a tear: he had lost a sincere, unbounded affection. He had found in Dinah the gentlest La Vallière, the most attractive Pompadour, that an egotist who is not a king could wish; and like the child who sees that by dint of worrying his butterfly he has killed him, Lousteau wept.

Madame de La Baudraye rushed from the little room where they had dined, paid for the dinner, and hurried to rue de l’Arcade, scolding herself and looking upon herself as a most ferocious creature.

## XIII.

DINAH, having made of her new abode a model of comfort, went through a metamorphosis herself; but this twofold transformation cost thirty thousand francs beyond the expectations of the new peer of France. The fatal occurrence which resulted in the loss by the house of Orléans of its heir presumptive having made necessary the meeting of the Chambers in August, 1842, little La Baudraye came up to present his credentials in the hereditary Chamber sooner than he expected, and at that time saw what his wife had done. He was so delighted with it that he paid the thirty thousand francs without the slightest remonstrance, as he had formerly given eight thousand to furnish La Baudraye.

On returning from the Luxembourg, where, according to the usual custom, he was presented by two peers, the Baron de Nueingen and the Marquis de Montriveau, the new count met the old Due de Chaulieu, one of his former debtors, on foot, with an umbrella in his hand; whereas the little man himself was planted in a little low carriage on whose panels blazed his coat-of-arms, with the words: *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus*. This contrast poured into his heart a dose of the balm with which the bourgeoisie had been intoxicated since 1830.

Madame de La Baudraye was dismayed to find her husband in better condition than on his wedding day. Beside himself with frenzied joy, the dwarf at sixty-four triumphed in the vitality which people denied him, in



the family which the handsome Milaud of Nevers forbade him to have, in his wife, who entertained at dinner in her new house M. and Madame de Clagny, the curé of the Assumption, and his two sponsors in the Chamber. He caressed his children with delightful fatuity. The beauty of the table appointments received his approval.

"These are the fieces of Berri," he said to M. de Nucingen, pointing to the bells of his new coronet; "they're silver!"

Although consumed by a profound melancholy, dissembled with the power of a woman who has become really superior, Dinah was clever and charming, and, above all, looked much younger in her court mourning.

"Any one would say," observed little La Baudraye to M. de Nucingen, indicating his wife, "that the countess was less than thirty years old!"

"Ah! so matame ist ein voman of tirty also?" replied the baron, who was wont to make use of jests consecrated by age, looking upon them as a sort of small change for conversational purposes.

"In all the force of the term," rejoined the countess, "for I am thirty-five, and I have strong hopes of having a little passion of the heart."

"Yes, my wife has ruined me in gewgaws and frippery."

"Madame acquired that taste in good season," said the Marquis de Montriveau, smiling.

"Yes," replied little La Baudraye, glancing coldly at the marquis, whom he had known at Bourges, "you know that in '25 and '26 and '27 she picked up more than a million francs' worth of curiosities, which make Anzy a perfect museum."

“What self-possession!” thought M. de Clagny, who concluded that the little provincial miser had risen to the height of his new position.

Misers have economies of all sorts to attend to, and on the morrow of the passage of the Regency law by the Chamber, the little new peer of France went back to Sancerre to gather his crops and resumed his usual habits.

During the winter of 1842 the Comtesse de La Baudraye, assisted by the *avocat-général* of the Court of Cassation, tried to form a social set. Naturally she selected a day to receive. She discriminated among the celebrities of the time; she chose to receive only serious-minded persons of mature age. She tried to obtain distraction by going to the Italiens and the Opéra. Twice a week she took her mother and Madame de Clagny, whom the magistrate compelled to associate with Madame de La Baudraye. But, despite her wit and her amiability, despite her airs of a woman of fashion, she was happy only in her children, upon whom she lavished all her disappointed affection.

The estimable M. de Clagny went about recruiting women for the countess’s salon, and he was successful. But his success was much greater with women piously inclined than with women of the world.

“They bore her!” he said to himself in dismay, when he saw his idol, matured by unhappiness, made pale by remorse, and at this time in all the splendor of a beauty restored by her life of ease and by her motherhood.

The devoted magistrate, supported in his efforts by the mother and by the *curé* of the parish, was admirable in his invention of expedients. Every Wednes-

day he served up to his dear countess some celebrity from Germany, England, Italy, or Prussia; he described her as a woman "out of the ordinary" to people to whom she did not say two words, but to whom she listened with such absorbed attention that they went away convinced of her superiority.

Dinah conquered at Paris by silence, as she had done at Saneerre by her loquacity. From time to time an epigram upon some occurrence or a remark on the absurdities of the day revealed the woman accustomed to handle ideas, who, four years earlier, had rejuvenated Lousteau's *feuilleton*.

This period was to the poor magistrate like the season called St. Martin's summer in years of little sunshine. He made himself more of an old man than he really was, that he might have the right to be Dinah's friend without injuring her; but, just as if he were young and comely and dangerous, he kept himself at a distance like a man who feels bound to conceal his good fortune. He tried to envelop in the utmost secrecy his little attentions and his trifling gifts, which Dinah openly displayed. He tried to give equivocal meanings to his most insignificant acts of obedience.

"He is playing at passion," the countess would say with a laugh.

She made sport of him to his face, and he would say to himself:—

"She is thinking about me!"

"I make so profound an impression on the poor man," she said laughingly to her mother, "that if I should say yes to him, I believe he'd say no."

One evening M. de Clagny was driving home with his wife and his dear countess, who was deeply pre-

occupied. They had been present at the first performance of Léon Gozlan's first drama, "La Main Droite et la Main Gauche" (The Right Hand and the Left Hand).

"What are you thinking about?" queried the magistrate, alarmed by his idol's melancholy.

The persistence of the sadness, concealed but profound, which was devouring the countess, was a dangerous malady which the avocat-général did not know how to contend with, for true love is often awkward, especially when it is not returned. Genuine love borrows its form from the lover's character. Now, the excellent magistrate loved after the manner of Alceste, while Madame de La Baudraye wished to be loved after the manner of Philinte. The eowardiees of love are altogether inconsistent with the straightforward character of the Misanthrope. So that Dinah was careful not to open her heart to her *patito*. How could she venture to confess that she sometimes regretted her former slime? She felt an enormous void in her life in society; she had no one to tell of her successes, her triumphs, her toilettes. Sometimes the recollection of her miseries came back to her mingled with the memory of consuming joys. Sometimes she was angry with Lousteau for not giving her a thought; she would have liked to receive letters from him, whether affectionate or abusive.

As Dinah did not reply, the magistrate took her hand and pressed it in his with a gesture of devotion.

"Do you want the right hand or the left hand?" she replied, smiling.

"The left hand," he said, "for I presume that you refer to falsehood and truth."

“Well, I have seen him,” she rejoined, speaking so that only the magistrate could hear her. “When I saw how depressed he looked, how utterly discouraged, I said to myself: ‘Has he plenty of cigars? has he any money?’”

“Oh! if you want the truth, I will tell you,” cried M. de Clagny, “that he’s living with Fanny Beaupré, as her husband. You extort this disclosure from me; I should never have told you, for you might have attributed it to an ungenerous sentiment on my part.”

Madame de La Baudraye grasped the *avocat-général*’s hand.

“You have for a husband,” she said to her *chaperon*, “one of the rarest of men. Ah! why —”

And she drew back into her corner and stared through the window of the *coupé*; but she suppressed the balance of her sentence which the *avocat-général* guessed: “Why had not Lousteau a little of your husband’s nobility of heart?”

Nevertheless this news banished Madame de La Baudraye’s melancholy, and she plunged into the ordinary life of women of fashion; she was determined to make a success and she succeeded; but she made little progress in the world of women — she found obstacles in the way of appearing there.

In the month of March Madame Piédefer’s clerical friends and the *avocat-général* accomplished a great stroke by procuring Dinah’s appointment as solicitor of funds for the charitable establishment founded by Madame de Carcado. And, furthermore, she was appointed by the court to receive the gifts for the victims of the earthquake at Guadeloupe. The Marquise

d'Espard, to whom M. de Canalis read the names at the Opéra, remarked upon hearing the countess's: —

“I have been in society a long while, and I can recall nothing finer than the manœuvres performed to rescue Madame de La Baudraye's honor!”

During the spring, which a caprice of our climate caused to beam upon our planet in the first week of March, 1843, making it possible to see the Champs-Élysées arrayed with foliage at Longchamp, Fanny Beaupré's lover saw Madame de La Baudraye several times, unseen by her. He was bitten to the heart more than once by one of those paroxysms of jealousy and envy familiar enough to people born and reared in the provinces, when he saw his former mistress driving in state on the back seat of a handsome carriage, well dressed, with an air of reverie, and a child at either door. He cursed himself the more bitterly because he found himself in the throes of the most painful of all kinds of poverty — the poverty that is unacknowledged. He was, like all natures essentially vain and heedless, most sensitive to that strange point of honor which consists in not derogating in the eyes of one's public, which leads men of the Bourse to commit crimes against the law in order to avoid being driven forth from the temple of stock-broking, and which gives to some criminals the courage to do virtuous deeds.

Lousteau breakfasted, dined, and smoked as if he were rich. Not for an inheritance would he have failed to buy the most expensive cigars, for himself no less than for the dramatist or author with whom he entered a booth. He went abroad in patent-leather boots; but he was in fear of executions, which, as the bailiffs expressed it, had received all the sacraments. Fanny

Beaupré had nothing left to be pawned, and his salary was under attachment. Having squeezed the last sou of advance payment from the reviews, the newspapers, and the booksellers, Étienne no longer knew of what ink to make gold. The gambling houses, so foolishly suppressed, could no longer pay, as formerly, the bills drawn on their green cloths by poverty in desperation. In short, the journalist had reached such a degree of indigence that he had actually borrowed a hundred francs from Bixiou, the poorest of his friends, to whom he had never before applied!

What most distressed Lousteau was not the owing five thousand francs, but the being despoiled of his elegant furniture, acquired by dint of such privations, and enriched by Madame de La Baudraye. On the third of April a yellow placard, torn off by the concierge after it had glistened on the wall for a space, had announced the sale of a fine lot of furniture for the following Saturday, the regular day for sales by order of court.

Lousteau walked about, smoking many cigars and seeking ideas; for in Paris ideas are in the air, they smile at you on street-corners, they dart from beneath a cab-wheel with a splash of mud. The idler had already been seeking ideas for articles and subjects for novels during the past month; but he had found only friends who enticed him to dinner, to the theatre, and who intoxicated his *châgrin* by assuring him that champagne would give him inspiration.

“Look out,” said the pitiless Bixiou one evening; he could give a friend a hundred francs and at the same time cut him to the heart with a word. “If you go to bed tight every night, you’ll wake up mad some day.”

On the Friday preceding the sale the poor wretch, accustomed as he was to poverty, was affected like one condemned to death. Formerly he would have said to himself, "Bah! my stuff's old; I'll get a new lot." But he felt incapable of beginning again upon literary *tours de force*. The book-trade, despoiled by pirated editions, paid very low rates. The newspapers economized upon played-out talents, as the theatrical managers do with tenors whose range is falling away. And he walked straight ahead, his eye upon the crowd but seeing naught, a cigar in his mouth and his hands in his pockets, his features working inwardly, and a false smile on his lips. He saw Madame de La Baudraye in her carriage, turning from rue de la Chaussée d'Antin into the boulevard, on her way to the Bois.

"That is the last straw," he said to himself.

He went home to array himself in his best, and in the evening, at seven, he drove in a cab to Madame de La Baudraye's door and asked the concierge to send up to her a note thus conceived: —

"Will madame la comtesse do M. Lousteau the honor to receive him for an instant, on the instant?"

The note was sealed with a seal which the lovers formerly used. Madame de La Baudraye had had the word *Parceque* (because) carved upon a genuine Oriental cornelian, — a great word, the woman's word, the word capable of explaining everything, even the Creation.

The countess had just finished dressing for the Opéra; Friday was the day she had a box. She turned pale when she saw the seal.

"Ask him to wait," she said, putting the note in her corsage.



She had the strength to conceal her distress, and asked her mother to put the children to bed. She then sent for Lousteau to come up, and received him in a boudoir adjoining her large salon, with the doors open. She was to go to the ball after the play, and had donned a lovely gown of figured silk, with alternate dull yellow and profusely flowered stripes. Her gloves, trimmed and with tassels, left her lovely white arms bare. She was swathed in lace, and wore all the dainty trifles demanded by the prevailing mode. Her head-dress *a la Sévigné* gave her a sophisticated air. A necklace of pearls on her neck resembled spots upon snow.

“What is it, monsieur?” she said, putting her foot out from under her dress to capture a velvet cushion. “I thought, I hoped, that I was entirely forgotten.”

“If I should say *never*, you would n’t believe me,” said Lousteau, who had remained standing and was pacing back and forth, nibbling flowers which he took at every turn from the jardinières, with whose fragrance the air of the boudoir was heavy.

There was a moment’s silence. Madame de La Baudraye, scrutinizing Lousteau, saw that he was dressed as only the most finical dandy could be.

“There is nobody on earth but you who can help me and hold out a plank to me, for I am drowning, and I have already swallowed more than one mouthful!” he continued, halting before Dinah and apparently abandoning himself to a supreme effort. “If you see me here, it is because my affairs are in devilish bad shape.”

“Enough!” she said; “I understand you.”

There was another pause, during which Lousteau turned away, took out his handkerchief and seemed to be wiping away a tear.

“How much do you need, Étienne?” she continued in a motherly tone. “We are simply old comrades now; talk to me as you would talk to — to Bixiou.”

“To prevent my furniture from being blown into the air to-morrow at the rooms of the court auctioneer, eighteen hundred francs! To repay my friends, a like amount; three quarters to the landlord, you know how much. ‘My aunt’ demands five hundred francs.”

“And for yourself — to live?”

“Oh! I have my pen!”

“It is of a heaviness about moving which is incomprehensible when one reads you,” she said, with a meaning smile. “I have not the amount you ask. Come to-morrow at eight. The bailiff will surely wait till nine, especially if you bring him here to pay him.”

She realized the necessity of dismissing Lousteau, who pretended to lack the courage to look at her; but she was stirred by a compassion strong enough to untie all the gordian knots that society ties.

“Thanks!” she said, rising and offering him her hand; “your confidence does one good! Oh! it’s a long time since I have felt so great joy in my heart!”

Lousteau took her hand, placed it upon his heart, and pressed it tenderly.

“A drop of water in the desert, and — from an angel’s hand! God always does things well!”

This was said half in jest and half emotionally; but be well assured that it was as noble, as theatrical, as Talma’s acting in his famous rôle of Leicester, where his whole strength consisted in delicate *nuances* of this sort. Dinah could feel his heart beat through his coat; it was beating with pleasure, for the journalist had escaped the judicial sparrow-hawk; but it was beating

also with a very natural passion at the sight of Dinah rejuvenated and restored by opulence.

The countess, stealthily examining Étienne, found his face in harmony with all the flowers of love that were blooming anew for her in that throbbing heart. She tried to fix her eyes, just once, on his eyes whom she had loved so dearly; but the blood rushed madly through her veins and made her head whirl. Thereupon those two exchanged the same red glance which, on the quay at Cosne, had inspired Lousteau with the effrontery to rumple the organdy gown. The Bohemian put his arm about her waist, she yielded, and their cheeks touched.

“Hide! here comes my mother!” cried Dinah in dismay.

And she hastened to meet Madame Piédefer.

“Mamma,” she said (to the stern Madame Piédefer that word was a caress that never failed of its effect), “will you do me a very great favor — take the carriage and go yourself to Monsieur Mongenond, our banker, with a line that I will give you, to get six thousand francs? Come, come! it’s for a charitable purpose; come to my room.”

And she led away her mother, who seemed desirous to look at the person with whom her daughter was talking in the boudoir.

Two days later, Madame Piédefer was deep in consultation with the curé of the parish. After listening to the lamentations of the old mother, who was in utter despair, the curé said gravely:—

“All moral regeneration, unless supported by deep religious feeling and carried on in the bosom of the Church, rests upon foundations of sand. All the re-

ligious practices, so minutely set forth and so little understood, which Catholicism enjoins, are so many dikes required to hold back the floods of the spirit of evil. Therefore prevail upon madame your daughter to perform all her religious duties, and we will save her."

Ten days after this conference the hôtel de La Baudraye was closed. The countess and her children, her mother, in fact, all her household, to which she had added a tutor, started for Sancerre, where Dinah proposed to pass the warm season. She was charming, it was said, to the count. Thus the Muse of Sancerre returned virtuously to family life and to wedlock; but, according to some evil speakers, she was forced so to return because the wish of the little peer of France would doubtless be gratified — he expected a daughter!

Gatien and M. Gravier overwhelmed the countess with servile courtesies and attentions. The president's son, who during Madame de La Baudraye's prolonged absence had been to Paris to take lessons in dandyism, had, so it was said at the Literary Society, an excellent chance of winning the disillusioned superior woman. Others bet on the tutor, and Madame Piédefer pleaded for religion.

In 1844, about the middle of June, the Comte de La Baudraye was walking on the Mall at Sancerre accompanied by his two fine children. He met M. Milaud, the procureur-général, who was in Sancerre on business, and said to him: —

"Here are my children, cousin."

"Ah! there are *our* children," echoed the malicious procureur-général.

A PRINCE OF BOHEMIA.

TO HEINRICH HEINE.

---

MY DEAR HEINE, — To you I dedicate this Study, — to you who represent in Paris the intellect and poesy of Germany, just as in Germany you represent keen and clever French criticism; to you who know better than any one what there may be herein of criticism, of jesting, of love, and of truth.

DE BALZAC.

## A PRINCE OF BOHEMIA.

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“MY dear friend,” said Madame de La Baudraye, producing a manuscript from under the pillow of her couch, “will you forgive me, considering our destitute condition, for having made a novelette of what you told me a few days ago?”

“Everything is fair game in these days; have n’t you known authors who, in default of new ideas, serve up their own hearts, and often their mistresses’, to the public? We shall eventually come to the point, my dear, where we shall seek adventures less for the pleasure of being the heroes of them than to tell about them.”

“Well, you and the Marquise de Rochefide will have paid our rent, and I don’t believe, from the way things are going here, that I shall ever pay yours.”

“Who knows? Perhaps you will have the same good fortune as Madame de Rochefide.”

“Do you call it good fortune to go back to her husband’s house?”

“No, that is only a great fortune. Go on! I am listening!”

Madame de La Baudraye read what follows:—

The scene is rue Chartres-du-Roule, in a magnificent salon. One of the most celebrated authors of our day is seated on a *causeuse*, beside a very illustrious marchioness, with whom he is as intimate as a man is likely

to be who is distinguished by a woman, who keeps him in attendance upon her, less as a *pis aller* than as a convenient and obliging *patito*.

“Well,” said she, “have you found the letters you spoke about yesterday, without which you could not tell me everything about *him?*”

“I have them.”

“You have the floor; I listen like a child to whom his mother tells the tale of ‘The Great Green Snake.’”

“Among all those persons of our acquaintance whom we are accustomed to call our friends, I reckon the young man now in question. He is a gentleman of infinite wit and hard luck, overflowing with good intentions, fascinating in conversation, who has already seen a great deal of life, albeit quite young, and who now, awaiting something better, belongs to what we call ‘Bohemia.’ Bohemia, which we ought really to call the doctrine of Boulevard des Italiens, is composed of young men, all more than twenty years old but less than thirty, all men of genius after their fashion, little known as yet, but who will make themselves known and will then be very distinguished men indeed. They are already familiar figures during the Carnival, when they discharge the overflow of their spirits, which are narrowly confined during the balance of the year, in inventions more or less diverting.

“What times we live in! What an absurd government that allows vast talents thus to run to waste! In Bohemia there are diplomatists capable of thwarting the designs of Russia if they felt that they would be supported by the power of France. One meets there writers, administrators, soldiers, journalists, artists —



in short, all varieties of talent and of intelligence are represented there. It is a microcosm. If the Emperor of Russia should buy our Bohemia for twenty millions or so, — assuming that it would consent to leave the asphalt pavement of the boulevards, — and should transport it to Odessa, within a year Odessa would be Paris. There is to be found the useless and rapidly withering flower of that admirable French youth which Napoleon and Louis XIV fostered with care, and which has been neglected for the last thirty years by the Gerontocraey under whose sway everything in France is withering, — that noble youth, of which only yesterday Professor Tissot, a man not under suspicion, said: ‘That youthful generation, truly worthy of him, the Emperor employed everywhere, in his councils, in the government, in negotiations bristling with difficulties or full of dangers, in the administration of conquered countries; and everywhere it came up to his expectations! The young men were to him the *missi dominici* of Charlemagne.’

“The word ‘Bohemia’ tells the whole story. Bohemia has nothing and lives on what it has. Hope is its religion, faith in itself is its code, charity is supposed to be its budget. All those young men are greater than their ill-luck — below fortune, but above destiny. Always mounted astride an *ij*, clever as feuilletons, light-hearted as people who owe — Ah! they owe as much as they drink! — Lastly, and this is what I am coming at, they are all amorous — so amorous! Imagine Lovelace, Henri Quatre, the Regent, Werther, Saint-Preux, René, and the Maréchal de Richelieu combined in a single man, and you will have an idea of their capacity for love! And such lovers! Eclectics *par*

*excellence* in love, they serve you up a passion such as any woman would like; their hearts resemble a restaurant menu; they have put in practice, unconsciously and perhaps without reading it, Stendhal's book, 'L'Amour'; they have the section on 'love as a taste,' that on 'love as a passion,' 'love as a caprice,' 'crystallized love,' and, especially, 'ephemeral love.' All is fish that comes to their net, and they have invented this burlesque axiom: 'All women are equal before man.' The text of this aphorism is more forcible, but as, in my opinion, its spirit is false, I do not cling to the letter.

"My friend's name, madame, is Gabriel-Jean-Anne-Victor-Benjamin-Georges-Ferdinand-Charles-Édouard Rusticoli, Comte de la Palférine. The Rusticoli, who came to France with Catherine de' Medici, had just then been dispossessed of an infinitesimal sovereignty in Tuscany. Distantly related to the d'Este, they formed an alliance with the Guises. They killed many Protestants on the Saint Bartholomew, and Charles IX gave them the succession to the countship of La Palférine, confiscated from the Duke of Savoy. Henri IV repurchased it from them, but left them the title. That great king was foolish enough to restore the fief in question to the Duke of Savoy. In exchange the Comtes de la Palférine, who, before the Medici had arms, bore argent a cross *fleurdelysée* azure (the cross was *fleurdelysée* by letters patent of Charles IX), surmounted by a count's coronet, and with two peasants for supports, with *In hoc signo vincimus* for a motto, received two offices under the crown and one governorship. They played a great rôle under the Valois and down to the quasi-reign of Richelieu; then they fell away under Louis XIV and were ruined under

Louis XV. My friend's grandfather consumed the last relics of that brilliant family with Mademoiselle Laguerre, whom he was the first to bring into fashion — before Bouret.

“Charles-Édouard's father, being an officer without means in 1789, had the good sense, prompted by the Revolution, to call himself Rusticoli. This father, who, by the way, during the Italian wars married a goddaughter of the Duke of Albany, a Capponi, whence La Palférine's last Christian name, — this father was one of the best colonels in the army; so that the Emperor appointed him a commander in the Legion of Honor and made him a count. The colonel had a slight curvature of the spine, and his son remarked laughingly: ‘He's a count *made over*.’

“General Comte Rusticoli — for he became a brigadier-general at Ratisbon — died at Vienna after the battle of Wagram, where he was promoted general of division on the field. His name, his high rank in Italy, and his merit would have procured him a marshal's bâton sooner or later. Under the Restoration he would have re-established the great and illustrious house of the La Palférines, already renowned in 1100 as Rusticoli, — for the Rusticoli had furnished a Pope and had twice overturned the kingdom of Naples, — and so brilliant and so adroit under the Valois that the La Palférines, although zealous Frondeurs, still existed under Louis XIV. Mazarin loved them; he had found in them a reminiscence of Tuscany. To-day, when one mentions Charles-Édouard de la Palférine, not three people in a hundred ever heard of the family of La Palférine; but the Bourbons have left a living Foix-Grailly from his brush! Ah! if you knew with what

spirit Édouard de la Palférine accepted that obscure position! how he laughs at the bourgeois of 1830! What salt, what Attic wit! If Bohemia could endure a king, he would be King of Bohemia. His verve is inexhaustible. We owe to him the map of Bohemia and the names of the seven castles that Nodier was unable to find."

"That," said the marchioness, "is the only thing lacking in one of the cleverest bits of satire of our epoch."

"A few of my friend La Palférine's good things will enable you to judge what he is," continued Nathan. "He finds one of his friends — a Bohemian — on the boulevard arguing with a bourgeois who considered that he had been insulted. Bohemia is very insolent to the powers that be. There was talk of a duel.

"'One moment,' said La Palférine, becoming as like Lauzun as Lauzun himself could ever be, 'one moment! Is monsieur born?'"<sup>1</sup>

"'What's that, monsieur?'" said the bourgeois.

"'Yes — are you born? What's your name?'"

"'Godin.'"

"'Eh? Godin!' said La Palférine's friend.

"'One moment, my dear fellow,' interposed La Palférine, stopping his friend. 'There are Trigaudins; are you one of them?'"

"'Amazement on the part of the bourgeois.

"'No? Then you must be one of the new Ducs de Gaëte, imperial creation? No? Well, how do you expect that my friend, *who will be* a secretary of embassy and ambassador, and to whom you will some day owe respect, can fight with you? — Godin! there's

<sup>1</sup> *Etes-vous né?* That is to say, "Are you anybody?"

no such thing; you are nobody, Godin! My friend can't fight in the air. When one is somebody, one fights only with somebody. Adieu, my dear man!

“My respects to madame,” added the friend.

“One day La Palférine was walking with one of his friends, who threw the end of his cigar in the face of a passer-by, who had the bad taste to be angry.

“You have sustained your adversary's fire,” observed the count; ‘the seconds declare that the demands of honor are satisfied.’

“He owed a thousand francs to his tailor, who, instead of going himself, sent his head clerk to La Palférine one morning. The clerk finds the unfortunate debtor on the sixth floor, at the rear of a courtyard at the upper end of Faubourg du Roule. There was no furniture in the room but a bed — and such a bed! and a table — and such a table! La Palférine listens to the ferocious demand, ‘which I should call illegal,’ he said to us, ‘being made at seven in the morning.’

“Go and tell your master,” he replies, with the gesture and pose of Mirabeau, ‘the condition in which you found me!’

“The clerk retreats with apologies. La Palférine sees the young man on the landing; he rises, in the costume made illustrious by the lines of ‘Britannicus,’ and calls out to him: —

“Observe the staircase! Take particular notice of the staircase, so that you won't forget to tell him about the staircase.’

“No matter what situation chance may place him in, La Palférine has never shown himself unequal to the emergency, or without wit, or capable of bad form. Always and in everything he displays the genius of

Rivarol and the refined craft of the great French nobleman. 'T was he who invented the delicious anecdote about the banker Laffitte's friend going to the office of the 'national subscription' proposed in order to preserve Laffitte's palace for him, where the Revolution of 1830 was brewed, and saying, 'Here are five francs, give me back a hundred sous.' Some one made a caricature of it. He had the misfortune — in indictment-jargon — to make an unmarried girl a mother. The child, who was not too innocent, confessed her sin to her mother, an excellent bourgeoisie, who runs to La Palférine and asks him what he intends to do.

"'Why, madame, I am neither surgeon nor midwife.'

"She was stupefied, but she returned to the charge three or four years later, insisting upon her previous question — what did La Palférine propose to do.

"'Oh, madame,' said he, 'when the child is seven years old, the age at which children pass from a woman's hands into a man's' (Here the mother nodded her assent), 'if the child is really mine' (A gesture from the mother), 'if he bears a striking resemblance to me, if he promises to be a gentleman, if I recognize in him my variety of intellect, and especially the Rusticoli manner, why, then' (Another gesture), 'on my honor as a gentleman, I'll give him a stick of barley candy!'

"All this, if you will allow me to adopt the style used by Monsieur Sainte-Beuve in his biographies of unknown persons, is the playful, sportive, but already decayed side of a powerful race. It has the savor of the Parc-aux-Cerfs rather than of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. It is not the race of *the gentles*; I am inclined to believe in a little debauchery, yes, more than I would prefer to have in a brilliant and generous character;

but he is gallant in the Richelieu manner, giddy-pated, and perhaps too much given to rascality. Perhaps it may be the *outrances* of the eighteenth century; it goes back to the Musketeers, and it contradicts Champcenetz; but such frivolity belongs with the arabesques and embellishments of the old court of the Valois. In so moral an age as ours we should be very stern when we fall in with such audacity; but that stick of barley candy may also serve to point out to young girls the danger of such intimacies, at the outset full of reveries, more delightful than repellent, rose-colored and blooming; but their slopes are not watched, and they end in ripening excesses, in faults running over with ambiguous effervescence, in results too exciting. This anecdote depicts the keen and unfailing wit of La Palférine, for it has the *entre-deux* that Pascal wanted, it is tender yet pitiless; it is, like Epaminondas, equally great at both ends. Moreover the jest characterizes the epoch; in old days there were no *accoucheurs*. Thus the refinements of our civilization are illustrated by that shaft of wit, which will live."

"I say, my dear Nathan, what rubbish is this you are talking?" asked the astonished marchioness.

"Madame la marquise," he replied, "you are not aware of the value of those precious phrases: I am speaking at this moment the *Sainte-Beuve*, a new French language. I resume. One day as he was walking on the boulevard, arm-in-arm with friends, La Palférine saw one of the most truculent of his creditors approaching.

"Are you thinking of me, monsieur?" queried the creditor.

"Not the least in the world!" replied the count.

“Observe how difficult his position was. Talleyrand, under similar circumstances, had said, ‘You are very inquisitive, my dear sir!’ It was necessary to avoid imitating that inimitable man.

“As generous as Buckingham, and unable to endure the idea of being caught unprovided, one day, finding that he had nothing to give to a chimney-sweep, the young count dips his hand into a eask of raisins at a green-grocer’s door, and fills the little Savoyard’s cap, who is very fond of raisins. The green-grocer began by laughing and ended by offering La Palférine his hand.

“‘Oh, fie! monsieur,’ said the latter; ‘your left hand should not know what my right hand just gave.’

“Bold to the point of rashness, Charles-Édouard never seeks or declines any adventure; but he has an amusing sort of courage. Meeting in the Passage de l’Opéra a man who had expressed himself in slighting terms concerning him, he hit him with his elbow as he passed, then retraced his steps and did the same thing again.

“‘You are very awkward!’ said the other.

“‘On the contrary, I did it purposely.’

“‘The young man handed him his card.

“‘This is very dirty; it’s been in your pocket too long! Be good enough to give me another,’ he added, throwing the card away.

“On the ground he received a sword-thrust; his adversary saw the blood flow, and wanted to have done.

“‘You are wounded!’ he cried.

“‘I deny the thrust!’ replied the count, as coolly as if he were in a fencing-gallery.



“And he returned with a similar thrust, but deeper, as he added:—

“‘That’s the real *coup!*’

“His adversary stayed in bed six months. This episode, confining ourselves still to Monsieur Sainte-Beuve’s territory, recalls the *raffinés* and the pungent pleasantry of the halcyon days of the monarchy. We detect therein a heedless life, without point of departure; a laughing imagination which is granted us only in the beginning of youth. It is no longer the velvety smoothness of the blossom, but there is dried seed therein, bulging and fertile, which assures one of abundance during the winter season. Does n’t it seem to you that such behavior indicates a something unsatisfied, uneasy, that may not be analyzed or described, but may be understood, and that would burn in scattered, soaring flames, if the opportunity should come to manifest itself? It is the *acedia* of the cloister—a something soured and fermented in the growing lack of occupation of juvenile powers; an ill-defined and vague melancholy.”

“Enough of that!” said the marchioness; “you make my brain ache.”

“It is the afternoon ennui. One has nothing to do, one does ill rather than do nothing, and that is what will always happen in France. Youth at this moment has two sides: the studious side of the *misunderstood*, the ardent side of the *passionate*.”

“Enough!” Madame de Rochefide repeated with an imperative gesture; “you set my nerves on edge.”

“I make haste, in order to complete my picture of La Palférine, to plunge into his sphere of gallantry, so that I may make clear to you the peculiar genius

of this young man, who represents admirably a portion of our mischief-making youth, of that youth which is powerful enough to laugh at the situation in which it is placed by the ineptitude of the powers that be, shrewd enough to do nothing in view of the futility of work, and still alive enough to cling to pleasure, the only thing which the said powers have been unable to deprive it of. But a policy at once middle-class, mercantile, and bigoted continues to suppress all the mill-dams which so many aptitudes and talents might overflow. Nothing for these poets, nothing for these young scholars! To enable you to understand the stupidity of the new court, listen to what happened to La Palférine. There is on the civil list a 'clerk for the unfortunate.' This clerk learned one day that La Palférine was in extreme destitution; he made a report, no doubt, and carried fifty francs to the heir of the Rusticoli. La Palférine received him with perfect courtesy and talked with him about people at court.

"'Is it true,' he asked, 'that Mademoiselle d'Orléans contributes a certain sum to this excellent service inaugurated for her nephew? That would be very noble of her.'

"He had given the tip to a little ten-year-old Savoyard, whom he calls 'Father Anchises,' who serves him for nothing, and of whom he says:—

"'I have never seen so much idiocy combined with so much intelligence; he would go through the fire for me, he understands everything, yet does not understand that I can do nothing for him.'

"Anchises drove up in a magnificent coupé from a livery stable, with a footman riding behind. When La Palférine heard the carriage-wheels, he skilfully led

the conversation around to the duties of his visitor, whom he calls since then 'the man *aux misères sans écart*'; he inquired about his work and his salary.

“Do they give you a carriage to go about the city in?”

“Oh no!”

“At that, La Palférine and the friend who happened to be with him escorted the poor man downstairs and compelled him to enter the carriage, for it was raining in torrents. La Palférine had planned everything. He offered to take the clerk wherever the clerk was going. When the distributor of alms had finished his next call, he found the carriage at the door. The footman handed him this note written in pencil:—

“The carriage is paid for for three days by Comte Rusticoli de la Palférine, who is only too happy to associate himself with the charities of the court by giving wings to his benefactions.’

“La Palférine calls the civil list now an uncivil list. He was passionately loved by a woman whose conduct was somewhat light. Antonia lived on rue du Helder and was remarked there. But in the days when she knew the count, she had not yet stood on her own feet. She had no lack of that impertinence of a former time which the women of to-day have degraded to insolence. After a fortnight of unalloyed happiness, she was obliged, in the interest of her civil list, to return to a less exclusive system of love-making. When he saw that she was not honest with him, La Palférine wrote Madame Antonia this letter, which made her famous:—

“MADAME, —

“Your conduct surprises as much as it distresses me. Not content to rend my heart by your disdain,

you are so indelicate as to detain a toothbrush of mine, which my means do not allow me to replace, my estates being burdened with mortgages beyond their value.

“Adieu, too fair and too ungrateful friend! May we meet in a better world!

“CHARLES-ÉDOUARD.’

“Assuredly (once more resorting to Monsieur Saint-Beuve’s macaronic style) this far surpasses Sterne’s satire in his ‘Sentimental Journey’; it would be Scarron without his vulgarity. Indeed, I do not know if Molière, in his good days, would not have said, as of Cyrano’s best, ‘That is mine.’ Richelieu was no more complete when he wrote to the princess who was awaiting him in the kitchen courtyard at the Palais-Royal, ‘Stay there, my queen, to fascinate the scullions!’ But Charles-Édouard’s jest is less acrid. I do not know if the Greeks or the Romans were familiar with that sort of wit. Perchance Plato, if we scan him closely, did approach it, but on the severe, musical side.”

“Drop that jargon,” said the marchioness; “it may do to print, but to have my ears flayed with it is a punishment I don’t deserve.”

“This is how he happened to meet Claudine,” continued Nathan. “One day — one of those idle days when a young man is a burden to himself, and, like Blondet under the Restoration, emerges from the state of enervation to which overweening old men condemn him, only to do evil, to undertake one of those far-reaching practical jokes which have their excuse in the very audacity of their conception — La Palférine was sauntering at the end of his cane, on the same sidewalk between rue de Grammont and rue de Richelieu. In

the distance he sees a woman, a woman dressed over-stylishly, and, as he expresses it, arrayed in fal-lals too expensive and worn too negligently, not to belong to a princess of the court or of the Opéra; but, since July, 1830, according to him, deception has become impossible, and the princess must be of the Opéra. The young count places himself beside the woman in question, as if he had an appointment with her; he follows her with courteous obstinacy, with a persistence that does not offend good taste, casting at her the while imperative but not unseasonable glances, which compel her to allow herself to be escorted. Another man would have been repelled by the woman's greeting, by her first evolutions, by the stinging frigidity of her manner, by her severe words; but La Palférine assailed her with amusing sallies of the sort that no gravity, no determination, can resist.

To rid herself of him the stranger goes into her milliner's; Charles-Édouard follows her in, sits down, and advises her like a man who is all ready to pay. This sang-froid makes the woman uneasy and she leaves the shop. On the stairs she says to La Palférine, her persecutor:—

“Monsieur, I am going to see a relation of my husband's, an old lady, Madame de Bonfalot.”

“Oh! Madame de Bonfalot?” rejoins the count; ‘why, I am delighted; that 's where I am going.’

“The couple go thither. Charles-Édouard goes in with the woman and is supposed to have been brought by her; he enters into the conversation and makes a lavish display of his keen and discriminating wit.

“The visit was unconscionably prolonged, which was not what he wanted.

“‘Madame,’ he said to the stranger, ‘don’t forget that your husband is waiting for us; he gave us only quarter of an hour.’

“Dumfounded by such audacity, which, as you know, always delights you, and drawn on by the triumphant glance, by the air, at once profound and artless, which Charles-Édouard can always assume, she rose, accepted her compulsory escort’s arm, went downstairs, and said to him at the door:—

“‘Monsieur, I love a joke.’

“‘And so do I!’ said he.

“She laughed.

“‘But it depends altogether on you whether this becomes serious,’ he rejoined. ‘I am the Comte de la Palférine, and I am overjoyed to have the privilege of laying at your feet both my heart and my fortune!’

“At this time he was twenty-two years old: it happened in 1834. As luck would have it, that day he was handsomely dressed. I will describe him to you in a word. He is the living image of Louis XIII: he has the pale brow, smooth at the temples, the olive complexion, that Italian complexion which becomes white in the light, the brown hair, worn long, and the black royale; he has his serious, melancholy expression, too, for his personal appearance and his temperament are in striking contrast.

“When she heard the name and saw the man, Claudine felt a sort of thrill. La Palférine noticed it; he shot a glance at her from his deep, black, almond-shaped eyes, with the slightly wrinkled and darkened lids which betray pleasures equal to crushing fatigue. Under the spell of that glance she said to him:—

“‘Your address?’

“‘How awkward!’ (*Quelle maladresse!*) he replied.

“‘Oh! pshaw!’ she exclaimed, smiling. ‘Bird on the branch?’

“‘Adieu, madame; you are just the woman for me, but my fortune is far from resembling my desire.’

“He bowed and left her abruptly, without turning round. Two days later, by one of those fatalities which are possible only in Paris, he went to one of the second-hand dealers in clothes who loan upon pledges, to sell him the surplus of his wardrobe; he was just taking the money with evident uneasiness, after long haggling, when the unknown passed and recognized him.

“‘No,’ he cried to the amazed tradesman, ‘I don’t want your trumpet.’

“And he pointed to a huge embossed trumpet hanging outside, which was used as a model for designs worked on the coats of ambassadors’ outriders and generals of the Empire. Then, impetuous and haughty, he again followed the young woman.

“After that great day of the trumpet they came to an excellent understanding. Charles-Édouard has the most judicious ideas concerning love. According to him there cannot be two loves in a man’s life; there is but a single one, deep as the sea, but shoreless. At every age this love bursts upon one, as the divine grace burst upon St. Paul. A man may live to the age of sixty without having felt it. In Heine’s noble words, that love may be *the secret malady of the heart*, a combination of the sense of the infinite which is born in us, and of the lovely ideal which reveals itself in a visible shape. In a word, this love embraces alike the creature and the creation. So long as there is no question

of this great poem, we cannot treat otherwise than jestingly loves which are destined to end, as being what lyrics are in literature as compared with the great epic.

“In this liaison Charles-Édouard was conscious of neither the lightning stroke which announces this genuine love, nor the gradual revelation of the charms, the recognition of the hidden qualities, which bind two mortals together with increasing force. True love has only these two modes: either the first sight, which doubtless is a result of the Scottish second sight, or the gradual fusion of the two beings, which realizes the Platonic androgynos. But Charles-Édouard was madly loved. That woman was moved by a complete love, ideal and physical; in short, La Palférine was her genuine passion. To him Claudine was simply a delectable mistress. The devil (who assuredly is a mighty magician) and his hell could never have changed the action of those two unequal flames. I venture to assert that Claudine often bored her lover.

“‘After three days the woman one does n’t love and the fish one has kept too long are good only to throw out of window,’ he used to say to us.

“In Bohemia little secrecy is kept touching ephemeral love affairs. La Palférine often talked to us about Claudine; still none of us ever saw her, and her married name was never mentioned. Claudine was almost a mythological personage. We treated them all alike, thus satisfying the exigencies of our life in common and the laws of good taste. Claudine, Hortense, the Baroness, the Bourgeoise, the Empress, the Lioness, the Spaniard, were phrases which enabled each of us to pour out his joys, his anxieties, his disappointments, his



hopes, and to communicate his discoveries. We did not go beyond that. There is one example, in Bohemia, of a chance disclosure of the identity of a person who had been under discussion; instantly, by common accord, we ceased to speak of her. This fact will indicate how keen a sense youth has of true delicacy. What admirable judgment the best men display in recognizing the point at which raillery should stop, and that multitude of French things designated by the military word *blague*, a word which will sometime be expelled from the language, let us hope, but which alone defines the wit of Bohemia.

“So we often joked about Claudine and the count. It was: ‘What are you doing with Claudine?’ — ‘How about your Claudine?’ — ‘Still Claudine?’ sung to Rossini’s air of ‘Still Gessler!’

“‘The worst evil I wish you,’ he said to us one day, ‘is a mistress like mine. Never was greyhound or terrier or poodle comparable to her for gentleness and submissive, unconditional affection. There are times when I reproach myself, when I call myself to account for my harshness. Claudine obeys me with the docility of a saint. She comes, I send her away, she goes away, and does n’t weep till she’s in the courtyard. I don’t want her about for a week, so I put her off till the Tuesday following, say at midnight or six in the morning, ten o’clock or five o’clock, the most inconvenient hour in the day, breakfast-time or dinner-time, bed-time or getting-up time. And she will come, lovely, beautifully dressed, enchanting, at the precise hour! And she is married! entangled in the duties and obligations of a household! The ruses she has to invent, the excuses to devise, in order to conform to my

caprices, would embarrass us men! Nothing tires her out, she stands her ground! I tell her it's not love, it's obstinacy. She writes me every day; I don't read her letters; she has discovered it, and she keeps on writing! See, there are two hundred letters in this box. She begs me to take one of her letters every day to wipe my razors on, and I never fail! She believes, and rightly too, that the sight of her handwriting makes me think of her.'

"La Palférine was dressing as he told us this; I took the letter he was about to use, and read it; and as he never reclaimed it I kept it. Here it is, for, as I promised, I have hunted it up: —

“‘MONDAY, *midnight.*

“‘Well, my dear, are you satisfied? I did n't ask you for your hand, which it would have been easy for you to give me, and which I longed so to press to my heart, to my lips. No, I did n't ask you for it, I was too much afraid of displeasing you. Let me tell you this: although I am cruelly aware that my actions are a matter of utter indifference to you, I have become none the less extremely shy in my conduct. The woman who belongs to you, by whatever title and although in profound secrecy, should avoid incurring the slightest blame. So far as the angels in Heaven are concerned, for whom there is no secret, my love is equal to the purest loves; but, wherever I am, it always seems to me that I am in your presence, and I wish to do you credit.

“‘All that you said to me about my manner of dressing impressed me and showed me how vastly superior to other men those of noble birth are! I still had something of the *fille de l'Opéra* in the cut of my dresses and the arrangement of my hair. In an instant I realized the distance that separated me from good taste. The

next time, you will receive a duchess, — you won't recognize me. Oh! how good you were to your Claudine! how many times I have thanked you for telling me all that! What profound interest in those few words! So you have really been thinking about this thing of yours which is called Claudine? That other imbecile would never have enlightened me; *he* thinks everything I do is right; besides, *he* is too "domestic," too prosaic, to have any sense of the beautiful. Tuesday will seem to my impatience a long time coming! Tuesday — with you for two or three hours! Oh! when Tuesday comes I will do my best to think that those hours are months, and that I am always like that. I live in hope of that morning, as I shall live on the recollection of it when it has passed. Hope is a memory that craves, recollection is a memory that has enjoyed. What a beautiful life in life thought creates for us thus! I dream of inventing caresses which will belong to me alone, the secret of which no other woman will guess. I have cold sweats at the thought that something may prevent. Oh! I would break off short with *him*, if necessary; but it is not from that quarter that the hindrance will come, but from you; perhaps you will want to go into society, to some other woman's, it may be. Oh! thanks for that Tuesday! If you should take it away from me, Charles, you don't know all that you would bring upon *him* — I should drive *him* mad. If you should n't want me, if you should be going out, let me come all the same, to see you dress, just to see you, — I don't ask anything more; let me prove to you so how purely I love you! Since you allowed me to love you, — for you must have allowed it, since I am yours, — since that day I have loved you with all the strength of my soul, and I shall always love you; after loving you, a woman cannot, should not love any other. And, you see, when you find yourself under a glance that seeks only to look at you, you feel that there is something divine in your Claudine — something divine

that you have aroused. Alas! I am not coquettish with you; I am like a mother with her child: I endure everything from you; I, who am so haughty and imperious elsewhere, I who used to put dukes through their paces, and princes, and aides-de-camp of Charles X, who were worth more than the whole of the present court, I treat you like a spoiled child! But of what use are coquetries? it would be a waste of time. And yet, for lack of coquetry, I shall never make you love me, monsieur! I know it, I feel it, and I keep on acting in obedience to an irresistible power; but I believe that such absolute abandonment of myself will win for me from you the sentiment that *he* says all men feel for things that belong to them.'

“‘WEDNESDAY.

“‘Oh! what black melancholy crept into my heart when I learned that I must abandon the happiness of seeing you yesterday! A single thought prevented me from throwing myself into the arms of death: it was your wish! To stay away was to carry out your will, to obey an order from you. Ah! Charles, I was so pretty! you would have had in me something better than that German princess whom you gave me as a model, and whom I studied at the Opéra. But you might have thought me unnatural. You see, you have taken away all my confidence in myself — perhaps I am ugly. Oh! I have a horror of myself, I am becoming idiotic thinking of my radiant Charles-Édouard. I shall end by going mad, that is sure. Don't laugh, don't talk to me about the fickleness of women. If we are fickle, you men are very peculiar! Think of depriving a wretched creature of the hours of love which she has been happy in looking forward to for ten days, which made her amiable and charming to everybody who came to see her! Indeed you were the cause of my mild treatment of *him* — you don't know what injury you are doing *him*. I have been wondering

what means I can devise to keep you, or simply to have the right to be yours sometimes. When I think that you would never consent to come here! With what ecstasy I would wait on you! There are women more favored than I! There are women to whom you say, "I love you." To me you have never said anything more than "You're a good girl." Certain things that you have said to me are wearing my heart away, without your knowledge. There are men who ask me sometimes what I am thinking about: I am thinking of my abject attitude, which is that of the most miserable of sinners in presence of the Saviour.'

"There are three pages more of it, you see. La Palférine let me take this letter, on which I can see the marks of tears that look as if they were still warm! The letter satisfied me that La Palférine had told us the truth. Marcas, who is decidedly bashful with women, went into ecstasies over a similar letter which he read in his corner before lighting his cigar with it.

"'Why, all women in love write that sort of stuff!' cried La Palférine; 'love gives them intelligence and style, every one of them, which proves that in France style comes from ideas and not from words. See how well thought out this is, how logical deep feeling can be!'

"And he read us another letter, which was far superior to the carefully studied, artificial epistles that we novelists try to compose. One day, poor Claudine, having learned that La Palférine was in imminent danger on account of a note of hand, conceived the fatal idea of carrying him a considerable sum in gold, in an exquisitely embroidered purse.

"'How dare you meddle in my domestic affairs?' exclaimed La Palférine wrathfully. 'Mend my breeches

and make slippers for me, if it amuses you. But — Ah! you choose to play the duchess, and you turn the fable of Danaë against the aristocracy!

“As he said this, he emptied the purse into his hand and made as if to throw the money in Claudine’s face. Claudine, terrified and not understanding the jest, stepped back, collided with a chair, and fell head-foremost against the sharp corner of the chimney-piece. She thought that she was dead. When, having been laid upon a bed, she was able at last to speak, the poor woman said simply: —

“‘I deserved it, Charles!’

“La Palférine had a moment of profound distress, which restored Claudine to life; she was overjoyed by the mishap and took advantage of it to make La Palférine take the money and thus to relieve his embarrassment. It was the reverse of the fable of La Fontaine in which a husband thanks the robbers for being the cause of an affectionate outburst on the part of his wife.

“A single remark of La Palférine’s will show you the man just as he is. Claudine returned home, manufactured a fable as best she could to account for her wound, and was dangerously ill. An abscess formed in her head. The doctor — Bianchon, I believe; yes, it was he — wanted one day to have her hair cut, her hair, by the way, being as beautiful as the Duchesse de Berri’s; but she refused, and said to Bianchon in confidence that she could n’t allow her hair to be cut without the Comte de la Palférine’s consent. Bianchon went to Charles-Édouard, who listened to him with a grave face; and when he had explained the case at length and shown that it was absolutely necessary to

out the hair in order to ensure the success of the operation, he exclaimed in a peremptory tone:—

“Cut Claudine’s hair! no, I prefer to lose her!”

“After four years Bianchon still talks about La Palférine’s *mot*, and we have laughed over it many a half-hour. Claudine, being informed of this decree, saw in it a proof of affection and concluded that he loved her. In face of her weeping family, and of her husband imploring her on his knees, she was immovable, she kept her hair. The operation, assisted by that inward force which the belief that she was loved gave her, was perfectly successful. There are emotions of the heart which play havoc with the tricks of surgery and the laws of medical science. Claudine wrote a delicious letter to La Palférine, without orthography or punctuation, to inform him of the happy result of the operation, telling him that love knew more than all the sciences.

“‘And now,’ La Palférine asked us one day, ‘how am I to set to work to get rid of Claudine?’”

“‘Why, she’s not troublesome, she leaves you free to do as you choose.’”

“‘That is true,’ said La Palférine, ‘but I don’t propose to have anything in my life that slips in without my consent.’”

“From that day he set about tormenting Claudine: he held in the utmost horror a mere bourgeoisie, a woman without a name; he absolutely must have a titled woman; Claudine had made progress, to be sure — she was dressed like the most fashionable women of Faubourg Saint-Germain, she had succeeded in sanctifying her gait, she walked with chaste, inimitable grace; but that was not enough! These eulogiums caused Claudine to swallow everything.



“‘Well,’ La Palférine said to her one day, ‘if you prefer to remain the mistress of an impoverished La Palférine, without a sou and without prospects, you must at least represent him worthily. You must have a carriage, servants, a livery, and a title. Give me all the pleasures of vanity which I cannot obtain by myself. The woman whom I honor with my attentions must never go on foot; if she is splashed, I suffer! I am made that way! My mistress must be admired by all Paris. I propose that all Paris shall envy me my good fortune! If some nice little fellow, when he sees a resplendent countess pass in a resplendent equipage, says to himself, ‘To whom do such divinities belong?’ it will increase my pleasure immensely.’

“La Palférine confessed to us that, when he had thrown this programme at Claudine’s head, in order to rid himself of her, he was abashed for the first and probably the only time in his life.

“‘My dear,’ she said, in a tone that betrayed an inward trembling, ‘it is well. All that shall be done, or I will die.’

“She kissed his hand and shed tears of joy upon it.

“‘I am delighted,’ she said, ‘that you have explained to me what I must do in order to remain your mistress.’

“‘And,’ said La Palférine, ‘she went away, with the coquettish little gesture of a woman satisfied. She stood on the threshold of my attic, tall and proud, on the level of a sibyl of old.’

“All this should make clear enough to you the morals of Bohemia in which this young *condottiere* is one of the most brilliant figures,” continued Nathan after a pause. “Now, this is how I discovered who Claudine was, and how I was enabled to understand



the lamentable truth in one passage of Claudine's letter, to which you probably paid no attention."

The marchioness, too pensive to smile, said to Nathan, "Go on!" in a tone which proved how deeply impressed she was by these strange anecdotes, and especially how much La Palférine interested her.

"Among all the dramatic authors in Paris, one of the most esteemed, most respectable, and most widely known in 1829 was du Bruel, whose true name is unknown to the public. He calls himself de Cursy on the posters. Under the Restoration he was chief of a bureau in one of the departments. Being passionately attached to the elder branch, he bravely handed in his resignation in 1830, and since then has written twice as many plays, to make up the deficit in his budget caused by his noble conduct. Du Bruel was forty years old at that time, and his life is well known to you. Following the example of some other authors, he conceived for a dancer one of those passions which cannot be explained and which exist none the less in the sight and knowledge of the literary world. The dancer in question, as you know, is Tullia, one of the former stars of the Royal Academy of Music. Tullia is only a stage name, as de Cursy is for du Bruel. For ten years, from 1817 to 1827, that young woman shone on the illustrious boards of the Opéra. More beautiful than intelligent, a moderately good performer, but a little cleverer than most dancers are, she did not take part in the virtuous reformation that destroyed the *corps de ballet*, but she continued the dynasty of the Guimards. She owed her ascendancy to several avowed protectors, to the Duc de Rhétoré, son of the Duc de Chaulieu, to the influence of a famous manager of the Beaux-Arts,

to diplomatists and rich foreigners. During her apogee she had a small house on rue Chauchat and lived as the nymphs of the Opéra used to live in the old days.

“Du Bruel fell in love with her when the Duc de Rhétoré’s passion began to decline, about 1823. Being an humble deputy-chief, du Bruel tolerated the manager of the Beaux-Arts, believing that he himself was the favored lover! After six years the liaison became a quasi-marriage.

“Tullia sedulously concealed her origin; it was known vaguely that she was from Nanterre. One of her uncles, formerly a simple carpenter or mason, thanks to his patrons and to generous loans, became, it is said, a rich building contractor. Du Bruel was guilty of this indiscretion: he said one day that Tullia would inherit sooner or later a handsome property. The contractor, who was not married, had a weakness for his niece, to whom he was under obligations.

“‘He’s a man who has n’t wit enough to be ungrateful,’ she said.

“In 1829 Tullia voluntarily retired. At thirty years of age she found that she was getting a little stout; she had tried pantomime to no purpose, for she could do nothing except give herself enough *ballon* to raise her skirts good and high when she pirouetted, after the style of the Noblets, and to show herself quasi-nude to the pit. Old Vestris told her at the outset that that particular *tempo*, well executed, when a dancer was beautiful in the nude state, was equal to all conceivable talents. It is the high C of dancing. That was why, he said, the celebrated dancers, Camargo, Guimard, and Taglioni, all of whom were scrawny, dark-skinned, and ugly, had to depend on their genius

alone. Tullia retired in all her glory, before performers more skilful than she, and she did wisely. Being an aristocratic dancer, who had lowered herself but little in her liaisons, she preferred not to soil her ankles in the mire of July. Beautiful and insolent, Tullia had glorious memories and little money, but the most magnificent jewels and some of the finest furniture in Paris.

“On leaving the Opéra, the illustrious young woman, who is well-nigh forgotten now, had but one idea,— she proposed to marry du Bruel; and you understand that she is Madame du Bruel to-day, although the marriage has never been made public. How do women of that sort induce men to marry them after seven or eight years of intimacy? What pressure do they exert? What machinery do they set in motion? Amusing as that domestic drama might be, it is not our subject. Du Bruel was married secretly, the thing was done. Before his marriage he was considered a jovial companion: he did n’t always go home at night, his life was more or less bohemian, he indulged in an occasional supper or other festivity. He would start out for a rehearsal at the Opéra-Comique, and would find himself, without knowing how, at Dieppe, Baden, or Saint-Germain; he gave dinner-parties, he led the vigorous and lavish life of authors, journalists, and artists; he claimed his privileges as an author in the wings of all the theatres in Paris; he was one of our circle. Finot, Lousteau, du Tillet, Desroches, Bixiou, Blondet, Couture, and des Lupeaulx tolerated him, despite his pedantic manner and his heavy bureaucratic pose.

“ But, once married, Tullia made du Bruel her slave. What would you have? the poor devil loved her

Tullia had left the stage, so she said, to belong wholly to him, to become a worthy and charming wife. She had the art to procure her acceptance by the most Jansenist females of the du Bruel tribe. Before any one realized her intention, she went to Madame de Bonfalot's to be bored to death; she made handsome presents to miserly old Madame de Chissé, her great-aunt; she passed a whole summer at the old lady's house and did n't miss a single Mass. The ex-dancer confessed, received absolution, eommunicated, but only in the country, under the aunt's eyes. She said to us the next winter:—

“Do you understand? I am going to have real aunts!”

“She was so happy to become a bourgeoisie, so happy to abandon her independence, that she found the means to carry her to her goal. She flattered the old people. She went on foot every day to sit two hours with du Bruel's mother during an illness. Du Bruel was bewildered by that ruse *à la Maintenon*, and he admired his wife without a single regret; he was so well trussed that he was no longer conseious of the cord.

“She gave du Bruel to understand that the elastic bourgeois system of government, with a bourgeois royalty and a bourgeois court, was the only one under which a Tullia, become Madame du Bruel, would be allowed to belong to the society which she had the good sense not to try to enter. She was content to be received by Mesdames de Bonfalot and de Chissé, and by Madame du Bruel the elder, with whom she assumed the attitude of a discreet, virtuous, simple-mannered woman, without ever contradicting herself. Three years later she was received by their friends.

“Really I can’t persuade myself that Madame du Bruel the younger ever showed her legs and the rest to all Paris in the light of a hundred gas-jets!’ naïvely observed Madame Anselme Popinot.

“In that respect July, 1830, resembles the Empire under Napolcon, who received at his court a former lady’s-maid in the person of Madame Garat, spouse of the great magistrate. The ex-dancer had broken entirely with all her former comrades, as you can imagine; among her old acquaintances she recognized no one who could possibly compromise her. When she married, she hired a charming little house with courtyard and garden, on rue de la Victoire, where she spent money madly, and in which the finest pieces of her furniture and du Bruel’s found their resting-place. Everything that seemed ordinary or commonplace was sold. To find analogies for the luxury that sparkled under her roof we must go back to the halcyon days of the Guimards and Sophie Arnoulds and Duthés, who devoured regal fortunes.

“How far did this sumptuous domestic life act upon du Bruel? The question, a delicate one to propound, is still more delicate to solve. To give an idea of Tullia’s whimsies, let it suffice to tell you of one detail. Her bed-spread was of English point-lace and worth ten thousand francs. A famous actress had one like it, and Tullia heard of it; thereupon she covered her bed with a superb angora. This anecdote depicts the woman. Du Bruel dared not say a word; he was ordered to publish that challenge hurled at *the other*. Tullia was fond of that present from the Duc de Rhétoré; but one day, five years after her marriage, she was playing with her cat and tore the bed-spread. She

made it into veils and trimming and replaced it by a sensible bed-spread, which was really a bed-spread, and not simply a proof of the insanity peculiar to those women who revenge themselves by insensate extravagance, as a journalist once said, for having lived on raw potatoes in their childhood.

“The day when the bed-spread was torn in shreds marked a new era in the household. Cursy distinguished himself by a frantic activity. No one suspects to what Paris owes the eighteenth-century vaudeville, with hair-powder and *mouches*, that suddenly assailed the theatres. The author of those innumerable vaudevilles, of which the feuilletonists complained so bitterly, was a formal command on the part of Madame du Bruel: she demanded that her husband purchase the house on which she had spent so much money, and in which she had placed furniture worth half a million francs. Why? Tullia never explains herself, she understands admirably woman’s sovereign ‘because.’

“‘They’ve made a good deal of fun of Cursy,’ she said; ‘but, after all, he found the house in the rouge-box, the powder-puff, and the spangled costume of the eighteenth century. But for me, he would never have thought of it,” she added, burying herself in the cushions in her chimney-corner.

“She said this to us on our return from a first performance of a play of du Bruel’s, which had made a hit, and against which she foresaw an avalanche of feuilletons. Tullia held receptions. Every Monday she served tea; her society was as well chosen as she could manage, and she neglected nothing to make her house attractive. There was a bouillotte table in one salon, conversation in another; sometimes, in the third

and largest salon, she gave concerts, always short, and in which she never allowed any but the most eminent artists to take part. She had so much common-sense that she finally acquired the most exquisite tact, — a quality which undoubtedly gave her great influence over du Bruel; however, the vaudevillist loved her with the sort of love which habit finally makes indispensable to existence. Every day added one more thread to that strong, irresistible, fine-spun fabric, whose network confines the most sensitive fancies, the most fugitive passions, unites them, and holds a man bound hand and foot, heart and head.

“Tullia knew Cursy thoroughly: she knew where to wound him and how to cure him. To every observer, even to one who prides himself as much as I do on a certain amount of perspicacity, all is abysmal mystery in passions of that sort, — the depths are darker there than elsewhere; in fact, even the best lighted spots have a misty aspect. Cursy, an old playwright, worn out by the life of the wings, loved his comfort; he loved a luxurious, easy-going life; he was happy to be a king in his own home, to receive a party of literary men in a house where regal luxury reigned and the choicest works of modern art delighted the eye. Tullia allowed du Bruel to play the potentate among those good folk, in whose number were journalists easy to catch and to placate. Thanks to her evening parties and to judiciously placed loans, du Bruel was not too savagely attacked, and his plays succeeded. So that he would not have parted from Tullia for an empire. He would have treated an infidelity slightly, perhaps, on condition that there was no diminution of his accustomed enjoyments; but, strangely enough,

Tullia caused him no apprehension in that direction. There was no suspicion of any new fancy on the part of the former *première danseuse*; and if she had any, she certainly was very careful of appearances.

“‘My dear fellows,’ said du Bruel to us on the boulevard, in a lordly way, ‘there is nothing like living with one of those women who have been cured of passion by excessive indulgence. Women like Tullia have led their bachelor life, they have lived in pleasure up to their necks, and they make the most adorable wives imaginable; knowing everything, well trained, not prudish, ready for everything, and indulgent. And so I advise everybody to marry *the relict of an English horse*. I am the happiest man on earth!’

“That is what du Bruel himself said to me in Bixiou’s presence.

“‘My dear fellow,’ said the draughtsman, ‘perhaps he is right to be wrong.’

“A week later, one Tuesday, du Bruel asked us to dine with him. In the morning I went to see him about a theatrical matter, an arbitration intrusted to us by a committee of dramatic authors. We were obliged to go out; but first he went to Tullia’s room, which he never enters without knocking, to ask permission.

“‘We live like great nobles,’ he said with a smile; ‘we are free, each in our own apartments!’

“We were admitted.

“‘I have invited two or three people to dinner to-day,’ said du Bruel.

“‘There you are!’ she cried; ‘you invite company without consulting me; I am nobody here. — I say,’ she said to me, taking me for referee by a glance, ‘I ask you yourself, when a man is foolish enough to live with



a woman of my sort, — for I was a dancer at the Opéra, and, in order that other people may forget it, I must never forget it myself, — well, any man of intelligence, in order to raise his wife in public esteem, would do his best to imagine some superiority in her, to justify his course by recognizing the existence of excellent qualities in her! The best way to make others respect her is to respect her in her own house, to allow her to be absolute mistress there. Well, it would make me think highly of myself to see how he dreads to seem to be listening to me. I must be right ten times over before he will make me any concession.'

“Not a sentence passed without a denial by gestures on du Bruel's part.

“‘Oh! no, no!’ she continued warmly, noticing her husband's gestures, ‘du Bruel, my dear man, I who all my life, before I married you, played the part of queen in my own house, — I know what I am talking about! My wishes were anticipated, gratified, surpassed. After all, I am thirty-five years old, and women of thirty-five can't be loved. Oh! if I were sixteen and one of the sort that bring such a high price at the Opéra, how attentive you would be to me, Monsieur du Bruel! I have a sovereign contempt for the men who boast of loving a woman and who are not always attentive to her in small things. Look you, du Bruel, you are a paltry, mean-spirited creature, you love to torment a woman, you have nobody else to put forth your strength on. A Napoleon subordinates himself to his mistress and he loses nothing by it; but you poor creatures think you're of no account then, you don't want to be dominated by anybody. — Thirty-five years, my boy,’ she said to me, ‘that's the key to the enigma. — Oho!

he still says no! — You are well aware that I am thirty-seven. I am very angry, but go and tell your friends you 'll take them to the Roehér de Cancale. I could give them some dinner, but I don't choose to — they sha'n't come! My poor little monologue will engrave in your memory the salutary motto, "Every one for himself," which is our charter,' she added, laughing, and reverting to the capricious and reckless temperament of the public dancer.

"Well, well, my dear little pet,' said du Bruel; 'there, there, don't be angry. We know how to get along.'

"He kissed her hands and went out with me; but he was furious. This is what he said to me between rue de la Victoire and the boulevard, if indeed such snatches as the types will tolerate of the most outrageous insults can be said to represent the atrocious words, the venomous thoughts that gushed from his mouth like a waterfall that breaks away at the side of a roaring torrent: —

"My dear man, I'll leave that low-lived, shameless dancer, that old top that has whirled about under the whip of every air of every opera, that she-ape, that Savoyard slut! Oh! you, who, like me, have attached yourself to an actress, don't ever let the idea of marrying your mistress get a hold on you! As you see, it's one form of torment that Dante forgot to put in his Inferno. At this moment I could beat her, I could pommel her, I could tell her what she is. Poison of my life, she sent me away like a sweep!'

"He was on the boulevard, in such a frenzy of rage that he could hardly get the words out of his mouth.

"I'll bury my feet in her stomach!'

“‘Apropos of what?’ I inquired.

“‘My dear man, you ’ll never know of that strumpet’s thousand millions caprices! When I want to stay at home, she wants to go out; when I want to go out, she insists on my staying at home. She spews reasons at you, and accusations, and syllogisms, and slanders, and words enough to drive you mad. Anything good is their idea, anything evil is ours! Crush them with a word that cuts short their arguments: they stop talking and stare at you as if you were a dead dog. My good fortune? It is accounted for by absolute servility, by the serfdom of the dog in the poultry yard. She sells me at too high a price the little she gives me. Damnation! I ’ll leave her everything and take refuge in an attic. Oh! an attic and liberty! For five years now I have n’t dared to do what I wanted to!’

“‘Instead of going to notify his friends, du Bruel remained on the boulevard, pacing the asphalt from rue de Richelieu to rue du Mont-Blanc, pouring out the most savage imprecations and the most comical extravagances. His paroxysms of wrath in the street were in striking contrast with his tranquillity in the house. The exercise served to tire out the quivering of his nerves and the tempest in his heart. About two o’clock, in one of his outbursts of passion, he cried:—

“‘Those damned females don’t know what they want. I’ll stake my head that, if I go home and tell her that I’ve notified my friends and that we’re to dine at the Rocher de Cancale, that arrangement, which she insisted on, won’t suit her. But,’ he said, ‘she probably has decamped. Perhaps there was an assignation with some goat’s beard behind all this! But no, for she does love me at bottom!’

“Ah! madame,” said Nathan, with a sly glance at the marchioness, who could not help smiling, “only women and prophets know how to make the most of faith.

“Du Briel,” he continued, “took me home with him again. We walked slowly. It was three o’clock. Before we went upstairs he noticed a commotion in the kitchen; he went in, saw preparations in progress, and looked at me as he questioned his cook.

“‘Madame ordered dinner,’ she replied; ‘she dressed and sent for a carriage; then she changed her mind and sent the carriage away, ordering it again in time for the play.’

“‘Well!’ exclaimed du Briel, ‘what did I tell you?’

“We crept stealthily up to the apartment. No one there. Going from salon to salon, we arrived at last at a boudoir, where we found Tullia in tears. She wiped away her tears, naturally enough, and said to du Briel:—

“‘Send a note to the Rocher de Cancale to tell your guests that the dinner will be given here.’

“She had made one of those toilets which actresses are unable to achieve: refined, harmonious in coloring and shape, cut simply, of tastefully chosen materials, neither too dear nor too common, nothing showy, nothing exaggerated—a word that is being cloaked with the word ‘artistic,’ with which fools content themselves. In short, she had a *comme il faut* air.

“At thirty-seven Tullia had reached the most beautiful phase of beauty in a Frenchwoman. Her famous oval-shaped face was of a divine pallor; she had removed her hat, and I saw the down, that flower of fruit, softening the delicate outlines of her cheek. Her

face, framed by clusters of light hair, had a melancholy fascination. Her sparkling gray eyes were swimming in the mist born of tears. Her slender nose, with its throbbing nostrils worthy of the finest Roman cameo, her little mouth, still like a child's, her long queenly neck, its veins slightly swollen, her chin, flushed for a moment by some secret chagrin, her ears rimmed with red, her hands trembling in her gloves, — everything indicated violent excitement. Her eyebrows, twitching feverishly, denoted grief. She was sublime.

“Her words crushed du Bruel. She cast at us a cat-like glance, penetrating yet impenetrable, which none but women of the highest rank and women of the stage can command; then she held out her hand to du Bruel.

“‘My poor dear,’ she said, ‘as soon as you had gone, I reproached myself bitterly. I accused myself of shocking ingratitude, and I told myself that I had been very wicked. — Was I very bad?’ she asked me. — ‘Why not receive your friends? Is n’t this your house? Do you want to know the secret of it all? Well, I am afraid you don’t love me. In a word, I was wavering between repentance and the shame of taking back what I said. When I read the papers, I saw that there was a first performance at the Variétés, and I concluded that you wanted to entertain a collaborator. When I was alone, I was weak, I dressed myself to hurry after you — poor boy!’

“Du Bruel looked at me with a triumphant air; he had no remembrance of the least vicious of his diatribes against Tullia.

“‘Well, my dear angel, I have n’t seen any one,’ he said.

“‘How well we understand each other!’ she cried.

“As she said those captivating words, I saw a little note thrust into her girdle, but I did not need that evidence to convince me that Tullia’s whims were referable to hidden causes. Woman is, in my opinion, the most logical of mortals after the child. Both alike present the sublime phenomenon of the constant triumph of a single thought. In the child the thought changes every instant, but it moves only in consequence of that thought, and with such eagerness that every one yields to it, fascinated by the persistence and the ingenuousness of the desire. Woman changes less frequently, but to call her fanciful is the insult of one who does not know. In her actions she is always under the sway of some passion, and she makes of that passion the centre of nature and of society.

“Tullia was like a cat; she fascinated du Bruel so that the day became blue once more and the evening was magnificent. The clever vaudevillist did not detect the grief buried in his wife’s heart.

“‘My dear fellow,’ he said to me, ‘such is life: differences, contrasts.’

“‘Especially when it’s not feigned,’ I replied.

“‘I agree with you. But if it were n’t for these violent excitements, we should die of ennui. Ah! that woman has the gift of moving me to the depths!’

“After dinner we went to the Variétés. But before we started, I slipped into du Bruel’s apartment and took from a pile of discarded papers the number of the ‘Petits Affiches’ containing a notice of the sale of the house to du Bruel, which was necessary in order to clear the title. As I read these words, which jumped

at my eyes like a flash of light: 'At the request of Jean-François du Bruel and *Claudine Chaffaroux, his wife,*' everything became clear to me. I took Claudine's arm and held her back until everybody had gone downstairs. When we were alone, I said to her:—

"'If I were La Palférine, I would never break an appointment.'

"She put a finger on her lips gravely, and pressed my arm as we went down; she looked at me with a sort of pleasure, thinking that I knew La Palférine. What do you suppose her first idea was? She wanted to make me her spy; but she was met by the badinage of Bohemia.

"A month later, we three came out together from the first performance of a play by du Bruel. It was raining. I went to find a cab; but we had lingered several minutes on the stage, and there were no cabs at the entrance. Claudine scolded du Bruel severely; and when we were driving away,—for she took me to Florine's,—she continued the quarrel, saying the most mortifying things to him.

"'Well, well! what's the trouble?' I inquired.

"'She blames me for letting you go after a cab, my dear fellow, and starting from that, she insists on having a carriage from now on.'

"'When I was *première danseuse,*' she said, 'I never used my feet except on the boards. If you have any heart, you will write four more plays a year; you will realize that they must succeed when you think of the destination of the proceeds, and your wife won't have to walk in the mud. It's shameful that I have to ask for it. You ought to have guessed my constant suffering all these five years that I've been married!'

“‘I am perfectly willing,’ said du Bruel, ‘that we shall ruin ourselves.’

“‘If you run into debt,’ she replied, ‘my uncle’s property will pay everything.’

“‘You are quite capable of leaving me with the debts and keeping the property.’

“‘Ah! so that’s the way you take it. I have no more to say: such a remark as that closes my mouth.’

“Du Bruel instantly overflowed in apologies and protestations of love; but she did not reply. He took her hands; she made no resistance, but they were icy cold like a dead woman’s hands. Tullia, you understand, was admirable in that rôle of corpse, which women play to convince you that they refuse their consent to everything, that they withdraw their minds, their hearts, their lives from you, and look upon themselves as mere beasts of burden. There is nothing that irritates decent men more than that manœuvre. A woman cannot employ that artifice except with a man who adores her.

“‘Do you believe,’ she said to me in the most contemptuous tone, ‘that a count would have uttered such an insult, even if it had occurred to him? Unfortunately for me, I have lived with dukes, with ambassadors, with *grands seigneurs*, and I know their ways. How intolerable it makes middle-class life! After all, a vaudevillist is neither a Rastignac nor a Rhétoré.’

“Du Bruel was livid. Two days later, he and I met in the foyer at the Opéra; we walked back and forth two or three times together, and the conversation fell upon Tullia.

“‘Don’t take my antics on the boulevard too seriously,’ he said; ‘I am naturally violent.’



“For two winters I was quite a frequent visitor at du Bruel’s, and I followed Claudine’s manœuvring closely. She had a handsome carriage, and du Bruel went into politics; she made him abjure his royalist opinions. He supported the government, and was replaced in the department in which he formerly held a post. She induced him to intrigue for the support of the National Guard, and he was chosen major. He behaved so courageously in an émeute that he obtained the rosette of an officer in the Legion of Honor; he was made master of requests and chief of division. Unele Chaffaroux died, leaving his niece forty thousand francs a year, about three quarters of his fortune. Du Bruel was chosen deputy; but before that, in order not to be obliged to stand for re-election, he obtained an appointment as Councillor of State and director.

He reprinted treatises on archæology and statistical works, and two political pamphlets which became the pretext of his appointment to one of the complaisant academies of the Institute. At this moment he is a commander of the Legion of Honor, and has been so active in the intrigues of the Chamber that he has just been made a count and peer of France. Our friend does n’t venture as yet to bear the title, but his wife has on her cards ‘*La Comtesse du Bruel.*’ The ex-vaudevillist has the order of Leopold, the order of Isabella, the cross of St. Wladimir, second class, the Bavarian order of Civil Merit, the Papal order of the Golden Spur; and he wears all these little crosses in addition to his grand cross.

“Three months ago Claudine drove up to La Palferine’s door in her gorgeous armored carriage. Du Bruel is the grandson of a farmer of the revenues en-

nobled toward the close of the reign of Louis XIV, his arms were composed by Chérin, and the count's coronet is not inappropriate, as they contain none of the absurdities of the imperial régime. Thus, in the space of three years, Claudine had performed all the conditions of the programme which the fascinating and jovial La Palférine had imposed on her.

"One day, a month ago, she climbed the staircase of the wretched hotel in which her lover lodges, and appeared in all her glory, dressed like a genuine countess of Faubourg Saint-Germain, in our friend's attic. When La Palférine saw her, he said:—

"I know that you've got yourself made a peer. But it's too late, Claudine; everybody's talking about the Southern Cross, and I want to see it.'

"I'll get it for you,' said she.

"Thereupon La Palférine burst into a roar of Homeric laughter.

"'Really,' he said, 'I don't want for my mistress a woman as ignorant as a pike, and who turns such somersaults that she goes from the wings of the Opéra to the court; for I want to see you at the court of the Citizen King.'

"'What's the Southern Cross?' she asked me in a sad and humiliated voice.

"Struck with admiration for the dauntless courage of true love which, in real life as in the most artless fables of mythology, jumps over precipices to obtain the singing flower or the roc's egg, I explained to her that the Southern Cross was a collection of nebulæ, arranged in the shape of a cross, and more brilliant than the Milky Way, but visible only in southern waters.

“Well, Charles,’ said she, ‘let’s go there.’

“Despite the pitilessness of his wit, La Palférine had a tear in his eye. But what an expression and what a tone were Claudine’s! I have never seen anything, even in the most extraordinary efforts of the greatest actors, to be compared to the movement with which, when she saw those eyes, so cruel to her, wet with tears, she fell on her knees and kissed the merciless La Palférine’s hand. He raised her, assumed his grand manner, — what he calls the ‘Rusticoli manner,’ — and said: —

“Look you, my child, I’ll do something for you: I’ll put you in my will!’

“Well,” said Nathan to Madame de Rochefide as he concluded, “I wonder if du Bruel is really fooled. Surely there can be nothing more comical, more extraordinary, than to see a heedless young man’s jesting remarks laying down the law for a household, a family, and his most trivial caprices enjoining and countermanding the most serious decisions. The episode of the dinner-party is, you understand, repeated again and again, and in respect to matters of the greatest importance! But, except for his wife’s fancies, du Bruel would still be de Cursy, one vaudevillist among five hundred; whereas he’s in the Chamber of Peers.”

“You will change the names, I trust,” said Nathan to Madame de La Baudraye.

“I should say so! I have given names to the masks only for your benefit. My dear Nathan,” she added in the poet’s ear, “I know another household where it’s the woman who is du Bruel.”

“What about the dénouement?” queried Lousteau,

who returned just as Madame de La Baudraye completed the reading of her novel.

"I don't believe in dénouements," said she; "we have to supply impressive ones in order to show that art is as powerful as chance; but, my dear, people only read a book for the details."

"But there is a dénouement," said Nathan.

"What is it?" asked Madame de La Baudraye.

"The Marquise de Rochefide is wild over Charles-Édouard. My story excited her curiosity."

"Oh! the wretch!" cried Madame de La Baudraye.

"Not so wretched!" said Nathan, "for Maxime de Trailles and La Palférine have made trouble between the marquis and Madame Schontz, and are going to reconcile Arthur and Beatrix."<sup>1</sup>

1839-1845.

<sup>1</sup> See "Beatrix."

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

TO MONSIEUR LE BARON JAMES DE ROTHSCHILD, BANKER,  
AND AUSTRIAN CONSUL-GENERAL AT PARIS.

## A MAN OF BUSINESS.

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“LORETTE” is a respectable sort of word invented to express the status of a girl, or the girl of a status, difficult to call by name, — a word which, in its modesty, the Académie Française has neglected to define, in view of the age of its forty members. When a new word is applied to a social condition which could not previously be mentioned without circumlocution, the fortune of that word is made. Thus “lorette” found its way into all classes of society, even those into which a *lorette* will never find her way. The word was manufactured in 1840, doubtless because of the agglomeration of those swallows’ nests around the church dedicated to Notre-Dame de Lorette. This is written only for the etymologists. Those gentlemen would not be so much embarrassed if the writers of the Middle Ages had taken pains to describe manners and morals minutely, as we do in these days of analysis and description.

Mademoiselle Turquet — or Malaga, for she is much better known under her *nom de guerre* (see “The False Mistress”) — was one of the first parishioners of that delightful church. That clever and jocund young woman, possessing no other fortune than her beauty, was, at the time of this tale, conferring happiness upon a notary who had in his notaress a female companion somewhat too devout, somewhat too strait-laced, and somewhat too mature to enjoy domestic happiness.

Now, on a certain evening during the Carnival, Maître Cardot had entertained at Mademoiselle Turquet's Desroches the solicitor, Bixiou the caricaturist, Lousteau the journalist, and Nathan — whose names have been so trumpeted in the "Human Comedy" that any sort of a portrait would be superfluous. Young La Palférine, despite the title of count of the old rock, — a rock without the slightest seam of metal, alas! — had honored the notary's illicit domicile with his presence. If one does not dine with a lorette to feed upon the patriarchal ox, the scrawny chicken of the conjugal table, and the family salad, it is equally true that one does not hear there the hypocritical speeches which are current in a salon furnished with virtuous bourgeois. Ah! when will good morals become attractive? When will women in the best society show a little less shoulder and a little more good-fellowship and wit?

Marguerite Turquet, the Aspasia of the Cirque-Olympique, was one of those outspoken, lively creatures in whom one pardons everything because of their artlessness in wrong-doing and their wit in repentance, and to whom we say, like Cardot, who was decidedly clever, although a notary, "Go on and deceive me!" But do not anticipate enormities. Desroches and Cardot were too good fellows, and too old at the game, not to be on an equal footing with Lousteau, Bixiou, Nathan, and the young count. And those gentlemen, having often had recourse to the two legal functionaries, knew them too well to "make them pose," as the lorettes say.

The conversation, perfumed with the odor of seven cigars, and erratic at first as a kid set at liberty, fell at last on the strategy born of the incessant battle between



creditors and debtors in Paris. Now, if you will deign to recall the lives and antecedents of the guests, you will realize that it would have been hard to find in Paris men better informed in that regard. Some being artists, the others past masters of the art, they resembled magistrates laughing with prisoners.

A series of designs on Clichy drawn by Bixiou were the cause of the turn taken by the conversation. It was midnight. The guests, seated in groups about a table and before the fire, performed those evolutions which not only are possible and comprehensible nowhere else than in Paris, but which can be understood only in the region bounded by Faubourg Montmartre and rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, between the upper part of rue de Navarin and the line of the boulevards.

In ten minutes the profound reflections, the moral aphorisms, and all possible quips upon that subject, were exhausted, as they were exhausted by Rabelais about 1500. It was no small merit to abandon that display of fireworks, which was brought to a close by this last rocket from Malaga:—

“All this goes to the profit of the boot-makers. I have left a milliner who made a failure of two hats. The vixen came twenty-seven times to ask me for twenty francs. She did n't know that we never have twenty francs. One has a thousand francs, one sends to one's notary for five hundred francs; but twenty francs — that I never had. My cook and my maid may have twenty francs between them. But I have nothing but credit, and I should lose it if I borrowed twenty francs. If I should ask for twenty francs, there would no longer be anything to distinguish me from my *confrères* who walk the boulevard.”

“Is the milliner paid?” inquired La Palférine.

“On my word! are you going crazy?” she retorted with a wink; “she came this morning for the twenty-seventh time, — that’s why I mention it.”

“What did you do?” asked Desroches.

“I took pity on her, and — I ordered the little hat I have finally invented as a change from the old familiar shapes. If Mademoiselle Amanda succeeds with it, she’ll never ask me for money again, — her fortune’s made.”

“The finest performance I ever saw in this sort of conflict,” said Desroches, “depicts Paris, for people who indulge in it, much better, in my opinion, than all the pictures in which an imaginary Paris is drawn. You think you are very strong at it,” he said, looking at Nathan and Bixiou, Lousteau and La Palférine; “but the king, in this sort of business, is a certain count, who is now intent upon preparing for his end, but who in his day was esteemed the cleverest, the most adroit, the foxiest, the best informed, the boldest, the craftiest, the most determined, the most present of all the corsairs with yellow gloves, cabriolets, and fine manners, who have sailed, are now sailing, and will hereafter sail on the tempestuous sea of Paris. Without faith or law his private policy was guided by the principles which guide that of the English cabinet. Until his marriage his life was a never-ending war against — against Lousteau’s. I was and still am his solicitor.”

“And the first letter of his name is Maxime de Trailles,” said La Palférine.

“However, he paid all his debts and injured no one,” continued Desroches; “but, as our friend Bixiou said just now, to pay in March what one prefers not to pay

till October is an assault on individual liberty. By virtue of an article of his special code, Maxime regarded as a swindle the ruse that one of his creditors employed to make him pay promptly. For a long time the note of hand had been understood by him in all its consequences, mediate and immediate. A young man once, at my house and in his presence, spoke of a note of hand as the *pons asinorum*. 'No,' said he, 'it's the Bridge of Sighs, — no one ever comes back over it.' His knowledge in the matter of commercial jurisprudence, too, was so complete that no lawyer could have taught him anything. At that time, you know, he had no property: his carriage and horses were hired; he lived in a house belonging to his valet, in whose eyes, they say, he will always be a great man, even after the marriage he is thinking of! Being a member of three clubs, he dined at one of them when he was n't asked to dine out. Generally speaking, he used his own quarters very little —"

"He said to me," exclaimed La Palférine, interrupting the solicitor: "'My sole affectation is to pretend that I live on rue Pigalle.'"

"There you have one of the two combatants," said Desroches, "and here's the other. You have heard more or less talk of a certain Claparon?"

"He had hair like this," cried Bixiou, rumpling his own locks.

And being blessed with the talent that Chopin the pianist possessed in such a high degree, of imitating other people, he represented the person in question instantly, with startling truth.

"He rolls his head this way when he talks, he's been a commercial traveller, he's practised every trade."

“Well, he was born to travel, for at this moment he is en route to America,” said Desroches. “There’s no chance for him now anywhere else, for he will probably be convicted of fraudulent bankruptcy at the next session, in contumacy.”

“A man at sea!” cried Malaga.

“This Claparon,” continued Desroches, “was for six or seven years the screen, the man of straw, the scapegoat of two of our friends, du Tillet and Nucingen; but in 1829 his rôle was so well known that —”

“Our friends dropped him,” said Bixiou.

“At least they abandoned him to his fate, and,” added Desroches, “he wallowed in the slime. In 1833 he associated himself in business with one Cérizet.”

“What! the fellow who, when stock companies were so popular, organized one on such deliciously ingenious terms that the Sixth Chamber came down on him with two years in prison?” queried the lorette.

“The same,” Desroches replied. “Under the Restoration, from 1823 to 1827, this Cérizet’s trade consisted in signing courageously articles that were relentlessly prosecuted by the government, and in going to prison. A man could obtain notoriety then very cheap. The Liberal party called its departmental champion ‘The bold Cérizet.’ His zeal was rewarded about 1828 by *the general interest*. The general interest was a sort of civic crown bestowed by the newspapers. Cérizet tried to discount the general interest; he came to Paris, where, under the patronage of the bankers of the Left, he began with a business agency, combined with banking operations on funds supplied by a voluntary exile, a too skilful gambler, whose funds went down in July, 1830, with the ship of state.”

“Why, that’s the man we used to call *le Méthode des cartes!*” cried Bixiou.

“Don’t speak ill of the poor boy,” said Malaga. “D’Estourny was a good fellow!”

“You can understand what rôle was likely to be played in 1830 by a ruined man who was called, in political parlance, the brave Cérizet! He was relegated to a very nice little sub-prefecture,” said Desroches. “Unfortunately for Cérizet, the government is n’t so ingenious as parties, which during a contest make projectiles of everything. Cérizet was obliged to resign after holding his office three months. He had taken it into his head to make himself popular, if you please! As he had done nothing as yet to forfeit his title of nobility (the brave Cérizet!), the government suggested to him as an indemnity to become manager of an opposition journal which should be ministerial *on the quiet*. Thus it was the government that perverted that noble character. Cérizet, finding himself, in his managership, a little too much like a bird on a rotten branch, plunged into that pretty stock company in which the poor fellow, as you just said, caught two years in prison, while more skilful gentry, under similar circumstances, have caught the public.”

“We know the most skilful,” said Bixiou; “let’s not slander the unfortunate fellow, he’s done for! Couture allowed his strong-box to be robbed — who’d ever have believed it?”

“Cérizet, by the way, is a low creature, and disfigured by the misfortunes of low-lived debauchery,” continued Desroches. “Let us return to the promised duel. As I was saying, never did two sharpers of worse style, of viler morals, of more degraded aspect, join

forces to carry on a dirty business. As quick assets they counted that species of *argot* derived from intimate acquaintance with Paris, the audacity born of poverty, the cunning due to familiarity with business, the knowledge founded upon an accurate memory of Parisian fortunes, of their origin, and of the intrinsic value of each one and the parties interested in it. This association of two *carotteurs*<sup>1</sup> — excuse that word, which is the only one, in the slang of the Bourse, to define them — lasted but a short time. Like two famished dogs, they fought over every bit of carrion. However the first speculations of the house of Cézizet and Claparon were well planned. The two rascals foregathered with the Barbets, the Chaboisseaus, the Samanons, and other usurers, from whom they bought desperately bad bills. At this time the Claparon agency had its office in a little entresol on rue Chabannais, consisting of five rooms, the rent of which was not beyond seven hundred francs. Each partner slept in a little chamber which, for prudential reasons, was kept so carefully locked that my chief clerk could never get in. The offices consisted of a waiting-room, a salon, and a cabinet, the furniture of which would n't have brought three hundred francs at auction. You know Paris well enough to have before you the aspect of the two official rooms: broken-down horsehair chairs, a table with a green cloth, a trumpery clock between two candlesticks under glass, which glared sullenly at each other in front of a little looking-glass in a gilt frame, over a fireplace in which the embers were, as my chief clerk jestingly remarked, aged two winters. As for the cabinet, you can guess what that was: many more pasteboard boxes

<sup>1</sup> One who risks but little at one time.

than causes; a common set of pigeon-holes for each partner; and in the centre the cylindrical desk, as empty as the strong-box; and two working arm-chairs on either side of a fireplace with a coal-fire. On the floor was a carpet bought at second-hand, like the bills. And lastly there were the useless pieces of furniture that are sold in such offices, by one occupant to his successor, for fifty years. Now you are acquainted with both of the contestants.

“In the first six months of their partnership, which was dissolved by fisticuffs after seven months, Claparon and Cérizet bought two thousand francs’ worth of notes signed Maxime (for there is a Maxime), and padded with two sets of costs — judgment, appeal, decree, execution, stay of proceedings; in short, a matter of three thousand two hundred francs and some centimes, which they got for five hundred francs, by an assignment with special power to act, in order to avoid expense. In those days Maxime, who was already of mature years, had one of the caprices peculiar to men of fifty.”

“Antonia!” cried La Palférine; “the same Antonia whose fortune was made by a letter in which I demanded the return of a tooth-brush.”

“Her real name is Chocardelle,” said Malaga, annoyed by that high-sounding appellation.

“That’s the woman,” assented Desroches.

“It’s the only mistake Maxime ever made in his life; but what do you expect? — vice is n’t perfect!” observed Bixiou.

“Maxime did not then know what sort of life a man leads with a girl of eighteen who is anxious to jump head first from her decent garret into a handsome

equipage," resumed Desroches; "and statesmen are supposed to know everything. At that time de Marsay had just employed his friend, our friend, in the high comedy of politics. Being a man given to grand conquests, he had known none but titled women; and at fifty he surely was entitled to nibble at a little self-styled wild fruit, like a hunter who stops to rest under an apple tree in a peasant's field. The count found for Mademoiselle Chocardelle a most respectable reading-room — second-hand, as always."

"Bah! she did n't stay there six months," said Nathan; "she was too beautiful to keep a reading-room."

"Can it be that you're the father of her child?" the lorette asked Nathan.

"One morning," continued Desroches, "Cérizet, who, since the purchase of Maximc's bill, had by degrees arrived at the costume of a bailiff's chief clerk, was admitted to the count's apartment after seven fruitless trials. Suzon, the old valet de chambre, although he was no novice, finally mistook Cérizet for a solicitor who came to offer Maxime a thousand crowns if he would obtain a stamp-office for a young lady. Having no suspicion of the little rascal, a genuine Paris *gamin* coated with prudence by his police-court convictions, Suzon urged his master to receive him. Can't you see the man of business, with the furtive glance, the sparse hair, the bald head, in the tight black coat and muddy boots —"

"What an image of the Creditor!" cried Lousteau.

"Before the count, the image of unblushing Debt," continued Desroches, "in blue flannel dressing-gown, slippers embroidered by some marchioness, and white







flannel trousers, with a superb smoking-cap on his glossy dyed locks, displaying a dazzling shirt-front, and toying with the tassels of his girdle?"

"It's a *genre* picture," said Nathan, "to one who knows the pretty little reception-room where Maxime breakfasts, full of pictures of great value, with silken hangings, and where you walk on Smyrna rugs, gazing in admiration the while at what-nots laden with curios and rareties to make a king of Saxony die with envy!"

"That is the scene of the conflict," said Desroches.

With that statement the narrator obtained the most profound silence.

"'Monsieur le comte,' said Cérizet, 'I am sent by one Monsieur Charles Claparon, formerly a banker.'

"'Ah! what does he want of me, the poor devil?'

"'Why, he has become your creditor for a matter of three thousand two hundred francs and seventy-five centimes, principal, interest, and costs.'

"'The Coutelier bill,' said Maxime, who knew his affairs as thoroughly as a pilot knows his coast.

"'Yes, monsieur le comte,' Cérizet replied, bowing. 'I have come to find out what you intend to do.'

"'I shall not pay that bill until I choose,' retorted Maxime, ringing to summon Suzon. 'Claparon is very presumptuous to buy a bill against me without consulting me! I am very sorry for him, he behaved so well, for such a long time, as the *man of straw* of my friends. I used to say of him: "On my word, he must be an idiot to serve with so little pay and so much fidelity men who are stuffing themselves with millions." Well, he's given me a proof of his idiocy now. Yes, men deserve their fate! A man dons a crown or a cannon-ball; a man's a millionaire or a concierge, — and it's

all as it should be. What would you have, my dear sir? I am not a king, I stand by my principles. I have no pity for people who pile up costs for me, or who don't know their trade of creditor. — Suzon, my tea! Do you see monsieur?' he said to the valet. 'Well, you allowed yourself to be hoodwinked, my poor old fellow. Monsieur is a creditor — you should have recognized him by his boots. Neither my friends, nor mere acquaintances who need my services, ever come on foot to see me. — My dear Monsieur Cérizet, do you understand? You won't wipe your feet on my rug again,' he said, glancing at the mud on his adversary's boots. 'You will convey my condolence to that poor old boniface of a Claparon, for I shall put this matter among the Z's.'

"All this was said in a good-humored tone fit to give the worthy bourgeois the colic.

"'You are making a mistake, monsieur le comte,' rejoined Cérizet, assuming a peremptory tone; 'we shall be paid to the last sou, and in a way that may annoy you. So I came to you in a friendly way, as such matters should be arranged between well-bred people.'

"'Ah! you think so, do you?' retorted Maxime, roused to wrath by this last piece of presumption on Cérizet's part.

"In this insolence there was a certain Talleyrandish wit, if you have fully grasped the contrast between the two men and between their costumes. Maxime frowned and fastened his eyes on Cérizet, who not only sustained that stream of cold rage, but replied to it with the icy malice that flows from a cat's staring eyes.

"'Well, monsieur, be off.'

“‘Very good: adieu, monsieur le comte. Within six months we shall be quits.’

“‘If you can *steal* from me the amount of your bill, which, I agree, is legitimate, I shall be obliged to you, monsieur,’ replied Maxime; ‘you will have taught me a new precaution to take. — Your servant.’

“‘Monsieur le comte,’ said Cérizet, ‘it is I who am your servant.’

“This was outspoken, full of vigor and a sense of security on both sides. Two tigers taking counsel together before fighting over a victim would be no finer or craftier than those two equally debauched natures — the one in his insolent elegance, the other beneath his mud-stained accoutrements. — Whom do you bet on?” asked Desroches, looking at his auditors, who were surprised to find themselves so deeply interested.

“Well, this is a story and a half!” said Malaga. “I beg you, go on, my dear man; it goes to my heart.”

“Between two *dogs* of that calibre there could be nothing commonplace,” said La Palférine.

“Bah! I’ll bet the account of my cabinet-maker, who cheats me horribly, that the little toad got the best of Maxime,” cried Malaga.

“I bet on Maxime,” said Cardot; “no one ever caught him napping yet.”

Desroches paused to empty a *petit verre* that the lorette handed him.

“Mademoiselle Choardelle’s reading-room,” he resumed, “was on rue Coquenard, within a few steps of rue Pigalle, where Maxime lived. The said Demoiselle Choardelle occupied a small apartment looking on a garden, and separated from her place of business by

a large dark room in which the books were kept. Antonia had her aunt to look after the reading-room —”

“She had her aunt already?” cried Malaga. “The deuce! Maxime did things well!”

“Alas! it was her real aunt,” replied Desroches, “named — wait a moment —”

“Ida Bonamy,” said Bixiou.

“So that Antonia, being relieved of much trouble by this aunt, rose late, went to bed late, and appeared at her desk only between two and four o’clock,” continued Desroches. “At the beginning her presence was enough to fill her reading-room with customers: several old men of the quarter went there, among them a former carriage-maker named Croizeau. After seeing that miracle of female beauty through the glass, the ex-carriage-maker concluded to go there every day to read the newspapers; and his example was followed by a former superintendent of customs named Denisart, a decorated personage, in whom Croizeau chose to see a rival, and to whom he said later: —

“‘You have given me a deal of trouble, *mô sieur!*’

“This remark should give you a good idea of the man. *Sieur Croizeau* happens to belong to that variety of little old men who, since *Henry Monnier*, ought to be called the *Coquerel* species, he reproduced so perfectly the squeaky voice, the mining manners, the little queue, the little touch of powder, the tiny steps, the little motions of the head, and the sharp little tone of the type, in his part of *Coquerel*, in ‘*La Famille Improvisée.*’ This *Croizeau* would say: ‘Here you are, *belle dame!*’ as he handed Antonia his two sous with a lordly gesture. *Madame Ida Bonamy*, *Mademoiselle Chocardelle’s* aunt, soon learned, through the

cook, that the ex-carriage-maker, who was exorbitantly avaricious, was taxed on an income of forty thousand francs in the quarter in which he lived — on rue de Buffault. A week after the installation of the fair renter of books, he was delivered of this pun: —

“‘You lend me books (*livres*), but I would gladly repay franes.’

“Some days later he assumed a knowing little air and said: —

“‘I know that you are bespoke now, but my day will come; I’m a widower.’

“Croizeau always appeared in fine linen, with a bottle-blue coat, paduasoy waistcoat, black trousers, double-soled shoes tied with black silk and creaking like an abbé’s. He always had his fourteen-franc silk hat in his hand.

“‘I am old and have no children,’ he said to the young woman some days after Cérizet’s call upon Maxime. ‘I hold my collateral relations in abhorrence. They’re all peasants, fit for nothing but ploughing! Fancy: I came from my village with six francs, and I’ve made a fortune here. I am not proud — a pretty woman’s my equal. Is n’t it better to be Madame Croizeau for a long time than to be a count’s servant for a year? You’ll be free some day or other. And then you’ll think of me. Your servant, *belle dame!*’

“All this simmered gently. Even the most trivial compliments were paid in secret. No one on earth knew that the spiek-and-span little old man loved Antonia, for the lover’s prudent conduct in the reading-room would have told a rival nothing. Croizeau was suspicious of the retired superintendent of eustoms for two months. But, toward the middle of the third



month, he had proof how ill-founded his suspicions were. It occurred to him to join Denisart and walk along the street with him; and, seizing a favorable opportunity, he said:—

“‘Fine day, *mô*sieur!’

“To which the former public official replied:—

“‘Austerlitz weather, *monsieur*: I was there; in fact, I was wounded there; my cross was given me for my conduct on that great day.’

“And from thread to needle, from skirmish to battle, from woman to carriage, an intimacy sprang up between those two relics of the Empire. Little Croizcau was connected with the Empire by his dealings with Napoleon’s sisters: he made their carriages and had often worried them for his money. So he gave himself out as ‘having had relations with the imperial family.’

“Maxime, being informed by Antonia of the propositions made by ‘the agreeable old man,’ — such was the sobriquet given him by the aunt, — was anxious to see him. Cérizet’s declaration of war had had the effect of causing that great ‘yellow glove’ to study his position on his chess-board by watching the least important pieces.

“Now, apropos of that ‘agreeable old man,’ he heard in his brain that stroke of a bell which forebodes a disaster. One evening he took his station in the second, dark room, the walls of which were lined with the shelves of the library. Having scrutinized through a slit between two green curtains the seven or eight habitués of the establishment, he gauged the little carriage-maker’s soul with a glancé; he estimated the extent of his passion, and was well content to know that at the



moment when his own fancy for Antonia should have passed, a sumptuous future would throw open its varnished doors to her at her nod.

“‘And that fellow,’ he said, pointing to the stout, handsome old man decorated with the Legion of Honor, ‘who’s he?’

“‘An ex-superintendent of customs.’

“‘He’s a disquietingly fine figure!’ said Maxime, admiring *Sieur Denisart’s* carriage.

“In truth the former soldier did carry himself as straight as a steeple; his head commended itself to public attention by its pomaded and powdered hair, closely resembling that of a postilion at a masked ball. Beneath that hat, as you might call it, moulded upon an oblong head, was an aged face, governmental and soldierly at once, marked by an artful expression, not unlike that which caricature has bestowed on the ‘*Constitutionnel*.’ This ex-functionary who was so old and hoary and bent that he could read nothing without spectacles, protruded his respectable paunch with all the vainglory of an old man with a mistress, and wore in his ears gold rings that recalled old General *Montcornet’s*, the *habitué* of the *Vaudeville*. *Denisart* affected blue: his trousers and his old coat, both very full, were of blue cloth.

“‘How long has that old fellow been coming here?’ asked Maxime, to whom the spectacles seemed to hail from a suspected port.

“‘Oh! from the beginning,’ Antonia replied; ‘nearly two months.’

“‘Good; it’s only a month since *Cérizet* came,’ said Maxime to himself. — ‘Make him speak,’ he whispered to Antonia, ‘I want to hear his voice.’

“‘The deuce!’ she replied, ‘that won’t be an easy matter; he never says anything to me.’

“‘Why does he come here then?’ queried Maxime.

“‘For a funny reason,’ rejoined the fair Antonia. ‘In the first place, he has a passion, for all his sixty-nine years; but, because of his sixty-nine years, he’s as regular as clockwork. The good man goes to dine with his passion, on rue de la Victoire, every day at five. Hard luck for her, poor girl! He leaves her at six, comes here and reads all the newspapers for four hours, and goes back to her at ten. Papa Croizeau says he knows the reason of Monsieur Denisart’s behavior and approves it; and that in his place he’d act the same way. So I know my future! If I ever become Madame Croizeau, from six o’clock to ten I shall be free.’

“Maxime examined the ‘Almanac of 25,000 Addresses,’ and found this reassuring line:—

“‘DENISART, formerly superintendent of customs, rue de la Victoire.’

“He had no further uneasiness.

“Gradually there came to be an exchange of confidences between *Sieur Denisart* and *Sieur Croizeau*. Nothing draws men together more than a certain conformity of views in respect to women. Papa Croizeau dined with the lady whom he called ‘*Monsieur Denisart’s charmer*.’ Here I must interpolate an important detail. The reading-room had been paid for by the count, half in cash, half in notes signed by the aforesaid *De-moiselle Chocardelle*. Rabelais’s quarter of an hour arrived: the count found himself without cash. Now the first of the three notes for a thousand francs was paid in full by the ‘agreeable’ carriage-maker, whom

that old rascal of a Denisart advised to obtain an acknowledgment of his loan in the shape of certain privileges in the reading-room.

“‘I myself,’ said Denisart, have seen charmers and charmers! And so, in all cases, even when I’ve lost my head, I always take precautions with women. That creature that I’m mad over—the furniture in her rooms is n’t hers, it’s mine. The lease of the apartment’s in my name.’

“You know Maxime: he considered the carriage-maker very green. He might pay the three thousand francs and yet not touch anything for a long time, for Maxime was more madly in love than ever with Antonia.”

“I should say so!” cried La Palférine; “she’s the Fair Imperia of the Middle Ages!”

“A woman with a rough skin!” exclaimed the lorette, “so rough that she’s ruining herself in baths of bran.”

“Croizeau talked with a carriage-maker’s admiration of the superb furniture that Denisart had given his charmer for a frame; he described it with demoniac delight to the ambitious Antonia,” continued Desroches. “There were chests of ebony inlaid with mother-of-pearl and fillets of gold, Belgian carpets, a middle-age bed worth a thousand crowns, a Boulle clock; and in the dining-room tall candelabra in the four corners, Chinese silk curtains upon which the patient Chinese had painted birds, and portières hung on rods that were worth more than concierges (*portières*) on two feet.

“‘That’s what you ought to have, *belle dame*, and that’s what I would like to give you,’ he said in conclusion. ‘I am well aware that you could hardly love me; but at my age a man listens to common sense. Judge

how well I love you, since I have lent you a thousand francs. I may as well tell you that in all my life before I never lent as much as that!

“And he handed over the two sous for his reading with the self-important air with which a scholar demonstrates a theorem.

“In the evening, at the Variétés, Antonia said to the count:—

“‘A reading-room is an awful bore, all the same. I don’t feel any inclination for the business; I don’t see any chance of a fortune in it. It’s the business for a widow who wants just to exist, or for a hideously ugly girl who thinks she can catch a man by dressing up a little.’

“‘It’s what you asked me for,’ replied the count.

“At that moment Nucingen, from whom the king of the lions—for the yellow gloves had then become lions—had won a thousand crowns the night before, came in to pay him; and, on remarking Maxime’s amazement, he said:—

“‘I haf received a brotest at te suit of tat teufel of a Clabaron.’

“‘Aha! that’s what they’re up to!’ cried Maxime; ‘they’re not so shrewd, after all, those fellows—’

“‘Nefer mind,’ said the banker, ‘bay tem, for tey might abby to odders but me, und inchure you. I call tis bretty voman to vitness tat I haf baid you tis morn-  
ing, long before te brotest.’

“‘Queen of the spring-board,’ said La Palférine with a smile, ‘you will lose your wager.’

“It was a long while before,” continued Desroches, “that in a similar case, in which, however, the too honest debtor, taking fright at having to take an oath,

refused to pay Maxime, we led the opposing creditor a devil of a race, stirring up attachments *en masse*, so as to use up the whole amount in costs."

"What's all that?" cried Malaga; "those words sound to me like patois. As you liked the sturgeon, pay me the value of the sauce in lessons in swindling."

"Well," said Desroches, "the sum of money that one of your creditors attaches in the possession of one of your debtors may become the subject of a similar attachment on the part of all your other creditors. What does the court do when all the creditors apply for authorization to pay themselves? It divides the amount attached among them. This division, made under the eye of the court, is called a contribution. If you owe six thousand francs, and your creditors seize one thousand, each of them receives a certain percentage of his claim, by virtue of a division *au marc le franc*, in legal phrase; that is to say, *pro rata*; but they can collect it only upon a legal document issued by the clerk of the court, and called an *extrait du bordereau de collocation*. Can you guess what this procedure is, being ordered by judges and carried out by solicitors? It implies a deal of stamped paper full of stupid, verbose lines, in which figures are drowned in columns of unspotted white. They begin by deducting the costs. Now, the costs being the same when the sum seized is a thousand francs as when it is a million, it is not difficult to consume a thousand crowns, say, in costs, especially if one succeeds in stirring up contests."

"A solicitor always does succeed," said Cardot. "How many times has one of your people said to me: 'What is there to eat?'"

"One succeeds all the more certainly," said Des-

roches, "when the debtor urges you to eat up the whole amount in costs. So the count's creditors got nothing; they had their pains for their trips to solicitors' offices and for their pleadings. To obtain his pay from a debtor so cunning as the count, a creditor must place himself in a legal position that is exceedingly difficult to attain: it's a matter of being his debtor and his creditor at the same time, for in that case one has the right, under the law, to create confusion —"

"On the debtor's part?" queried the lorette, who was listening closely to the discourse.

"No, confusion of the two relations of debtor and creditor, and of paying one's self through one's own hands," replied Desroches. "So that the greenness of Claparon, who could think up nothing more than attachments of money owed, resulted in tranquillizing the count. As he took Antonia home from the Variétés, he was all the more enthusiastic over the idea of selling the reading-room, so that he could pay the last two thousand francs of the price, because he dreaded to be known as the financial backer of such an enterprise. So he adopted the suggestion of Antonia, who wished to enter the higher spheres of her profession, to have a sumptuous apartment, a lady's-maid, a carriage, and to rival our fair hostess, for instance —"

"She's not well built enough for that," cried the illustrious beauty of the Circus; "but she cleaned out little d'Esgrignon all the same!"

"Ten days later little Croizcau, perched on his dignity, held this language to the fair Antonia," continued Desroches: —

"My child, your reading-room's a regular den; you'll turn yellow here, and the gas will spoil your

eyesight; you must get out of it. And, look you, let's seize the opportunity; I have found a young lady for you who asks nothing better than to buy your reading-room. She's ruined and has nothing left to do but jump overboard; but she has four thousand francs in cash, and it's better to put it to some use so that she can support and bring up two children.'

"Well, you're a nice man, Papa Croizeau,' said Antonia.

"Oh! I'll be still nicer before long,' continued the old carriage-maker. 'Just fancy — poor M<sup>onsieur</sup> Denisart's had a disappointment that's given him the jaundice. Yes, it went to his liver as it does with susceptible old men. He's foolish to be so sensitive. I said to him: "Be passionate, if you please — that's all right; but as to being sensitive — stop there! that's killing!" I really would n't have anticipated such distress in a man strong enough and knowing enough to absent himself during the hours of digestion from —'

"But what's the trouble?' queried Mademoiselle Chocardelle.

"That little creature with whom I dined has planted him. Yes, she has dropped him without a word except a letter without any orthography.'

"That's what it is, Papa Croizeau, to make yourself a bore with women.'

"It's a good lesson, *belle dame*,' rejoined the soft-spoken Croizeau. 'Meanwhile I never saw a man so desperate as our friend Denisart. He can't tell his right hand from his left, he refuses to see what he calls the theatre of his happiness. He has lost his senses so completely that he has proposed to me to buy the whole

of Hortense's furniture — her name's Hortense — for four thousand francs !'

“‘It's a pretty name,’ said Antonia.

“‘Yes, it's Napoleon's step-daughter's. I furnished her carriages, as you know.’

“‘Well, I will see,’ said the shrewd Antonia ; ‘begin by sending me your young woman.’

“Antonia hastened to look at the furniture, returned fascinated, and fascinated Maxime with an antiquary's enthusiasm. That same evening the count consented to the sale of the reading-room. The establishment was in Mademoiselle Chocardelle's name, you understand. Maxime laughed at the idea of little Croizeau supplying a purchaser. The firm of Maxime and Chocardelle lost two thousand francs, to be sure, but what was that loss in the presence of four lovely thousand-franc notes ? As the count expressed it to me : —

“‘Four thousand francs in living money ! there are times when one signs notes for eight thousand francs just to have them !’

“Two days later the count went himself to see the furniture, having the four thousand francs upon him. The sale had been rushed through by the diligence of little Croizeau, who pushed on the wheel ; he had *enclaudé* the widow, he said. Paying little heed to the ‘agreeable old man,’ who was about to lose his thousand francs, Maxime proposed to have all the furniture taken at once to an apartment in a new house on rue Tronchet, hired in the name of Madame Ida Bonamy. To that end he had provided himself with several large moving-vans. Maxime, fascinated anew by the beauty of the furniture, which would have been worth six thousand francs to a dealer, found the unhappy old



man, yellow with his jaundice, in the chimney corner, his head enveloped in two silk handkerchiefs, and a cotton cap on top, — swathed like a chandelier; prostrated, unable to speak, in short, so dilapidated that the count was forced to deal with a servant. Having handed the four thousand francs to the servant, who carried them to his master so that he might give a receipt, Maxime started to go out to tell his movers to bring up their vans. But on the instant he heard a voice that grated on his ears like a watchman's rattle, shouting: —

“‘It's no use, monsieur le comte; we are quits, and I have six hundred and thirty francs and fifteen centimes change for you.’

“And he was horrified to see Cérizet emerging from his envelopes like a butterfly from its cocoon and handing him his infernal bills.

“‘In my days of hard luck,’ said the man of business, ‘I learned to act, and I'm as good as Bouffé in old men's parts.’

“‘I am in the forest of Bondy!’ cried Maxime.

“‘No, monsieur le comte, you're at Mademoiselle Hortense's, old Lord Dudley's friend; he is keeping her out of everybody's sight, but she has the bad taste to love your humble servant.’

“‘If ever I wanted to kill a man,’ the count said to me afterward, ‘it was at that moment; but *que voulez-vous!* Hortense showed her pretty face and I had to laugh; and, in order to retain my prestige, I tossed her the six hundred francs, saying: “This is for the girl!”’”

“That's Maxime to the life!” said La Palférine.

“Especially as it was little Croizeau's monecy,” said the astute Cardot.

“Maxime had a triumph,” continued Desroches; “for Hortense exclaimed: ‘Oh! if I’d known it was you!’”

“So that’s your *confusion!*” cried the lorette. “You’ve lost, milord,” she said to the notary.

And this is how it was that the cabinet-maker, to whom Malaga owed a hundred francs, came to be paid.

PARIS, 1845.

THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES

TO EUGÈNE DELACROIX, PAINTER

# THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES.



## I.

BEYOND question one of the most appalling spectacles imaginable is the general aspect of the Parisian populace, — a mob ghastly to look upon, gaunt, wan, and haggard. What is Paris, if not a vast field kept in constant motion by a tempest of opposing interests, beneath which an abundant crop of men revolve in eddying crowds, whom Death mows down oftener than elsewhere, and who spring up again as numerous as ever, their twisted, distorted faces exhaling through every pore the shrewd wit, the desires, the poisons with which their brains are pregnant; nay, not faces either, but masks: masks of weakness, masks of strength, masks of poverty, masks of good cheer, masks of hypocrisy; all emaciated, all bearing the ineffaceable marks of panting greed? What do they want? Gold, or pleasure!

A few observations concerning the soul of Paris may explain the causes of its cadaverous physiognomy, which has but two ages, — youth and decrepitude: a pallid and colorless youth, a dyed and painted decrepitude which would fain appear young. At sight of that exhumed multitude, strangers who are not given to reflection feel at first a thrill of repulsion for this capital of ours, a

vast workshop of enjoyments, which they themselves ere long become powerless to leave, and where they remain, to be vitiated with full knowledge. A very few words will suffice to account physiologically for the almost infernal complexion of Parisian faces; for not in jest alone has Paris been called an inferno. Take that name as well deserved. In Paris everything smokes and blazes and flames and boils and evaporates and goes out and is rekindled and snaps and crackles and consumes itself. Never in any country was life more ardent or more devouring. That social organization, always in a state of fusion, seems to say to itself on the completion of each new work: "Next!" as Nature herself says. Like Nature, this social organization gives its attention to insects, to flowers of a day, to trifles, to mere ephemera, and belches fire and flame through its ever active crater. Perhaps, before we analyze the causes which give a special physiognomy to each tube of this intellectual and restless nation, we should point out the general cause which more or less discolors the individuals, which turns them pale or blue or brown.

As a result of interesting himself in everything, the Parisian ends by being interested in nothing. As no sentiment predominates on his face, worn by constant rubbing, it becomes as gray as a plaster wall which has received every sort of dust and smoke. The truth is that the Parisian, indifferent the night before as to what he will be intoxicated with on the morrow, lives like a child, whatever his age. He grumbles at everything, finds consolation in everything, laughs at everything, forgets everything, wants everything, tastes of everything, goes into everything enthusiastically, drops

everything without regret, — his kings, his conquests, his good fame, his idol (whether of bronze or glass), — just as he throws aside his stockings, his hats, his fortune. In Paris no sentiment is strong enough to resist the onrush of things, and their current forces one to a struggle that relaxes the passions: there love is a desire, and hatred a mere passing fancy; there is no real kinsman save the thousand-franc note, no other friend than the *mont-de-piété*. This general recklessness bears its fruit; and in the salon, as in the street, no one is *de trop*, no one is absolutely useful or absolutely detrimental: this is true of fools and knaves no less than of clever or upright folk. Everything is tolerated — government and the guillotine, religion and cholera. You are always welcome in that cosmos, you are never missed.

What, then, are the dominant forces in this land without morals, without faith, without sentiment of any sort, but where all sentiments, all faiths, all morals have their beginning and their end? Gold and pleasure. Take those two words as a light and examine this great plaster cage, this hive with foul gutters, and follow the serpentine windings of the thought that disturbs and excites and moulds it! And first of all examine the multitude who have nothing.

The workingman, the proletarian, the man who moves his hands, his tongue, his back, his single arm, his five fingers, to gain a livelihood — that man who, above all others, should economize the elements of life, goes beyond his strength, harnesses his wife to some machine, ties his child to a set of pulleys, and wears him out. The manufacturer, the not easily defined secondary screw that keeps in motion the multitude of working men and women, who with their dirty hands

fashion and gild porcelains, sew coats and gowns, hammer out iron, carve wood, forge steel, weave flax and linen, polish bronzes, decorate glass, make harnesses and laces, stamp copper, paint carriages, trim the old elms, vaporize cotton, blow glass, corrode the diamond, burnish metals, transform marble into leaves, grind down granite, clothe thought, and color, whiten, and blacken all sorts of things — that deputy-chief, I say, has promised that microcosm of sweat and determination, of study and patience, an exorbitant wage, either in the name of the whims of the city or at the bidding of the monster called Speculation. Whereupon those four-handed creatures work night and day, and suffer and curse and fast; one and all exceed their strength to earn the gold that fascinates them. And then, heedless of the future, greedy for enjoyment, relying on their arms as the painter relies on his palette, they throw away their money in the wine-shops on Monday, — *grands seigneurs* of a day, — in the wine-shops that form a girdle of depravity about the city; the girdle of the most shameless of Venuses, incessantly fastened and unfastened, wherein is wasted, as at the gaming-table, the weekly fortune of that multitude, as fierce in the pursuit of pleasure as it is placid at its daily toil. And then, for the next five days, there is no rest for that toiling segment of Paris! It abandons itself to exertions which cause it to become stunted and emaciated and pallid, and to expend its vigor in numberless streams of creative will. Then its relaxation, its repose, is an exhausting debauch, blackened with blows, pallid with drunkenness, or yellow with indigestion, which lasts but two days, it is true, but which steals the bread of the future, the soup of the whole week, the wife's dresses,



the swaddling-clothes of the child that goes clad in rags.

These men, born doubtless to be comely, — for every creature has its relative beauty, — enlisted, in childhood, under the command of brute force, under the sceptre of the hammer, the shears, and the mill, and speedily became vulcanized. Vulcan, with his ugliness and his strength, is the emblem, is he not? of this ugly and powerful nation, sublime in mechanical skill, patient in its hours of labor, terrible on one day in a generation, inflammable as powder, and made ready by *cau-de-vie* for the conflagration of revolution — yet clever enough to take fire at an insidious phrase which to its ears always signifies: “gold and pleasure!”

Including all those who put out their hand for alms, for lawful wages or for the five francs bestowed upon every variety of Parisian prostitution, — in short, for any money well or ill earned, this populace numbers three hundred thousand souls. But for the wine-shops, would not the government be overthrown every Tuesday? But, luckily, on Tuesday the people are benumbed, chewing the cud of their pleasures, without a sou in their pockets; and they go back to their work and their crust of bread, stimulated by a craving for material procreation which becomes a habit with them.

Nevertheless they have their miracles of virtue, their perfect men, their unknown Napoleons, who are the type of their powers raised to their highest expression, and who represent their loftiest social elevation in an existence in which thought and effort combine, not so much to sow good cheer therein as to regulate the action of grief.

Let us assume that chance has made a workingman economical, that chance has endowed him with a mind, so that he has been able to have an eye on the future; that he has met a woman, has become a father, and after several years of stern privation has gone into the linen-draper's trade in a small way and has hired a shop. If neither illness nor vice check him in his path, if he has prospered, his normal existence will be something like what follows.

And first of all salute this king of Parisian activity who has made time and space his subjects. Aye, salute this creature of saltpetre and gas combined, who gives children to France during his toilsome nights, and multiplies his personality by day, in the service of his fellow citizens and for their glory and pleasure. That man solves the problem of doing his duty to a charming wife, to his children, to the "Constitutionnel," to his shop, to the National Guard, to the Opéra, and to God, all at the same time; but with a view of turning into cash the "Constitutionnel," the shop, the Opéra, the National Guard, the wife, and God. In short, salute an irreproachable pluralist. Rising every day at five, he traverses like a bird the space between his abode and rue Montmartre. Whether it blows or thunders, rains or snows, he is at the office of the "Constitutionnel" and awaits there the package of newspapers of which he has undertaken the distribution. He receives that political loaf eagerly, takes it, and carries it away. At nine o'clock he is in the bosom of his family, repeating a droll story to his wife, stealing a resounding kiss from her, sipping a cup of coffee, or scolding his children. At quarter to ten he appears at the mayor's office. There, perched on an armchair like a parrot on its

staff, stimulated by the city of Paris, he registers the deaths and births of a whole arrondissement without according them a tear or a smile. The good and ill fortune of the quarter pass through the nib of his pen, as the wit of the "Constitutionnel" travelled on his shoulders a little earlier. Nothing disturbs him! He always goes straight ahead, takes his patriotism ready-made from the newspaper, contradicts no one, yells or applauds with everybody else, and lives like a swallow. Being within two steps of his parish church, he can, in case of an important ceremony, turn over his place to a substitute and go and sing a *Requiem* at the chorister's desk, of which, on Sundays and holy days, he is the finest ornament, his the most impressive voice; where he vigorously distorts his ample mouth as he thunders out a joyous "Amen!" He is an official chorister.

Relieved at four o'clock from his official duties, he appears, to diffuse joy and merriment, in the most famous shop in the whole *Cité*. Fortunate is his wife — he has no time to be jealous; he is a man of action rather than of sentiment. And so, as soon as he arrives, he begins to tease the young women behind the counter, whose bright eyes attract many a customer; he makes merry among the dresses, the fichus, the muslin fashioned by the skilful workwomen; or, more frequently, before dinner, he waits on a customer, copies a page from the journal, or takes to the sheriff's officer the money to pay an over-due bill.

At six o'clock every second day he is unfailingly at his post: permanently employed as a bass-singer in the chorus, he is on hand at the Opéra, ready to become a soldier, Arab, prisoner, savage, peasant, ghost, camel's foot, lion, devil, genie, slave, or eunuch, black or white;

always expert in arousing merriment, distress, pity, amazement, in uttering the same invariable outeries, in holding his peace, hunting, fighting, representing Rome or Egypt; but always a linen-draper *in petto*. At midnight he is re-transformed into a good husband and loving father; he creeps into the conjugal bed, his imagination still kindled by the deceptive figures of the nymphs of the Opéra, and thus turns to the advantage of conjugal love the depravity of society and the voluptuous plumpness of Taglioni's leg. If he sleeps, he goes to sleep at once, and despatches his slumber as he despatches his life.

Is he not action made man, space incarnate, the Proteus of civilization? That man is the sum of all things: history, literature, politics, government, religion, military art. He is a living encyclopædia, a grotesque Atlas, constantly in motion, like Paris, and never taking rest. No face could remain pure in such travail. It may be that the workman who dies an old man at thirty, his stomach tanned by increasing doses of eau-de-vie, will be considered by certain well-to-do philosophers more fortunate than our linen-draper. One dies at a single stroke, the other little by little. From his eight occupations, his shoulders, his hands, his throat, his wife, and his shop, as from an equal number of farms, the draper derives children, a few thousand francs, and the most laborious happiness that ever refreshed the heart of man. His fortune and his children — or, say the children who represent everything to him — become the prey of the higher social order, to which he transfers his cash and his daughter, or his son, educated in college, who, being more learned than his father, casts his ambitious glances higher than

he. Often the younger son of a petty retail tradesman becomes a man of importance in the State.

This ambition introduces the element of thought into the second of Parisian spheres. Go up one floor, to the entresol, — or start from the garret and stop on the fourth floor; in short, make your way into the class which has some property: you will reach the same result. Wholesale tradesmen and their clerks, government employés, men of great probity engaged in small banking, knaves, tools, first and last clerks, clerks to bailiffs, to solicitors, to notaries — in a word, the active, thinking, speculating members of that petty bourgeoisie which tramples under foot the material interests of Paris, keeps watch on its stock of grain, monopolizes its crops, stores in warehouses the products of the toil of the proletariat, barrels the fruits of the South, the fish of the sea, the wines of every hillside beloved by the sun; which puts out its hand over the Orient and seizes the shawls cast aside by the Turks and Russians; which reaps a harvest even in the Indies, goes to bed to await the auction sale, reaches out for the profit, discounts bills, rolls up and packs in boxes everything of value, all Paris in small pieces, and transports it hither and yon; which keeps watch on the whims of children, on the fancies and vices of mature men and women, and squeezes funds out of their illnesses; — well, without drinking eau-de-vie like the workingman, or swaggering in the filth of the barriers, all these people exceed their strength none the less, strain beyond measure their bodies and their moral organizations, each reacting on the other, drain themselves dry with desires, ruin themselves by fast living. In their case physical stress is achieved under the lash of selfish interest, under the

scourge of the same ambitions which perturb the higher strata of this monstrous city, as that of the proletariat is achieved under the cruel balance-wheel of the material refinements constantly required by the despotic "It is my will" of the aristocracy. Here too, therefore, in order to obey that universal master, pleasure or gold, men must devour time, squeeze time, find more than twenty-four hours in the day and night, destroy their nerves, kill themselves, sell thirty years of old age for two years of sickly repose. But the workingman dies in the hospital when his last period of degeneration is at an end, while the petty bourgeois persists in living, and does live, but in a state of idiocy: you may see him, with a worn, aged, expressionless face, with no gleam of life in his eyes, dragging himself along on tottering legs and with a stupid expression, on the boulevard, the girdle of his Venus, of his beloved city.

What does the bourgeois want? The flint-lock of the National Guard, an inalienable hearthstone, a decent plot in Père-Lachaise, and for his old age a little money lawfully acquired. His Monday is Sunday; his rest is the drive in a hired carriage, the trip to the country, when the wife and children joyously swallow mouthfuls of dust and bake themselves in the sun; his barrier is the restaurant whose murderous dinners are renowned, or a "family ball," where the participants suffocate till midnight. Some simpletons are amazed at the St. Vitus's dance that afflicts the *animaleulæ* which the microscope reveals in a drop of water; but what would old Rabelais's Gargantua say, — that image of sublime, incomprehensible audacity, that giant fallen from celestial spheres, — what would he say if he should divert himself by contemplating the evolutions of this second

stratum of Paris, of which the following is one of the formulæ?

Have you ever noticed the little booths, cool in summer and heated only by a foot-warmer in winter, placed beneath the huge copper dome that crowns the Halle au blé? Madame is there early in the morning: she is a government auctioneer there, and makes at that trade twelve hundred francs a year, they say. When madame rises, monsieur goes to a dark office, where he lends money at usurious rates to the tradesmen of his quarter. At nine o'clock he is at the bureau of passports, where he is one of the deputy-chiefs. In the evening he is at the box-office of the Théâtre-Italien, or of any other theatre you please. The children are put out at nurse, and return home to go to college or a boarding-school. Monsieur and madame live in a third-floor apartment, have only a cook, give balls in a salon twelve feet by eight, lighted by argand lamps; but they give their daughter a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and retire at fifty, at which age they begin to appear in the boxes of the third tier at the Opéra, in a cab at Longchamp, or in faded attire, every sunny day, on the boulevards, the *espalier* of that toilsome fructification. Esteemed in the neighborhood, beloved of the government, allied to the higher bourgeoisie, monsieur obtains the cross of the Legion of Honor at sixty-five, and his son-in-law's father, the mayor of his arrondissement, invites him to his evening receptions. Thus these labors of a whole life redound to the advantage of the children whom the petty bourgeoisie inevitably strive to raise to the class above them. Each sphere thrusts its spawn into the next higher sphere. The rich grocer's son becomes a notary, the wood-dealer's son becomes a mag-

istrate. Not a tooth fails to fit into its cog, and everything tends to promote the upward movement of funds.

We have now arrived at the third circle of this inferno, which, perchance, will have its Dante some day.

In this third social circle the Parisian stomach, so to speak, where the interests of the city are digested, and become condensed into what is called "business," the mob of solicitors, physicians, notaries, advocates, men of affairs, bankers, wholesale merchants, speculators, and magistrates bestir themselves and rush to and fro with a splenic and rancorous intestinal commotion. There we find more causes of degeneration, physical and moral, than anywhere else. These men, almost without exception, live in stuffy offices, in pestiferous courtrooms, in small fenced-off dens; they pass the day bent beneath the burden of business; rise at dawn to be ready for the day's work, to forestall any attempt to take them unawares, to gain all or lose nothing, to lay hold of a man or his money, to forward or defeat an undertaking, to make the most of an accidental circumstance, to cause a man to be hanged or acquitted. They react upon their horses, founder them, wear them out, make their legs, like their own, old before their time. Time is their tyrant; they must have it, it eludes them; they can neither extend it nor confine it. What soul can remain great and pure and noble and generous, and consequently what face can remain comely in the degrading exercise of a trade that compels one to bear the burden of public sufferings, to analyze them, to pass judgment on them, and to file them according to a fixed rule? Those men put their hearts away — where? I cannot say; but they leave them somewhere, when they



have any, before they go down every morning into the depths of the sorrows that are driving families to despair. For them there are no mysteries: they see the reverse side of the society whose confessors they are, and they despise it. Now, whatever they may do, by dint of constantly contending with corruption they conceive a horror of it and are saddened by it; or else, from weariness, or by some secret compromise, they espouse it; in short, they necessarily become *blasé* concerning all forms of sentiment, — they whom the laws and institutions and mankind train to swoop down like vultures upon dead bodies that are still warm. Every hour in the day the man of money weighs the living, the man of contracts weighs the dead, the man of law weighs the conscience. Compelled to talk incessantly, they all replace ideas by words, sentiment by verbosity, and their mind becomes a mere larynx. They wear themselves out and become demoralized. Neither the great merchant, nor the judge, nor the advocate, retains his uprightness: they cease to feel and simply apply the rules which money makes of no account. Carried away by their torrent-like existence, they are neither husbands nor fathers nor lovers; they glide over the affairs of life as a sleigh over snow, and live every hour under the impulsion of the great city's business. When they return home, they are called upon to go to a ball, to the Opéra, or to some festivity, where they try to obtain clients, acquaintances, patrons. They all eat enormously, gamble, grow old rapidly, and their faces become bloated and red and expressionless.

To such a terrible expenditure of intellectual strength, to moral shortcomings so multiplied, they oppose, not

pleasure, — that is too insipid and causes no contrast, — but debauchery, secret, shocking debauchery; for they have everything at their command and dictate the morals of society. Their actual stupidity is concealed beneath a special sort of knowledge; they know their own trade, but they know nothing of whatever is not connected with it. Whereupon, to save their self-esteem, they call everything in question, criticise at random, make a show of being doubters when they are really mere triflers, and drown their wits in their endless discussions. Almost without exception they conveniently adopt the current social, literary, or political prejudices, in order to avoid having an opinion; just as they place their consciences out of reach of the Code, or of the Tribunal of Commerce. Starting out early to be men of note, they become mediocre and crawl about on the high places of the world. So that their faces present the bilious pallor, the artificial coloring, the dull, black-ringed eyes, the chattering, sensual mouths, wherein the shrewd observer recognizes the symptoms of degradation of the mind and its endless rotation in the narrow circle of a specialty that destroys the creative faculties of the brain, the power to look at things broadly, to generalize, and to draw deductions. Most of them shrivel up in the furnace of business.

So it is that no man who has allowed himself to be caught and crushed in the gear of that machine can ever become great. If he is a physician, either he has practised medicine but little, or he is an exception, a Bichat who dies young. If, being a great merchant, he continues to amount to anything, he is almost a Jacques Cœur. Did Robespierre practise? Denton was a lazy fellow, who waited upon events. But who has ever de-

sired the figures of Robespierre and Danton, however superb they may have been? These busy men *par excellence* draw money to themselves, and pile it up in order to form alliances with aristocratic families. If the workingman's passion is identical with that of the petty bourgeois, here again we find the same passions at work.

In Paris vanity is the moving principle of all passions. The type of the class we are considering would be the ambitious bourgeois, who, after a life of distress and of constant manœuvring, makes his way into the Council of State, as an ant crawls through a crack in a board: the editor of a newspaper, it may be, overdone by intrigues, whom the king makes a peer of France, perhaps to be revenged on the nobility; or some notary chosen mayor of his arrondissement; one and all wire-drawn by business, and who, if they arrive at their goal, are *done for* when they arrive. In France the custom is to enthrone the wig. Napoleon, Louis XIV, only the great monarchs, have always sought young men to carry on their schemes.

Above this sphere dwells artistic society. But, there again, the faces stamped with the seal of originality are wasted and worn — nobly wasted, if you please, but wasted, fatigued, and furrowed. Beset by the craving to produce, overreached by their extravagant caprices, worn out by a devouring genius, greedy of pleasure, the artists of Paris all strive to fill anew, by excessive toil, the gaps left by idleness, and seek in vain to reconcile society and renown, money, and art. At the outset the artist is constantly cowering under the lash of the creditor; his cravings give birth to debts, and his debts demand his nights. After toil, pleasure.

The actor aets till midnight, studies in the morning, rehearses at noon. The sculptor bends beneath his statue. The journalist is an idea on the march, like a soldier in war-time. The fashionable painter is overwhelmed with work, the painter without orders eats his heart out if he is a man of genius. Competition, rivalries, slanders, murder all these talents. Some, in despair, wallow in the depths of vice; others die young and unknown because they have discounted their future too soon. Few of those figures, originally sublime, remain beautiful. An artist's face is always exaggerated, always above or below the lines agreed upon as essential to what fools call the "beau ideal." What power destroys them? Passion. In Paris every passion is explained by two words: gold and pleasure.

Now, do you not breathe freely again? Do you not feel that the atmosphere is purified? Here there is neither labor nor suffering. The whirling shuttlecock of gold has reached the highest levels. From the depths of the eaverns where its anties begin, from the shops where flimsy dikes delay it, from the bosom of counting-rooms and factories where it allows itself to be made into bars, gold, in the shape of dowries or inheritanees, brought by the slender hands of young girls or by the bony hands of the aged man, rushes up toward the aristocratic fold, where it will gleam and flow freely and make a fine show.

But before leaving the four foundations whereon the property of the upper classes of Paris rests, it will be well to deduce the physical causes from the so-called moral causes, and to call attention to an underlying pest, so to speak, which aets constantly on the faees of the porter, the shop-keeper, and the artisan; to point

out a deleterious influence, the corrupting effect of which equals the corruption of the Parisian administrators who obligingly allow it to exist! If the atmosphere of the houses in which the majority of bourgeois live is poisonous, if the air in the streets injects dangerous miasmas into back-shops where air is scarce; understand that, in addition to this source of pestilence, the forty thousand houses of this great city bathe their feet in filth which the authorities have not seriously attempted to cover with walls of cement, which might prevent the most fetid slime from soaking through the soil, poisoning the wells, and perpetuating underground the famous ancient name of the city, — Lutetia. One half of Paris sleeps in the putrid exhalations from the back-yards, streets, and cesspools.

But let us glance at the spacious gilded salons, the mansions with gardens, the rich, idle, fortunate class. There the faces are shrunken and ravaged by vanity. There is nothing genuine. To seek pleasure is to find ennui, is it not? The rulers of society become *founded* early in life. Having no other occupation than to manufacture enjoyment, they speedily abuse their passions, as the workingman abuses *eau-de-vie*. Pleasure is like certain drugs: to continue to obtain the same results, one must double the dose, and death or brutalization is contained in the last one. All the lower classes cower before the rich and closely watch their tastes, in order to make vices of them and exploit them. How resist the adroit schemes of seduction that are devised in this country? Paris, too, has its *thériakis*, to whom gambling or gluttony or a courtesan is a sort of opium. So that you soon discover that such folk have tastes, not passions, romantic fancies, and easily chilled love-

affairs. There impotence reigns; there is a dearth of ideas, which have been transformed, like the quality of energy, into the simperings of the boudoir, into feminine monkey-tricks. There are novices of forty years, and venerable doctors of sixteen.

In Paris the rich find intellect ready-made, knowledge all digested, opinions all formed, which relieve them of the necessity of having intellect, knowledge, or opinions. In that section of society the lack of common sense is equal to the weakness and licentiousness. People are niggardly of time there, because they waste so much of it. Do not expect, either, to find more affections than ideas there. Embraces cloak the most absolute indifference, and courteous manners a constant contempt. No one cares for anybody else. Sallies without meaning, indiscretion, gossip, and, above all, the merest commonplaces, — such is the substance of their speech; but those unfortunate fortunate ones declare that they do not meet to utter and act maxims *à la Rochefoucauld*; as if there were not a medium, which the eighteenth century discovered, between over-fulness and absolute emptiness. If perchance some man of parts indulges in a refined and airy jest, it is not understood; and being soon wearied of giving without receiving, such men stay at home and leave the fools to reign on their own ground.

This hollow life, this constant waiting for a pleasure that never arrives, this permanent ennui, this emptiness of mind, heart, and brain, this weariness of the great Parisian hurly-burly, are reflected upon men's features, and fashion the pasteboard-like faces, the premature wrinkles, the characteristic rich man's physiognomy, on which impotence grins hideously, amid the yellow

reflection of gold, and from which intelligence has fled.

This sketch of moral Paris proves that the physical Paris cannot be other than it is. This diademed city is a queen who, being always pregnant, has irresistibly frantic desires. Paris is the brain of the globe, a brain that is bursting with genius and that guides the march of civilization; a great man, an artist always creating, a politician endowed with second sight, who must inevitably have the brain-wrinkles, the vices of the great man, the caprices of the artist, and the blunted sensibilities of the politician. Her face suggests the germination of good and evil, battle and victory: the moral battle of '89, whose trumpets still resound in every corner of the world; and also the prostration of 1814. This city, then, cannot be more moral, more affectionate, or cleaner than the boilers that propel the magnificent steamboats which we gaze upon with admiration as they cleave the waves! Is not Paris a sublime vessel, laden with intelligence? Yes, her coat-of-arms is one of those oracles which fate sometimes indulges in. THE CITY OF PARIS has her mainmast of bronze, carved with the names of victories, and Napoleon for steersman. The craft rolls and pitches, it is true; but she ploughs through the world, fires broadsides from her hundreds of tribunes, traverses the scientific seas, sails over them under full sail, shouts from her tops, by the voices of her scholars and artists: "Forward, march! follow me!" She carries an enormous crew which takes delight in decking her out with new streamers. There are cabin-boys laughing among the ropes; for ballast the heavy bourgeoisie; workmen and sailors covered with tar; in the staterooms the fortunate passenger;



dapper midshipmen lean over the gunwale, smoking their cigars; and on the poop her troops, novelty-seeking or ambitious, wish to land on every coast, and, although casting a bright light wherever they go, they crave glory which is a pleasure, or loves which require gold.

Thus the unreasonable activity of the proletariat, the depravity of the self-seeking motives which crush the two ranks of the bourgeoisie, the pitilessness of the artistic idea, and the abuse of pleasure constantly striven for by the great, explain the normal ugliness of the Parisian physiognomy. Only in the East can the human race display a magnificent chest; but it is a result of the continual tranquillity practised by those profound philosophers with long pipes and small legs and square shoulders, who despise activity and hold it in horror; whereas in Paris small, middle-sized, and great run about and leap and cut capers, under the lash of a pitiless goddess, — Necessity: necessity of money, of glory, and of entertainment. The result being that a fresh, placid, smiling, truly youthful face is a most exceptional phenomenon in Paris, and is very rarely seen there. If you see one, you may be sure that it belongs to a young and ardent ecclesiastic, or to some excellent quadragenarian abbé, with a triple chin; to a young woman of pure morals, such as are found in some bourgeois families; to a mother of twenty, still full of illusions and nursing her first-born; to a young man newly arrived from the provinces, and entrusted to the care of a devout dowager who leaves him without a sou; or, perchance, to a shop-clerk who goes to bed at midnight, tired out with folding and unfolding calico all day, and who rises at seven to arrange the show-



window; or, frequently, to a scientific man or a poet, who leads a monastic life in company with a beautiful conception, and who remains sober, patient, and pure; or to some self-satisfied fool, who feeds on his stupidity, overflowing with health, and always smiling to himself; or to the thrice-blessed, flabby race of idlers, the only people in Paris who are really happy, and who relish every hour her constantly shifting poetic aspects.

Nevertheless, there are in Paris some privileged persons who profit by this overdone activity in manufacture, in business, in the arts, and in finance. Those persons are the women. Although they too have a thousand hidden causes which more effectually there than elsewhere ravage their features, there are to be found, in the world of women, fortunate little tribes that live after the Oriental fashion and are able to retain their beauty; but such women rarely appear on foot in the streets; they remain in hiding, like rare plants which unfold their petals only at certain hours and which are true exotic exceptions. But Paris is essentially the land of contrasts. If genuine sentiments are infrequent there, one does find there, as elsewhere, noble friendships, devotions that know no bounds. Upon that battlefield of selfish interests and of passions, just as in the midst of those marching societies in which egotism triumphs, in which every one is obliged to defend himself unaided, and which we call *armies*, it is as if the sentiments delight in being complete when they do show themselves, and are sublime by juxtaposition.

And so it is with faces. In Paris, among the higher aristocracy, one meets at intervals some ravishingly beautiful youthful faces, the fruit of altogether exceptional education and morals. With the juvenile beauty

of the English blood, they unite a southern firmness of expression, the French intellect, and purity of outline. The fire of their eyes, the charming redness of their lips, the lustre of their fine black hair, a white skin, a distinguished type of face, make them beautiful human flowers, magnificent as one views them against the mass of other faces, haggard, peaked, aged, and leering. So that the women fall instantly into admiration of these young men, with the covetous pleasure which men take in looking at a pretty girl, who is modest and graceful and endowed with all the maidenly charms with which our imagination delights to embellish the perfect maiden.

If this swift glance at the population of Paris has explained the rarity of Raphaellesque faces, and the enthusiastic admiration which such a face is likely to arouse at first sight, the main theme of our tale will be justified. *Quod erat demonstrandum*, if we may apply the formulas of mathematics to the science of morals.

## II.

ON one of those lovely spring mornings when the leaves, although open, are not yet green; when the sun is beginning to make the roofs blaze, and the sky is blue; when the Parisian populace emerges from its hives, buzzes on the boulevards, and winds like a multi-colored serpent through rue de la Paix toward the Tuileries, hailing the brilliant celebration of the country's ever recurring hymen, — on one of those gladsome mornings, as I was saying, a young man, beautiful as the light of that lovely day, dressed with taste, of unassuming ease of manner, — let us reveal the secret; a love-child, the natural son of Lord Dudley and the famous Marquise de Vordac, — was walking on the main avenue of the Tuileries.

This Adonis, whose name was Henri de Marsay, was born in France, where Lord Dudley had just given the young woman in marriage to an old gentleman named M. de Marsay. That faded and almost extinct butterfly recognized the child as his, in consideration of a life interest in an income of one hundred thousand francs, which was definitely settled on his putative son; a piece of folly which did not cost Lord Dudley very dear, French *rentes* being then quoted at seventeen francs fifty centimes.

The old gentleman died without ever making his wife's acquaintance. She married the Marquis de Vordac; but before she became a marchioness, she troubled her head very little about her son and Lord

Dudley. In the first place the war that broke out between France and England separated the lovers, and fidelity through thick and thin was not then, and never will be, very fashionable in Paris. Moreover, the social triumph of the pretty, dainty, universally adored creature benumbed the maternal sentiment in her, true Parisian that she was. Nor was Lord Dudley more mindful of his progeny than was the mother. It may be that the speedy disloyalty of a girl whom he had loved passionately inspired in him a sort of aversion for everything that proceeded from her. It may be, too, that fathers love only those children with whom they have become well acquainted: a social theory of the greatest importance to the repose of families, and which all celibates ought to support, as it proves that paternity is a sentiment reared in a greenhouse by woman, manners, and the laws.

Poor Henri de Marsay found a father only in that one of the two who was under no obligation to be his father. M. de Marsay's paternity was, naturally, far from thorough. In nature children have fathers for only a few moments; and the gentleman in question copied nature. He would not have sold his name except for the fact that he was addicted to certain vices; so he ate in gambling-hells, and drank elsewhere, without remorse, the paltry half-yearly payments that the national treasury made to holders of *rentes*. Then he turned the child over to an elderly sister of his, one Mademoiselle de Marsay, who took great care of him, and supplied him, from the niggardly stipend allowed her by her brother, with a tutor, a penniless abbé, who contemplated the young man's future and determined to pay himself out of the hundred thousand francs a

year for the labor bestowed upon his pupil, to whom he became much attached.

This tutor happened to be a real priest, one of those churchmen who are cut out to be cardinals in France or Borgias under the tiara. In three years he taught the child what he himself had been taught at school in ten. And then that great man — his name was Abbé de Maronis — completed his pupil's education by causing him to study civilization in all its phases: he fed him with his experience, dragged him to church very little, the churches being then closed, but took him sometimes into the wings, and more frequently to the abodes of courtesans. He dislodged his human feelings bit by bit; taught him politics in salons, where it was then basking in the warmth; placed numbers for him on the various governmental machines, and tried, by dint of affection for that noble character, deserted by its progenitors, but rich in hope, to make himself a masculine substitute for the mother. Is not the Church the mother of all orphans?

The pupil responded to this unwearying devotion. The excellent man died a bishop in 1812, with the satisfaction of knowing that he had left under the sun one child of sixteen years, whose heart and mind were so well shaped that he could get the better of a man of forty. Who would have expected to find a heart of bronze, a subtilized brain, beneath the most fascinating exterior that the old painters, those sincere artists, ever gave to the serpent in the earthly paradise? But this is nothing. Furthermore, the violet-clad *bon diable* had been the means of his favorite child's making certain acquaintances in the Parisian aristocracy which might well, in the young man's hands, be equivalent to

another hundred thousand francs a year. In short, the priest, vicious but politic, an unbeliever but a scholar, treacherous but lovable, weak in appearance but in reality equally strong in body and mind, was so genuinely useful to his pupil, so indulgent to his vices, so unerring a calculator of every element of strength, so deep when it was necessary to take advantage of some human weakness, so youthful at table, at Frascati's, at — I know not where, that the grateful Henri de Marsay, in 1814, was incapable of being moved by anything except the portrait of his dear bishop, the only corporeal legacy which had been bequeathed to him by that prelate, an admirable specimen of the men whose genius will save the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, endangered at this moment by the weakness of its recruits and the old age of its pontiffs; but such is the will of the Church!

The continental war prevented young de Marsay from making the acquaintance of his real father, whose name it is doubtful if he knew. Being an abandoned child, he did not know Madame de Marsay either. Naturally, he did not regret his putative father. As for Mademoiselle de Marsay, his only mother, when she died he placed a pretty little tombstone over her grave. Monseigneur de Maronis had promised the old shell-cap one of the best seats in Heaven, so that, seeing that she was happy to die, Henri shed selfish tears for her — he wept for her on his own account. Observing his grief, the priest dried his tears by reminding him that the old lady took her snuff in most revolting fashion, and was growing so ugly and deaf and tiresome that he ought to be thankful to Death.

The bishop had caused his pupil to be emancipated

in 1811. And when M. de Marsay's mother married again, he made choice, at a family council, of one of those honest brainless creatures whom he had sorted out on the shutter of the confessional, and placed in his hands the management of the fortune, the income of which he applied to the necessities of the community, but the principal of which he meant to preserve intact.

In 1814, therefore, Henri de Marsay had no feeling of obligation to any one on earth, and was as free as the bird without a mate. Although he was twenty-two years old, he looked barely seventeen. Generally speaking, the most censorious of his rivals considered him the comeliest youth in Paris. From his father, Lord Dudley, he had inherited the most amorously beguiling blue eyes; from his mother the most luxuriant black hair; from both, pure blood, the skin of a young girl, a winning and modest manner, a slender, aristocratic figure, and beautiful hands. For a woman, the mere sight of him was to go mad over him; you know what I mean? to conceive one of those desires which tear the heart, but which die out quickly because of the impossibility of satisfying them; for, under ordinary circumstances, Parisian women lack tenacity. Few of them say to themselves, after the manner of men, the *Je maintiendrai* of the House of Orange.

Beneath that youthful aspect, and despite the limpidity of his eyes, Henri was as brave as a lion and as adroit as a monkey. He could split a bullet on a knife-blade at ten paces; he rode in such wise as to make real the legend of the centaur, drove a four-in-hand most gracefully, was as active as Chérubin and as placid as a sheep; but he could beat a man of the faubourgs at the hazardous sports of wrestling and quarter-staff.

Moreover, he played the piano so well that he could become a public performer if he should fall on evil days, and he possessed a voice which would have been worth fifty thousand francs a season to him from Barbaja. But alas! all these noble qualities, these venial shortcomings, were marred by a shocking vice: he believed neither in men nor in women, neither in God nor in the devil. Capricious Nature had begun his endowment and a priest had completed it.

To make the adventure about to be narrated comprehensible, it is necessary to add that Lord Dudley naturally found many women disposed to make copies of such a charming portrait. His second masterpiece in that sort was a girl named Euphémic, born of a Spanish lady, reared in Havana, and taken back to Madrid with a young Creole girl from the Antilles and with all the ruinously extravagant tastes of the colonies; but fortunately married to an old and immensely rich Spanish noble, Don Hijos, Marquis of San-Réal, who, after the occupation of Spain by the French troops, had come to Paris and lived on rue Saint-Lazare. As much from heedlessness as from respect for innocence, Lord Dudley did not advise his children of the kindred that he was sowing for them everywhere. This is a slight drawback of civilization; but it has so many advantages that, in their favor, we must needs overlook its disadvantages. To have done with Lord Dudley, let us say that in 1816 he came to Paris to elude the pursuit of the English courts, which protect only merchandise among Oriental products. The globe-trotting nobleman, seeing Henri one day, asked who that handsome young man might be; and upon hearing his name, — “Ah!” he said, “it’s my son! What a pity!”



Such is the history of the young man who was sauntering nonchalantly along the main avenue of the Tuileries in mid-April, 1815, after the manner of all animals who, aware of their strength, walk abroad in peace and majesty. The bourgeois women turned artlessly to look at him; the other women did not turn — they waited until they should meet him again, and engraved on their minds, in order to remember it at the proper season, that sweet face which would not have misbecome the body of the most beautiful among them.

“What are you doing here on Sunday?” the Marquis de Ronquerolles asked Henri as they passed.

“There’s a fish in the net,” the young man replied.

This exchange of thoughts was effected by speaking glances, without either de Ronquerolles or de Marsay giving the slightest sign that they were acquainted. The young man scrutinized the promenaders with the rapidity of sight and hearing peculiar to the Parisian, who seems, at first glance, to see nothing and hear nothing, but who sees and hears everything.

Just then another young man came up to him and took his arm familiarly, saying:—

“How are you, my dear de Marsay?”

“Oh! very well,” replied de Marsay with the outwardly cordial manner which between two young Parisians means nothing either in the present or for the future.

In truth, the young men of Paris do not in the least resemble those of any other city. They are divided into two classes: the young man who has something, and the young man who has nothing; or the young man who thinks (*pense*), and the young man who spends (*dépense*). But understand, we are referring only to

those native Parisians who lead the delightful life of fashionable society. There are of course other young men, but they learn very late to understand Parisian life, and are always its dupes. They do not speculate, they study and delve, say the others. Lastly, there are some young men, rich and poor, who embrace professions and follow them single-heartedly; they are something like Rousseau's *Émile*, the stuff that citizens are made of, and they never appear in society. Diplomatsists uncourteously dub them fools. Fools or not, they add to the number of mediocre folk under whose weight France is bent. They are always at hand, always ready to botch affairs, public or private, with the flat trowel of mediocrity, pluming themselves upon their impotence, which they call good morals and uprightness. These winners of social prizes for deportment, so to speak, infest the government service, the army, the magistracy, the chambers, the court. They belittle and degrade the country, and constitute in some sort a mass of lymph in the body politic, which overburdens it and makes it flabby. These worthy persons call men of talent immoral or knaves. If such knaves demand pay, they at all events render service; whereas the others do harm, and are respected only by the mob; but luckily for France, the young men of fashion constantly stigmatize them with the name of *ganaches*.<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, then, it is natural to look upon the two classes of young men who lead fashionable lives — an attractive fraternity to which Henri de Marsay belonged — as quite distinct from each other. But care-

<sup>1</sup> *Ganache* is, literally, the lower jaw of a horse; by extension, one who has a hanging lower jaw, a stupid person, or idiot.

ful observers, who do not stop at the surface of things, are soon convinced that the differences are purely moral, and that nothing is more misleading than that charming outer husk. Nevertheless they all take precedence over everybody else; talk utterly at random of men and things, of literature and the fine arts; have "Pitt and Coburg," or the corresponding watchword of the year, always in their mouths; interrupt conversations with puns; turn learning and the scholar to ridicule; despise everything that they do not know or everything that they dread; and place themselves above all, by constituting themselves supreme judges of all. They would all deceive their fathers and be ready to shed crocodile tears on their mother's breast; but, generally, they believe in nothing, calumniate women, or counterfeit modesty, while they are really at the beck and call of some vile prostitute or some old hag.

They are all alike, rotten to the core with intriguing, depravity, and a brutal determination to succeed; and if they were threatened with the stone, it would always be found in their hearts. In the normal state they all have a most attractive exterior, make a show of friendship on every occasion, and are equally alluring. The same sort of persiflage predominates in their shifting jargon; they aim at oddity in their garb, take pride in repeating the stupid remarks of this or that popular actor, and begin a conversation with anybody you please by a contemptuous or impertinent phrase, in order to have the first play in the game, so to speak; but woe to him who has not the tact to allow them to put out one of his eyes in order to put out both of theirs.

They seem equally indifferent to the misfortunes of the country and to its scourges. In short, they all are

very like the pretty white foam that crowns the waves during a storm. They dress, dine, dance, and enjoy themselves on the day of Waterloo, during the cholera, or during a revolution. Lastly, they are all equally extravagant; but here the divergence begins.

Of this elusive and pleasantly squandered fortune, one class has the principal, the other awaits it; they have the same tailors, but the bills of the latter class are unpaid. Moreover, while one class, like sieves, receive all sorts of ideas and retain none, the others compare them and assimilate the good ones. While the former think that they know and understand everything, but know nothing, loan all they have to those who need nothing, and refuse aid to those who are in need, the latter secretly study the thoughts of others and invest their money as well as their follies at a high rate of interest. The former do not receive accurate impressions, because their minds, like a looking-glass marred by use, give back no images; the latter economize their passions and their life, while seeming to throw them out of window as the others do. The former, on the faith of a hope, devote themselves without conviction to a system which has the wind with it and ascends the stream, but they leap upon another political vessel when the first sinks; the latter scrutinize the future, probe it, and see in political good faith what the English see in commercial probity — an element of success. But where the young man of property makes a pun or says a good thing about the throne's wearing ship, the man who has nothing engages in a public intrigue or some secret villany, and succeeds while shaking hands with his friends. The former never believe in another man's talent, take all their own ideas for

original, as if the world were made the day before; they have unlimited confidence in themselves and have no more pitiless enemy than their own personalities. But the others are armed with an unceasing distrust of men, whom they estimate at their real worth, and are profound enough to have one idea more than their friends whom they exploit; and at night, when their heads are on the pillow, they weigh men as a miser weighs his gold pieces. The former lose their temper at an inconsequential impertinence, and allow themselves to be laughed at by diplomatists who force those mario-nettes to put themselves on exhibition by pulling the string of their leading characteristic, — self-esteem; whereas the latter compel respect and choose their own victims and protectors.

And then there comes a day when they who had nothing have something and they who had something have nothing. The latter look upon their comrades who have attained a position as crafty, evil-hearted fellows, but also as strong men. “He is very strong!” is the extravagant eulogy awarded those who, *quibus-cunque vis*, have attained political station, a woman, or a fortune. Among them may be found some young men who begin to play the rôle burdened with debts; and they are naturally more dangerous than those who play it without a sou.

The young man who called himself Henri de Marsay’s friend was a light-headed creature, newly arrived from the provinces, to whom the young men then in vogue were teaching the art of curtailing an inheritance; but he had one last cake to eat in his province, — an inalienable establishment. He was simply an heir-at-law who

had passed without transition from a paltry hundred francs a month to the whole paternal fortune, and who, if he had not wit enough to discover that he was being laughed at, knew enough of figures to halt at two-thirds of his capital. He had found out at Paris, by means of a few thousand-franc notes, the exact value of harnesses, and the art of not being too careful of his gloves; had heard learned disquisitions on the wages to be paid to servants, and had tried to learn what was the most advantageous bargain to make with them. He was very desirous to be able to speak highly of his horses and his Pyrenean dog; to tell by her dress, her gait, or her shoes to what class a woman belonged; to study *écarté*, to remember a few popular *mots*, and to acquire, by means of his sojourn in Parisian society, the authority necessary to import later into his province the taste for tea and silverware of English shape, and to assume the right to look down upon everybody about him all the rest of his days.

De Marsay had made a friend of him in order to use him in society, as a bold speculator uses a confidential clerk. De Marsay's friendship, whether real or feigned, was equivalent to a social position for Paul de Manerville, who, for his part, considered that he was very shrewd in exploiting his intimate friend after his own fashion. He lived in his friend's reflected light, constantly stood under his umbrella, wore his boots, gilded himself in his beams. When he stood near Henri, or even when he was walking beside him, he seemed to say: "Don't insult us; we are regular tigers!" He often had the assurance to say fatuously: "If I should ask Henri to do this or that, he is a good enough friend of mine to do it." But he was careful never to ask him

to do anything. He feared him, and his fear, although imperceptible, reacted upon others and was of service to de Marsay.

“He ’s a wonderful man, is de Marsay,” Paul would say. “Oh! you ’ll see, — he will be whatever he chooses to be. I should n’t be at all surprised to find him minister of foreign affairs some fine day. Nobody can resist him.”

Moreover, he used de Marsay as Corporal Trim used his cap, as a never-failing subject of conversation: —

“Ask de Marsay, and you ’ll see.”

Or, —

“The other day we were hunting, de Marsay and I; he would n’t believe what I told him, so I jumped a bush without stirring from my horse.”

Or, —

“We were with some women, de Marsay and I, and on my word of honor, I was — ” etc.

Thus Paul de Manerville could be classed nowhere else than in the great and illustrious and powerful family of simpletons who succeed. He was certain to be a deputy some day. For the moment he was not even a young man.

His friend de Marsay defined him thus: —

“You ask me what Paul is. Why, Paul — is Paul de Manerville.”

“I am surprised, my boy,” he said to de Marsay, “that you are here on Sunday.”

“I was going to make the same remark to you.”

“An intrigue?”

“An intrigue.”

“Psha!”

“I can safely tell you that much, without compromising my flame. And then, a woman who comes to the Tuileries on Sunday is without value, aristocratically speaking.”

“Ha! ha!”

“Be quiet, or I’ll tell you nothing more. You laugh too loud, you’ll make people think that we’ve breakfasted too heartily. Last Thursday I was walking here, on the Terrasse des Feuillants, thinking of nothing in particular. But when I reached the gate on rue de Castiglione by which I intended to leave the gardens, I found myself nose to nose with a woman, or, rather, with a young person who, if she did n’t leap on my neck, was prevented, I think, less by human respect than by profound amazement of the sort that cuts off arms and legs, runs down the spinal column, and stops at the soles of the feet, to nail you to the ground. I have often produced an effect like that, — a sort of animal magnetism which becomes very powerful when the connection has made some progress. But, my dear fellow, it was not stupefaction, nor was she a common hussy. Morally speaking, her face seemed to say: ‘Ah! there you are, — my idol, the creature of my thoughts, of my dreams from morning till night. How came you here? why this morning? why not yesterday? Take me, I am yours!’ *et cætera*. ‘Bah!’ I said to myself, ‘another one!’ So I looked her over. Ah! my dear boy, physically speaking, the stranger was the most adorably feminine person I have ever met. She belongs to that variety of women that the Romans used to call *fulva*, *flava*, the woman of fire: And first of all, the thing that impressed me most strongly, and that I am still in love with, were two yellow eyes, like a tiger’s; a



golden yellow that glistens, — living gold, gold that thinks, gold that loves, and that absolutely insists on coming into your pocket!”

“We know all about her, my dear fellow!” cried Paul. “She comes here often, — it’s the ‘Girl with the Golden Eyes.’ We gave her that name. She’s a young woman of about twenty-two whom I saw here when the Bourbons were in the saddle, but with a woman who’s worth twenty times as much.”

“Nonsense, Paul! It’s impossible that any woman on earth should surpass that girl, who’s like a cat that wants to rub against your legs; a fair girl with *cendré* hair, delicate to look at, but sure to have silky threads on the third joint of her fingers, and on her cheeks a soft white down, fairly luminous on a fine day, extending along the edge of her cheeks from the ears till it passes out of sight at the neck.”

“Ah! but the other, my dear de Marsay! She has black eyes that have never wept, but that burn; black eyebrows that join and give her a harsh expression, contradicted by the smooth, full lips, whereon a kiss stays not, — voluptuous, red lips; and a Moorish complexion in which a man may warm himself as in the sunshine. Why, on my word, she resembles you — ”

“You flatter her!”

“A slender figure, as rakish as a corvette built for speed, that swoops down on the merchant vessel with French impetuosity, snaps at her and sinks her in two-time.”

“Look you, my dear fellow, what do I care about a woman I’ve never seen?” interposed de Marsay. “In all the time I have been studying women, my unknown is the only one whose virgin breast, whose glow-

ing and voluptuous form, have reproduced the only woman I ever dreamed of! She is the original of the maddening picture called 'Woman Caressing her Chimæra,' the most passionate, the most infernal inspiration of the genius of the ancients; a sanctified poetic creation prostituted by the fools who have copied it for frescoes and mosaics; for a parcel of bourgeois who see in that wonderful cameo only a gewgaw, and hang it on their watch-guards; whereas it is the whole of woman, an abyss of pleasures wherein one wanders and never finds the bottom; an ideal woman, who is seen occasionally in the flesh in Spain and Italy, but almost never in France. Well, I saw this Girl with the Golden Eyes, this woman caressing her chimæra, I saw her again, on Friday. I had a feeling that she would come again the next day at the same hour; I was not mistaken. I amused myself by following her, unseen by her, and in studying the indolent gait of the woman with nothing to do, whose every movement, however, suggests the passion that sleeps within. Well, she turned, she saw me, adored me again, started and quivered as before. Thereupon I noticed the real old Spanish duenna who has her in charge, a hyena upon whom some jealous lover has put a dress, a female devil well paid to watch that sweet creature. The duenna made me something more than love-struck, — I became curious. Saturday, no one. And here I am to-day, looking for this damsel whose chimæra I am, and desirous of nothing better than to pose as the monster of the fresco."

"Here she comes," said Paul; "everybody is turning to look at her."

The unknown flushed and her eyes sparkled when she saw Henri; she closed them and passed on.

“And you say that she notices you!” exclaimed Paul de Manerville jocosely.

The duenna scrutinized the two young men closely. When the stranger and Henri met again, the girl rubbed against him, seized his hand and pressed it. Then she turned and smiled passionately; but the duenna hurried her away toward the gate on rue de Castiglione. The two friends followed, admiring the magnificent curve of the neck, which connected the head with the body by a series of flowing lines, and on which there was an abundance of short curly locks. The Girl with the Golden Eyes had the slender, curving foot that presents so many attractions to refined imaginations. She was daintily shod, too, and wore a short gown. On the way to the gate she turned again and again to look at Henri, and was evidently loath to follow the old woman, whose slave and mistress at once she seemed to be: she could have her flogged, but could not dismiss her. All this was visible enough.

The two friends reached the gate. Two footmen in livery let down the steps of a modest coupé, with a coat-of-arms on the door. The Girl with the Golden Eyes entered first, selected the side where she would be seen when the carriage turned, placed her hand on the door, and waved her handkerchief, unscen by the duenna, heedless of the comments of the onlookers, and saying openly to Henri with each flutter of the handkerchief: “Follow me!”

“Did you ever see the handkerchief thrown more adroitly?” Henri asked Paul de Manerville.

Then, spying a cab about to drive away after leaving its fare, he motioned to the driver to wait.

“Follow the coupé yonder, see in what street and at

what house it stops, and you shall have ten francs. Adieu, Paul."

The cab followed the coupé, which stopped on rue Saint-Lazare, at one of the finest mansions in that quarter.

## III.

DE MARSAY was no shallow-pate. Any other young man would have followed at once the temptation to make inquiries concerning a girl who realized so thoroughly the most luminous ideas concerning women expressed by Oriental poetry; but, being too shrewd to imperil thus the future of his intrigue, he told his cabman to keep on along rue Saint-Lazare and to take him to his own house.

The next day his first valet de chambre, one Laurent, as sly a rascal as any Frontin in the old comedies, awaited in the neighborhood of the stranger's abode the hour for the distribution of letters. That he might be able to play the spy at his ease and to prowl about the house, he had bought an Auvergnat's cast-off costume, following the custom of the police when they assume a disguise, and tried to adapt his countenance to it. When the carrier who served rue Saint-Lazare that morning made his appearance, Laurent pretended to be a messenger unable to remember the name of a person to whom he was to deliver a package, and he consulted the postman. Deceived at first by appearances, that functionary — a picturesque survival in the midst of Parisian civilization — informed him that the mansion in which the Girl with the Golden Eyes dwelt belonged to Don Hijos, Marquis de San-Réal, a grandee of Spain.

Naturally, the Auvergnat's business was not with the marquis.

"My package is for the marchioness," he said.

"She's away," replied the postman. "Her letters are remailed to London."

"Then the marchioness is n't a young lady, who —"

"Aha!" said the postman, interrupting the valet and examining him carefully, "you're no more a messenger than I'm a dancer."

Laurent displayed a number of gold pieces, whereat the man with the clapper began to smile.

"Here, this is the name of your quarry," he said, taking from his leather sack a letter postmarked London, on which this address: 'To Mademoiselle Paquita Valdès, Rue Saint-Lazare, Hôtel San-Réal, Paris,' was written in long, slender characters that betrayed a woman's hand.

"Would you be averse to a bottle of Chablis, accompanied by a *filet sauté aux champignons* and preceded by a few dozen oysters?" queried Laurent, desirous to gain the postman's invaluable friendship.

"At half-past nine, after my work is done. Where?"

"At the Puits sans Vin, corner of rue de la Chaussée d'Antin and rue Neuve-des-Mathurins," said Laurent.

"Look you, my friend," said the postman, when he joined the valet an hour after this meeting, "if your master's in love with that girl, he's undertaking a famous job! I doubt whether you'll succeed in getting a sight of her. In the ten years that I've been a postman in Paris, I've had a chance to see a good many kinds of doors; but I can say, without fear of being contradicted by any of my comrades, that there's not another door as mysterious as Monsieur de San-Réal's. No one can get into the house without some password — I don't know what; and observe that a house between a court-

yard and a garden was chosen for the express purpose of avoiding all communication with other houses. The concierge is an old Spaniard who never speaks a word of French, but who examines people as Vidocq would do, to make sure they're not thieves. If this keeper of the outer gate could be deceived by a lover or a thief, or by you, — no offence intended, — why, in the first hall, which is entered through a glass door, you'd find a majordomo surrounded by footmen — an old joker even more savage and surly than the concierge. If any one passes under the porte-cochère, my majordomo comes out, waits for you under the porch and puts you through a cross-examination, just as if you were a criminal. That has happened to me, a mere postman. He took me for a *hemisphere* in disguise, he said, and laughed at his own fool joke. As for the servants — don't expect to get anything out of them; I think they must be dumb, for nobody in the quarter knows the color of their words; I don't know what wages they must get to induce them not to talk or drink. But it's a fact that they're unapproachable, either because they're afraid of being shot, or because they stand to lose a big sum of money if they let their tongues wag. If your master loves Mademoiselle Paquita Valdès well enough to overcome all these obstacles, he certainly won't get the better of Doña Concha Marialva, the duenna who goes about with her, and who'd put her under her petticoats rather than leave her. Those two women look as if they were sewed together."

"What you tell me, most estimable postman," said Laurent, after they had finished the bottle, "confirms what I had already learned. On my word as a man of honor, I thought they were making sport of me. The

fruit-woman opposite told me that at night they turned dogs loose in the gardens, after hanging their food on posts just out of their reach. The infernal beasts would think that anybody who might try to get in meant to steal it from them, and they'd tear him to pieces. You'll say that one might poison them, but it seems that they're trained to eat only from the concierge's hand."

"Monsieur le Baron de Nucingen's concierge, whose garden adjoins the San-Réal garden, told me the same thing," said the postman.

"Good! my master knows him," said Laurent. "Do you know," he continued, leering at the postman, "that I belong to a master who's a devil of a fellow, and if he should take it into his head to kiss the soles of an empress's feet, she'd have to come to it? If he should need your services, which, for your sake, I hope he may, for he's very generous, could we count on you?"

"*Dame*, yes, Monsieur Laurent; my name's Moinot. You spell it exactly like *moineau* (erow): M-o-i-n-o-t, Moinot."

"Just so," said Laurent.

"I live on rue des Trois-Frères, Number 11, on the fifth," continued Moinot; "I've a wife and four children. If what you want of me does n't go beyond the possibilities of my conscience and my official duties, you understand, why, I'm your man."

"You're a fine fellow," said Laurent, shaking hands with him.

"Paquita Valdès is undoubtedly the mistress of the Marquis de San-Réal, King Ferdinand's friend," said Henri, when his valet told him the result of his investi-



gations. "No one but an old Spanish corpse of eighty is capable of taking such precautions."

"Unless you go in a balloon, monsieur," said Laurent, "you can never get into that house."

"You're a fool! Is it necessary to get into the house to possess Paquita, when Paquita can go out?"

"But, monsieur, the duenna?"

"We'll shut her up for a few days, your duenna."

"Then we shall have Paquita!" said Laurent, rubbing his hands.

"You rascal!" retorted Henri, "I sentence you to La Concha if you carry your insolence to the point of speaking so of a woman before I have had her. Come and dress me — I am going out."

Henri sat for a moment buried in agreeable reflections. To the honor of women let us say that he obtained all those whom he condescended to desire. And what must one think of a woman without a lover who could resist a young man armed with the beauty which is the wit of the body, armed with the wit which is a charm of the mind, armed with the mental force and the wealth which are the only two veritable powers?

But, triumphing with so little trouble, de Marsay was certain to become wearied of his triumphs; and, in truth, for two years past he had been sadly bored. Plunging into the depths of sensual pleasures, he brought up more gravel than pearls. So that, like certain monarchs, he had reached the point of appealing to chance for obstacles to overcome, for some enterprise which would require the putting forth of his inactive mental and physical forces. Although Paquita Valdès presented a marvellous combination of perfections which

he had hitherto enjoyed only singly, the attraction of passion was almost dead in him. Constant satiety had weakened the sentiment of love in his heart. Like old men and *blasé* folk generally, he no longer had aught save extravagant whims, ruinous tastes, and caprices which, when gratified, left no pleasant memory in his heart.

In young people love is the most beautiful of sentiments: it causes life to bloom in the soul, it fosters with its solar warmth the noblest inspirations and the great thoughts to which they give birth; the first fruits always have a delicious flavor. In middle-aged men love becomes a passion: its force leads to abuse. In old men it turns to vice; impotence leads to extreme courses. Henri was at the same time old, middle-aged, and young. To reproduce in him the emotions of genuine love would have required a *Clarissa Harlowe*, as in the case of *Lovelace*. But for the magical reflection of that undiscoverable pearl, he could never again know aught of love save factitious passions sharpened by Parisian vanity, or a determination to force a certain woman to a certain degree of corruption, or some intrigue that should arouse his curiosity.

The report made by Laurent imparted tremendous value to the *Girl with the Golden Eyes*. It was a question of doing battle with some hidden foe, who seemed no less dangerous than adroit; and, to carry off the victory, all the resources that Henri had at his disposal were likely to be of use. He was about to play the ever-living old comedy which will always be new, the characters being an old man, a maiden, and a lover: *Don Hijos*, *Paquita*, and *de Marsay*. If Laurent was equal to *Figaro*, the *duenna* was apparently incor-

ruptible. Thus the living play was more powerfully constructed by chance than any play ever was by a dramatic author. But, in truth, is not chance a man of genius?

“We shall have to play a careful game,” said Henri to himself.

At that moment Paul de Manerville appeared.

“Well,” he said, “how far have we got? I have come to breakfast with you.”

“Good,” said Henri. “You won’t be offended if I dress in your presence?”

“What nonsense!”

“We are borrowing so many things from the English just now that we might become hypocrites and prudes like them,” said Henri.

Laurent had placed before his master so many different pieces of furniture and toilet articles, and such dainty things, that Paul could not help saying:—

“Why, you’re in for two hours!”

“No,” said Henri, “two hours and a half.”

“Well, as we’re alone and can say whatever we please, tell me why it is that a superior man like yourself — for you are a superior man — affects to carry beyond bounds a fatuous self-conceit which cannot be natural in him. Why pass two hours and a half currying yourself, when it’s enough to pass quarter of an hour in a bathtub, comb your hair in a twinkling, and dress?”

“I must needs be very fond of you, you big dolt, to confide such lofty thoughts to you,” said the young man, who was at that moment having his feet rubbed with a soft brush covered with English soap.

“But I have conceived the sincerest affection for

you," rejoined Paul de Manerville, "and I am very fond of you, considering you superior to myself —"

"You must have noticed, if indeed you are capable of observing a moral fact, that women like fops," continued de Marsay, without other reply than a glance to Paul's declaration. "Do you know why women like them? My friend, fops are the only men who take care of themselves. Now, to take too much care of one's self is equivalent to saying, is it not? that one has an eye in one's own person on the well-being of other people. The man who does n't belong to himself is the very man of whom the women are greedy. Love is essentially thievish. I say nothing about the excess of cleanliness that they doat on. Do you ever find one who has a passion for a careless man, no matter how remarkable a character he may be? If such a thing has been, we must charge it to the account of the cravings of a pregnant woman, of those wild ideas that go through everybody's mind. On the other hand, I have seen some very noteworthy men dropped like a shot because of their slovenliness. A fop who spends all his time on his personal appearance, busies himself with trifles, with things of no account. And what is a woman? a thing of no account, a collection of trifles. With two or three words spoken at random, can you not keep her at work for four hours? She is sure that the fop will be engrossed by her, since he does not think of great things. She will never be neglected for glory, ambition, politics, or art, those great public harlots who are her rivals. Then, too, fops have the courage to cover themselves with ridicule to please a woman, and her heart overflows with rewards for the man who is ridiculous through love. However, a fop can be a fop only when

he has reason for being one. It's the women who give us that rank. The fop is the colonel of love; he has love-affairs, he has his regiment of women to command! In Paris, my dear fellow, everybody knows everybody else, and a man can't be a fop gratis. Do you, who have but one mistress, and who perhaps are wise to have but one, try to play the fop? You will not even become ridiculous, you'll be a dead man. You will become a precedent on two legs, one of those men who are inevitably condemned to do a single, unalterable thing. You will signify stupidity, as Monsieur de La Fayette signifies America, Monsieur de Talleyrand, diplomacy, Desaugiers, *chanson*, and Monsieur de Ségur, romance. If they go outside their specialty, people cease to believe in the merit of what they do. That's the way we are in France — always fearfully unjust! Monsieur de Talleyrand may be a great financier, Monsieur de La Fayette a tyrant, and Desaugiers a skilful administrator. If you should have fifty women next year, you would not be accredited publicly with a single one. So that conceit, my friend Paul, is the symbol of an incontestable influence over the female portion of the population. A man who is loved by several women is supposed to possess unusual qualities; and then there's a great struggle to get him, poor fellow! But do you think it of no account to have the right to enter a salon, to stare at everybody from over your cravat or through an eyeglass, and to be able to despise the most talented man if he wears an out-of-date waistcoat? — Laurent, you hurt me! — After breakfast, Paul, we will go to the Tuileries, to have a look at the adorable Girl with the Golden Eyes."

When, after making an excellent meal, the two friends

had traversed the Terrasse des Feuillants and the broad avenue of the Tuileries, they met nowhere the sublime Paquita Valdès, on whose account fifty of the most fashionable dandies of Paris, all with high stocks, beperfumed and booted and spurred, were walking to and fro, spitting and talking and laughing and consigning one another to all the devils.

“A white mass,” said Henri; “but I have the most excellent scheme you can imagine. This girl receives letters from London: we must bribe the postman, or make him tipsy, unseal a letter, read it, of course, slip a little billet-doux into it, and seal it again. The old tyrant — *crudel tiranno* — doubtless knows the person who writes the letters from London, and has no suspicion of her.”

The next day de Marsay walked once more in the sunshine on the Terrasse des Feuillants, and saw Paquita Valdès. His passion had already embellished her in his sight. He fell seriously in love with those eyes, whose beams seemed to partake of the nature of those shed by the sun, whose ardor typified the ardor of that perfect body, wherein everything was lust of the flesh. De Marsay burned to touch the alluring creature's gown when they met, but all his attempts were vain. At one time, when he had passed the two women, so that he might be on Paquita's side when he turned, she, no less impatient than he, hastily stepped forward, and de Marsay felt her press his hand in such a nervous and passionately significant fashion that he thought he had received an electric shock. In an instant all his youthful emotions stirred in his heart. When the lovers looked at each other, Paquita seemed ashamed; she lowered her eyes to avoid meeting Henri's; but her

glance stole out beneath her lowered eyelids to scan the feet and form of him whom the women before the Revolution called "their conqueror."

"I shall certainly have this girl for my mistress," said Henri to himself.

As he followed her to the end of the terrace, toward Place Louis XV, he spied the old Marquis de San-Réal, leaning on his valet's arm, and walking with all the precautions of a dyspeptic and victim of the gout. Doña Concha, who was suspicious of Henri, made Paquita walk between the old man and herself.

"Bah!" said de Marsay to himself, with a scornful glance at the duenna, "if we can't force you to surrender, we'll put you to sleep with a little opium. We know our mythology, and the legend of Argus."

Before entering her carriage, the Girl with the Golden Eyes exchanged with her lover more than one glance whose expression was not equivocal, and Henri was overjoyed. But the duenna surprised one of them and said a few words hastily to Paquita, who threw herself into the carriage with an air of desperation. For several days she did not go to the Tuileries. Laurent, who by his master's orders kept a lookout in the neighborhood of the house, learned from the neighbors that neither the two women nor the old marquis had gone out since the day when the duenna had surprised a glance between Henri and the girl placed in her charge. So that the feeble bond which united the two lovers was broken already.

A few days later, by what means no one knew, de Marsay had attained his end: he had a seal and wax exactly like the seal and wax used on the letters sent to

Mademoiselle Valdès from London, paper similar to that used by her correspondent, and all the tools required to affix and cancel French and English stamps. And he had written the following letter, to which he gave all the external appearance of a communication sent from London: —

“DEAR PAQUITA, — I will not try to describe in words the passion you have aroused in me. If, for my happiness, you share it, let me say that I have discovered a method of corresponding with you. My name is Adolphe de Gouges, and I live on rue de l’Université, No. 54. If you are too closely watched to write to me, if you have no paper or pens, I shall know it by your silence. So that, if between eight in the morning and ten at night to-morrow you have thrown no letter over your garden-wall into Baron de Nueingen’s garden, where I shall wait for it all day, a man who is entirely devoted to me will drop two bottles over your garden-wall at the end of a cord at ten o’clock the following morning. Be walking there at that time. One of the bottles will contain opium to put your Argus to sleep,—six drops will be enough to give her; the other will contain ink. The ink-bottle is cut, the other smooth. Both are flat enough for you to hide them in your bosom. All that I have done thus far in order to be able to correspond with you must tell you how madly I love you. If you doubt it, I confess that I would give my life to obtain an hour’s interview.”

“They all believe that sort of thing, the poor creatures!” said de Marsay to himself; “but they are right. What should we think of a woman who would n’t allow herself to be seduced by a love-letter accompanied by such convincing circumstances?”

The letter was delivered to the concierge of the Hôtel



de San-Réal about eight the next morning by Sicur Moinot, postman.

To be nearer the battle-field de Marsay had gone to breakfast with Paul de Manerville, who lived on *ruc de la Pépinière*. At two o'clock, when the two friends were laughing together over the discomfiture of a young man who had tried to lead a fashionable life without a stable fortune, and were wondering what his end would be, Henri's coachman came to Paul's apartment in search of his master and introduced a mysterious personage who insisted upon speaking with him. It was a mulatto from whom Talma would certainly have derived inspiration in his performance of Othello if he had fallen in with him. Never was African countenance more eloquently expressive of the Moor's grandeur in vengeance, his ready distrust, his promptness in putting an idea in execution, his strength, his childlike lack of reflection. His black eyes had the fixed glare of those of a bird of prey, and were set like a vulture's within a bluish membrane devoid of lashes. His low, narrow forehead had a threatening aspect. The man was plainly under the empire of a single engrossing thought. His nervous arm did not belong to him.

He was followed by a man whom every imagination, from those which shiver with cold in Greenland to those which perspire in New England, will describe to itself by the sentence: "He was an unlucky man." This sentence will enable every one to understand what manner of man he was, and to picture him to himself according to the ideas peculiar to his own country. But who will ever imagine his wrinkled white face, red on the edges, and his long beard? Who will see his discolored string-like cravat, his greasy shirt-collar, his

dilapidated hat, his shiny greenish coat, his wretched trousers, his patched waistcoat, his sham gold pin, his dirty shoes with strings that had dragged in the mud? Who will divine him in all the immensity of his wretchedness, past and present? None but the Parisian. The unlucky man in Paris is the unlucky man *par excellence*, for he takes some satisfaction in knowing how unlucky he is. The mulatto resembled a headsman under Louis XI, taking a man to be hanged.

"Who on earth fished up these two villains for us?" said Henri.

"*Pantoufle!* one of them gives me the shivers," replied Paul.

"Who are you, who seem to be the more like a Christian of the two?" asked Henri, looking at the unlucky man.

The mulatto stood with his eyes fixed on the two young men, like one who understood nothing of what was said, but who was trying to guess at it from the gestures and movement of the lips.

"I am a public writer and interpreter. I live at the Palais de Justice and my name is Poincet."

"Good! And this fellow?" said Henri, pointing to the mulatto.

"I don't know; he can only talk a sort of Spanish patois, and he brought me here to help him come to terms with you."

The mulatto took from his pocket the letter written to Paquita by Henri and handed it to the latter, who tossed it into the fire.

"Well, this is beginning to take shape," said Henri to himself. "Leave us a moment, Paul."

"I translated this letter for him," said the interpreter

when they were alone. "When it was done, he went away, I don't know where; then he came back for me to bring me here, and promised me two louis."

"What have you to say to me, Chinaman?" asked Henri.

"I did n't talk Chinese to him," said the interpreter, awaiting the mulatto's reply. "He says, monsieur," continued the interpreter after listening to the unknown, "that you must be on Boulevard Montmartre, near the Café, at half-past ten to-morrow evening. You will see a carriage there which you will enter, saying to the man who will be there ready to open the door, *cortijo*; a Spanish word that means lover," added Poincet, with a congratulatory glance at Henri.

"Very good!"

The mulatto attempted to pay the two louis; but de Marsay would not allow him, and recompensed the interpreter himself; while he was paying him the mulatto muttered a few words.

"What does he say?"

"He warns me," replied the unlucky man, "that if I am guilty of the slightest indiscretion, he will strangle me. He's very amiable, and he looks very much as if he were capable of doing it."

"I am sure of it," said Henri; "he would do just as he says."

"He says further," continued the interpreter, "that the person who sends him entreats you, for your sake and hers, to be most prudent in all you do, because otherwise the daggers that are held over your heads would be plunged into your hearts and no human power could protect you against them."

"He said that? So much the better, it will be more

amusing. — You can come back, Paul!” he called to his friend.

The mulatto, who had not ceased to gaze at Paquita Valdès's lover with magnetic attention, went away with the interpreter.

“Well, at last here is a truly romantic venture,” said Henri to himself when Paul returned. “After taking part in more or less intrigues I have at last come upon one here in Paris, attended by circumstances of serious moment, by grave dangers. *Diantre!* how bold danger makes a woman! To fetter a woman, to try to put force upon her, is to give her the right and the courage to pass in an instant barriers which otherwise she would not leap over for years! Go on, pretty creature, jump! Die? poor child! Daggers? a woman's fancy! They all feel that they must have their little joke. However, I'll think about it, Paquita! I'll think about it, my girl! Deuce take me! now that I know that that lovely girl, that masterpiece of Nature, is mine, the adventure has lost its savor.”

Despite this assumption of indifference the young man had reappeared in Henri. To enable him to wait until the morrow without discomfort he had recourse to excessive dissipation; he dined and supped with friends, drank like a cabman, ate like a German, played, and won ten or twelve thousand francs. He left the Rocher de Cancale at two in the morning, slept like a child, awoke fresh and rosy, and dressed to go to the Tuileries, proposing to ride after seeing Paquita, in order to get an appetite and dine more heartily as a means of passing the time.

## IV.

AT the appointed hour Henri was on the boulevard; he saw the carriage and gave the password to a man whom he took to be the mulatto. When he heard the word, the man quickly opened the door and let down the step. Henri was driven through Paris so swiftly, and his thoughts left him so little leisure to notice the streets he passed through, that he did not know where the carriage stopped. The mulatto ushered him into a house where the staircase was near the porte-cochère. The staircase in question was dark, as was the landing, where Henri was obliged to wait while the mulatto opened the door of a damp, evil-smelling apartment, unlighted, the different rooms of which, in the dim light of a candle which the guide found in the reception-room, seemed to be almost unfurnished, like those of a house whose occupants are travelling. He recognized the sensation he had felt on reading one of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, where the hero walks through the cold, dark, unoccupied rooms of some deserted, melancholy house.

At last the mulatto opened the door of a salon. The condition of the old furniture and faded hangings that adorned the room made it resemble the salon of a house of ill-fame. There was the same pretension to elegance, and the same collection of things in execrable taste, of dust and grease.

On a couch covered with red Utrecht velvet, at the corner of a fireplace which smoked freely, the fire being smothered under the ashes, sat an old woman, poorly

clad, wearing on her head one of those turbans which Englishwomen have the art to devise when they reach a certain age, and which would have unbounded success in China, where monstrosity is the artist's beau ideal. The salon, the cold heartli, the old woman, all these would have frozen love to death had not Paquita been there, on a *causeuse*, in a sumptuous peignoir, free to cast her glances of gold and flame, free to show her arched foot, unfettered in her luminous movements.

This first interview was what all first meetings are between two passionate people who have crossed long distances swiftly and who ardently desire each other although they are hardly acquainted. It is impossible that there should not be at the outset some discordant notes in such a situation, which is an embarrassing one until the two hearts are tuned to the same key. If desire gives audacity to the man and inclines him to spare naught, the mistress, under the penalty of ceasing to be a woman, is terrified, however intense her love, to find that she has so quickly reached the goal, and is face to face with the necessity of giving herself to her lover, which with many women is equivalent to a fall over a precipice at the bottom of which they know not what they may find. Such a woman's involuntary coldness is in striking contrast with her avowed passion, and inevitably reacts upon the most enamoured lover.

These ideas which often float about the heart like vapor produce a sort of temporary illness. In the pleasant journey which two mortals undertake through the smiling regions of love, such a moment is like crossing a moor, a verdureless moor, alternately damp and hot, covered with scorching sand, intersected by swamps, and leading to laughing, shady thickets, clad in roses,

where love and its train of pleasures gambol upon carpets of fine grass. Often the clever man finds himself possessed of a meaningless laugh which serves as an answer to everything; his wit is benumbed as it were by the frigid repression of his desires. It would not be impossible for two lovers, equally attractive, clever, and passionate, to exchange at first the stupidest common-places, until chance, a word, a quivering glance, the communication of a spark brings about the happy transition which leads them to the flower-strewn path, whereon one does not walk, but rolls, albeit without descending. This condition of the heart is always proportioned to the violence of the passions. Two persons who love each other lukewarmly feel nothing of the sort. The effect of such a crisis may be compared to that produced by the glow of a cloudless sky. At first glance Nature seems to be covered with a gauze veil, the azure of the firmament seems black, the intense light resembles darkness.

In Henri and in the Spaniard there was equal violence of feeling; and the law of statics, by virtue of which two equal forces neutralize each other when they meet, may be equally true in the moral kingdom. Moreover the embarrassment of that moment was greatly increased by the old mummy's presence. Love takes fright or is amused at all sorts of things; for it everything has a meaning, everything is an omen of good or evil. That decrepit creature seemed the image of a possible dénouement of the intrigue; she represented the ghastly fish's tail with which the symbolical geniuses of Greece completed the legendary chimæras and sirens so fascinating and deceptive from the waist up, as all passions are at their inception.

Although Henri was not an *esprit fort*, — that phrase is always a joke, — but a man of extraordinary power, as great as a man can be who does not believe, the combination of all these circumstances impressed him. Moreover, the strongest-minded men are always the most impressionable and consequently the most superstitious, assuming, that is, that we can apply the term superstition to the tendency to act on the first impulse, which doubtless is the precognition of the result that lurks in causes hidden from other eyes but visible to theirs.

The Spaniard profited by that moment of stupefaction to abandon herself to the ecstasy of endless adoration which grasps a woman's heart when she truly loves and finds herself in the presence of an idol for whom she has vainly longed. Her eyes were ablaze with joy and happiness, and sparks flew from them. She was under the spell, and she yielded to the sweet intoxication with no dread of a felicity long dreamed of. She seemed to Henri so marvellously lovely that all that phantasmagoria of rags and old age and worn red hangings and green mats in front of arm-chairs and ill-scrubbed red floor, all that decrepit and sickly luxury, instantly disappeared. The salon became lighter, he saw only through a mist the terrible old dumb harpy on her red couch, whose yellow eyes betrayed the servile sentiments due to misfortune or to some vice under whose tyranny one has fallen lower and lower as under a despot by whose constant flagellations one is transformed into a brute. Her eyes had the cold gleam of those of a caged tiger who knows his powerlessness and is forced to devour his craving to destroy.

“Who is this woman?” Henri asked Paquita.



But Paquita did not reply. She shook her head to show that she did not understand French, and asked Henri if he spoke English. De Marsay repeated his question in English.

“She is the only woman I can trust, although she has already sold me once,” said Paquita calmly. “My dear Adolphe, she is my mother, a slave bought in Georgia for her rare beauty, of which, however, little remains to-day. She speaks nothing but her mother tongue.”

The old woman’s attitude and her eager desire to divine from her daughter’s gestures and Henri’s what was taking place between them, were instantly made clear to the young man, whose mind was set at ease by this explanation.

“Shall we not be free, then, Paquita?” he asked.

“Never!” she replied sadly. “Indeed, we have very few days to ourselves.”

She looked down at her hands, and with her right hand counted on the fingers of the left, showing thus the loveliest hands that Henri had ever seen:—

“One, two, three —”

She counted up to twelve.

“Yes,” she said, “we have twelve days.”

“And then?”

“Then,” she said, and sat completely absorbed, like a weak woman before the executioner’s axe, killed in advance by a terror which robbed her of the superb energy which nature seemed to have taken from her only to augment her desires and to transform into endless poems the grossest pleasures. “Then,” she repeated. Her eyes became fixed as if she were gazing at a distant, threatening object. “I do not know,” she said.

“The girl is mad,” thought Henri; and thereupon he himself fell into a strange train of thought.

It seemed to him that Paquita’s mind was upon something other than himself, as if she were acted upon with equal force by remorse and by passion. Perhaps she had in her heart another love which she forgot one moment and remembered the next. In a twinkling Henri was assailed by a multitude of contradictory ideas. The girl became a mystery to him; but as he examined her with the knowing scrutiny of the *blasé* man, a thirst for novel sensations like that Oriental king who demanded that some new pleasure should be created for him, — a terrible thirst to which the greatest minds are subject, — Henri discovered in Paquita the richest physical organization that Nature was ever pleased to construct in love’s behalf. The presumed action of that machine, laying aside the mind, would have terrified any other man than de Marsay; but he was fascinated by that abundant harvest of promised joys, by that constant variety in bliss which is the dream of every man, and which every loving woman craves no less. He was enraptured by the prospect of the infinite made palpable and transported into the excessive sensual enjoyments of the finite creature. He saw all this in the young woman before him more distinctly than he had previously seen it, for she obligingly allowed herself to be scrutinized, happy to be admired. De Marsay’s admiration became a secret frenzy, and he displayed it in all its force by a glance which the Spaniard understood as if she were accustomed to receive such glances.

“If you were not mine, and mine alone, I would kill you!” he cried.

At that exclamation Paquita hid her face in her hands and ejaculated ingenuously:—

“Holy Virgin, what have I fallen into!”

She sprang to her feet, threw herself on the red couch, buried her head in the rags that covered her mother’s breast, and wept. The old woman received her child without departing from her impassive demeanor, without a sign of emotion. She possessed in the highest degree the immovable gravity of savage people, the statuesque impassibility which defeats critical scrutiny. Did she or did she not love her daughter? No reply. Beneath that mask all human sentiments, good and evil, were smouldering, and one could expect anything from that creature. Her glance moved slowly from her daughter’s beautiful hair, which covered her as with a mantilla, to Henri’s face, which she watched with indescribable curiosity. She seemed to be wondering by what sorcery he had come there, what whim had led Nature to make a man so fascinating.

“These women are making sport of me,” said Henri to himself.

At that moment Paquita raised her head and darted at him one of the glances that go to the very soul and sear it. She was so lovely in his eyes that he mentally took an oath to possess that pearl of beauty.

“Be mine, my Paquita!”

“Do you mean to kill me?” she said, sorely perturbed, trembling, half afraid, but drawn to him by an inexplicable force.

“Kill you — I!” he exclaimed, smiling.

Paquita gave a cry of terror and said a word to the old woman, who with an imperious gesture took her hand and Henri’s, looked at them a long while, then

released them, shaking her head in horribly significant fashion.

“Be mine to-night, this instant; come with me, do not leave me, Paquita, I insist! Do you love me? Come!”

In a moment he poured out a thousand wild words with the rapidity of a torrent leaping among the rocks and repeating the same sound in a thousand different forms.

“It is the same voice!” said Paquita sadly, but so low that de Marsay could not hear; “and the same ardor,” she added. “Ah, well, yes,” she continued aloud with a passionate recklessness which no words could describe; “yes, but not to-night. To-night, Adolphe, I gave La Concha too little of the opium; she might wake, and I should be lost. At this moment the whole household thinks that I am asleep in my room. Two days hence be at the same place and say the same word to the same man. He is my foster-father, Cris-temio; he adores me and would die in torment for my sake rather than allow a word against me to be extorted from him. Adieu!” she said, seizing Henri by the waist and twining herself about him like a serpent.

She hugged him on all sides at once, put his face under hers, offered him her lips, and gave him a kiss which excited them both to such a degree that de Marsay thought that the earth was opening, and Paquita cried, “Go!” in a tone that showed how little control she had over herself. But she detained him none the less, still crying “Go!” and led him slowly to the stairs.

There the mulatto, whose white eyes lighted up at sight of Paquita, took the candle from his idol’s hands and escorted Henri to the street. He left the candle in

the porch, opened the door of the carriage to admit Henri, and set him down on Boulevard des Italiens with wonderful celerity. The horses seemed to have the devil in their legs.

This scene was like a dream to de Marsay, but like one of the dreams which when they fade away leave in the heart a sense of supernatural ecstacy, after which a man runs all the rest of his life. A single kiss had sufficed. Never was lovers' meeting more chaste, more innocent, or less ardent, in a place more ghastly in its surroundings, or in the presence of a more hideous presiding genius; for the mother remained in Henri's memory as a hell-born, cadaverous, vicious, fierce, savage, crouching creature, such as the imagination of poet or painter had never conceived. But never had a meeting stirred his senses more keenly, revealed bolder passions, caused love to gush more freely from its source and diffuse itself like an atmosphere about a man. There was a something sombre, mysterious, sweet, loving, constrained, and expansive, a combination of the divine and the horrible, of paradise and hell, which made de Marsay like a drunken man. He was no longer himself, and yet he was great enough to resist the intoxication of sensual pleasure.

In order to a better understanding of his conduct in the dénouement of this narrative, it is necessary to explain how his character had expanded at the age when young men generally lose something of their mental stature by consorting with women or by thinking too much about them. He had grown mentally as the result of a combination of hidden circumstances which invested him with a tremendous undisclosed power. That young man held in his hand a sceptre

more potent than that of any king of modern times, almost all of whom are curbed by the laws in carrying out even their least important wishes. De Marsay wielded the autocratic power of the Oriental despot. But that power, unintelligently exercised in Asia by uncivilized men, was solidified by European intelligence and by French wit, the keenest and sharpest of all intellectual tools. Henri could do whatever he chose in the interest of his diversions and his vanity. This invisible sway over the social world had clothed him with a genuine but secret royalty, never emphasized, but confined to his own breast. His opinion of himself was not the opinion that Louis XIV might have had of himself, but that which the haughtiest of the caliphs, of the Pharaohs, the Xerxes, who deemed themselves of divine origin, had of themselves, when they imitated God by concealing themselves from their subjects, on the pretext that their glance caused death.

And so, without a twinge of remorse for acting as both judge and party, de Marsay coolly sentenced to death the man or woman who had seriously offended him. Although often pronounced in a tone of levity, the decree was irrevocable. An error was a misfortune like that caused by the lightning in striking a happy Parisian damsel in a cab, instead of the old cabman who is driving her to an assignation. Thus the bitter and profound jocosity which distinguished de Marsay's conversation generally caused dismay; no one had the slightest desire to offend him. Women are tremendously fond of such men, who call themselves pachas, who produce the effect of being attended by lions and executioners, and who are surrounded by the paraphernalia of terror. The result is on their part a sense of safety in whatever they

do, a certainty of power, a pride of expression, a leonine tranquillity of conscience, which personify for a woman the ideal type of strength of which all women dream. Such was de Marsay.

Happy at the moment in his anticipations of the future, he became young and impressionable once more and thought of nothing but love as he went home to bed. He dreamed of the Girl with the Golden Eyes, as ardent young men dream. He had visions of superhuman images, of strange, intangible things, full of light, which reveal invisible worlds, but always incompletely, for an interposed veil changes the optical conditions.

On the next day and the next Henri vanished, and no one could find out where he went. His power depended on certain conditions, and, luckily for him, during those two days he was a private soldier in the service of the demon from whom he derived his talismanic existence. But at the appointed hour in the evening he awaited the carriage on the boulevard, and he had not long to wait. The mulatto went up to him and repeated in French a sentence that he had evidently learned by heart.

“If you want to come, she told me, you must agree to let your eyes be covered.”

And Cristemio produced a white silk handkerchief.

“No!” said Henri, his pride of power suddenly rising in revolt.

And he started to enter the carriage. The mulatto waved his hand and the coachman drove away.

“Yes!” cried de Marsay, frantic at the thought of missing a pleasure that he had promised himself. Moreover he realized the impossibility of parleying with a slave whose obedience was as blind as a heads-

man's. Was it upon this passive instrument that his wrath should fall?

The mulatto whistled, the carriage returned. Henri entered in a hurry. The passers-by had already begun to assemble on the boulevard and were looking on all agape. Henri was strong and proposed to disappoint the mulatto. When the carriage was in rapid motion, he seized the other's hands, so that he might, by depriving him of power to act, retain the use of his faculties and see where he was going. But it was a vain effort. The mulatto's eyes gleamed in the darkness. He uttered a succession of cries which his rage caused to expire in his throat, freed himself from de Marsay's grasp, threw him back with a hand of iron, and nailed him, so to speak, against the back of the carriage. Then, with his free hand he drew a triangular dagger and at the same moment whistled. The coachman heard the whistle and stopped.

Henri was unarmed and had no choice but to yield: he held his head toward the handkerchief. This gesture of submission pacified Cristemio, who bandaged his eyes with a respectful care which testified to a sort of veneration for the man whom his idol loved. But before taking this precaution he distrustfully placed his dagger in an outside pocket and buttoned his coat to the chin.

"He'd have killed me, the Chinaman!" said de Marsay to himself.

Again the carriage started off at great speed. There was still one resource for a man who knew Paris as well as Henri knew it. To discover where he was going, all he need do was to concentrate his thoughts and count, by the number of gutters they crossed, the streets that



they passed while they continued along the boulevard. In this way he could tell into which side street the carriage turned, whether toward the Seine or toward the heights of Montmartre, and so guess the name or position of the street in which they stopped. But the violent excitement caused by the struggle, the rage born of his offended dignity, the schemes of vengeance that he planned, the conjectures suggested by the extraordinary pains which the mysterious girl took to ensure his reaching her side, all combined to prevent his concentrating his faculties as a blind man does, and as it was necessary for him to do in order to remember distinctly.

The journey lasted half an hour. When the carriage stopped, it had left the pavements. The mulatto and the coachman took Henri in their arms, placed him on a sort of hurdle, and carried him through a garden where he could smell the flowers and the odor peculiar to trees and verdure. The silence was so profound that he could hear the drops of water falling from the damp leaves. The two men bore him up a flight of stairs, then bade him rise, led him by the hand through several rooms, and left him in a bedroom where the air was laden with perfume and he could feel a thick carpet under his feet. A woman's hand forced him upon a divan and removed the handkerchief. Henri saw Paquita before him, but Paquita in all the glory of a beautiful passionate woman.

The half of the boudoir in which Henri sat was semi-circular in shape, while the other half was square, with a white and gold marble mantel in the centre. He had entered through a door at the side, concealed by a rich tapestry portière, opposite which was a window. The horseshoe was fitted with a genuine Turkish divan,

that is to say, a mattress laid on the floor, — but a mattress as broad as a bed, a divan fifty feet in circumference, — covered with white cashmere, buttoned with tufts of black and puce-colored silk arranged lozenge-wise. The back of this enormous bed rose several inches above the numerous cushions which enhanced its splendor by their diverse beauties. The hangings of the room were of a red material over which was laid an Indian muslin, fluted like a Corinthian pillar, with a strip of puce-colored material at top and bottom, with black arabesques thereon. Through the muslin the puce-color became pink, an amorous hue repeated in the window-curtains, which were of Indian muslin lined with rose-colored silk, and had a puce and black fringe. Six gilt arms, each holding two candles, were affixed to the hangings to light the divan. The ceiling, in the centre of which was a chandelier of dull silver-gilt, was dazzlingly white, and the cornice was gilded. The carpet resembled an Oriental shawl, having the characteristic designs of one, and recalled the poetry of Persia, where the hands of slaves had woven it. The furniture was covered with white cashmere relieved by puce and black figures. The clock and candelabra were of white marble and gold. The only table in the room had a cashmere cover. There were dainty jardinières containing roses of every variety, and white and red flowers. In fact, the slightest detail seemed to have been the object of a loving solicitude.

Never did opulence conceal itself more equettishly, to become mere daintiness, to express the refinement of grace, to inspire passion. Everything there was adapted to kindle a flame in the coldest of mortals. The changing hues of the hangings, which, according to the angle

at which one looked at them, became all white or all pink, harmonized with the effects of the light which filtered through the transparent folds of the muslin, producing a nebulous effect.

The heart has an inexplicable liking for white, love takes delight in red, and gold excites the passions, for it has the power of giving shape to their dreams. Thus all that there is of vagueness and mystery in a man's being, all his unexplained affinities, were flattered in their instinctive sympathies. There was in that perfect harmony a combination of colors to which the soul responded by voluptuous, vague, wavering ideas.

## V.

It was amidst an atmosphere laden with exquisite perfumes that Paquita, dressed in a white peignoir, with bare feet, and with orange-blossoms in her black hair, appeared to Henri, kneeling at his feet, offering him adoration as the god of that temple which he had deigned to visit. Although de Marsay was accustomed to the marvels of Parisian luxury, he was surprised by the aspect of that shell which resembled that in which Venus was born. Whether as a result of the contrast between the darkness from which he came and the brilliant light that bathed his soul, or of a hasty comparison between this scene and the scene of his former interview, he was conscious of such a sensation as genuine poetry gives. When he espied in the centre of that bower created by a fairy's magic wand the chef-d'œuvre of creation, that lovely maid whose warm-hued complexion and whose soft skin faintly gilded by the reflection of the red hangings and by an indescribable vapor of love sparkled as if with the reflection of all the lights and colors, his anger, his longing for vengeance, his wounded vanity, all vanished. Like an eagle swooping down on his prey, he seized her by the waist, seated her on his knees, and felt with unutterable ecstasy the voluptuous pressure of her body, whose generously developed charms softly enfolded him.

"Come, Paquita!" he whispered.

"Speak, speak without fear!" she said. "This retreat was made for love. No sound escapes from it, so

jealously do we long to retain the tones of the beloved voice. However loud one may shriek, no one can hear outside these walls. You could murder a person here and his outcries would be as vain as if he were in the middle of the desert."

"Who, pray, had so perfect a comprehension of jealousy and its cravings?"

"Never question me on that subject," she replied, untying with incredible grace of movement the young man's cravat, doubtless so that she could see his neck. "Yes, there is the neck I love so dearly!" she said. "Will you do something to please me?"

This question, asked with an accent which almost made it lascivious, roused de Marsay from the reverie into which he had fallen after the imperative reply by which Paquita had forbidden him to seek any light concerning the unknown person who hovered over them like a shadow.

"And suppose I insisted upon knowing who reigns here?"

Paquita looked at him, trembling.

"Is it not I, then?" he said, rising and throwing off the girl, who fell with her head thrown back. "I choose to be the only one where I am."

"Cruel! cruel!" cried the poor slave in deadly terror.

"What do you take me for? Will you answer?"

Paquita rose gently, her eyes filled with tears, took a dagger from one of the ebony cabinets and offered it to Henri with a submissive gesture that would have touched a tiger.

"Give me such a fête as men give when they love," she said, "and while I am asleep kill me, for I cannot

answer you. Listen! I am fastened like any poor beast to its stake; I am surprised that I have succeeded in throwing a bridge across the gulf that separates us. Make me drunk with bliss, then kill me. Oh! no, no!" she cried, clasping her hands, "do not kill me! I love life! Life is so lovely in my eyes! If I am a slave, I am a queen too. I could deceive you with words, tell you that I love no one but you, prove it to you, and take advantage of my momentary power over you to say, 'Take me, as one enjoys the perfume of a flower on passing through a king's garden.' Then, after putting forth a woman's crafty eloquence and unfolding the wings of pleasure, after quenching my thirst, I could have you cast into a well where no one would ever find you,—a well that was built to gratify the craving for vengeance without having to fear the vengeance of the law; a well filled with quicklime which would consume you so thoroughly that no morsel of your body would ever be found. And you would remain in my heart, mine forever!"

Henri looked at her without a quiver, and that fearless glance filled her with joy.

"No, I won't do it! You have not stepped into a trap, but into the heart of a woman who adores you, and I am the one who will be tossed into the well."

"All this impresses me as prodigiously amusing," said de Marsay, scrutinizing her closely. "But you seem to me to be a good girl, albeit of a strange character; on the faith of an honest man, you are a living charade, the key to which seems very hard to find."

Paquita did not understand a word that he said; she looked at him sweetly, with eyes that could never be stupid, they were so alight with passion.

"Tell me, my love," she said, recurring to her first idea, "will you do something to please me?"

"I will do whatever you like, and even what you won't like," replied de Marsay, laughing. He had recovered his dandyfied self-assurance on making up his mind to let himself go with the current of his intrigue, and look neither behind nor ahead. Perhaps, too, he relied on his power and on his experience in such matters to acquire full control over the girl a few hours later, and to learn all her secrets.

"Well, then," she said, "let me dress you as I please."

"Dress me as you please," said Henri.

Paquita in great glee took from a drawer a red velvet gown in which she dressed de Marsay; then she put a woman's cap on his head and wrapped him in a shawl. As she performed these pranks with the innocent delight of a child, she laughed convulsively, and resembled a bird flapping its wings; but she did not look beyond.

Although it is impossible to describe the incredible joys experienced by those two beautiful creations of Heaven in one of its moments of gladness, it is perhaps essential to express in metaphysical terms the young man's extraordinary, almost fantastical impressions. The one thing that people in de Marsay's social position and who live as he lived are best able to discover is whether or not a girl is innocent. But, strangely enough! if the Girl with the Golden Eyes were a virgin, she certainly was not innocent. The startling conjunction of the real and the mysterious, of darkness and light, of the horrible and the beautiful, of pleasure and peril, of paradise and hell, which had heretofore marked that intrigue, manifested itself anew in the

capricious but sublime creature with whom de Marsay was amusing himself. All the cunning arts of the most experienced and most sophisticated courtesan, all that Henri had ever known of that poesy of the senses which is called love, were surpassed by the treasures unfolded by that girl whose flaming eyes belied none of the promises they had made. It was like an Oriental poem, glowing with the sunshine that Saadi and Hafiz have introduced in their swelling strophes. But neither Saadi's nor Pindar's rhythm would avail to describe the ecstasy fraught with confusion which overwhelmed that enchanting creature when there came an end of the error in which a hand of iron had forced her to abide.

"Dead!" she exclaimed; "I am dead! O Adolphe! take me to the ends of the earth, to some island where no one knows us. Let us leave no trace of our flight! We shall be followed even into hell! Great God! here is daylight! Fly! Shall I ever see you again? Yes, to-morrow; I must see you again, even though I have to put all my keepers to death to obtain that joy. Until to-morrow!"

She strained him to her heart in an embrace in which there was the fear of death. Then she pressed a spring that rang a bell, and implored de Marsay to allow his eyes to be bandaged.

"And suppose I will not — suppose I prefer to remain here?"

"You would cause my death the sooner," she said, "for I am sure now of dying for you."



## V.

HENRI made no resistance. In the man who is sated with pleasure there is an inclination to forget, a sort of ingratitude, a desire for freedom, a fancy to go for a walk, a tinge of contempt and perhaps of disgust for his idol, — in short, a mixture of inexplicable feelings which make him a despicable, ignoble creature. The certainty of such an ill-defined but genuine affection in hearts which are neither enlightened by that celestial radiance nor perfumed by the blessed balm from which we derive tenacity of sentiment, doubtless suggested to Rousseau the adventures of Lord Edward with which the letters of “*La Nouvelle Héloïse*” are brought to a close. Although Rousseau evidently drew his inspiration from Richardson’s work, he departed from it in innumerable details which make his own work superbly original. He commended it to posterity by great thoughts which it is difficult to cull out by analysis when one reads the book in one’s youth with the hope of finding therein an ardent depiction of the most physical of our sentiments; whereas serious-minded and philosophical writers never employ metaphors except as the consequence or the necessary accompaniment of a far-reaching thought; and the adventures of Lord Edward are, in their delicate suggestiveness, one of the most characteristically European ideas of that work.

Henri, then, found himself under the influence of that confused sentiment which is unknown to true love. It required, so to speak, the persuasive logic of compari-

sons and the irresistible attraction of his memories to lead him back to a woman. True love owes its power to memory above all else. The woman whose image is not engraved on the heart either by excess of enjoyment or by the force of sentiment — can such a woman ever be truly loved? Unknown to Henri, Paquita had gained a foothold in his heart by those two means. But upon leaving her, conscious only of the fatigue born of enjoyment, that delicious melancholy of the body, he could not analyze the sentiments of his heart while he still had on his lips the taste of the keenest sensual joys he had ever plucked.

He found himself on Boulevard Montmartre at day-break gazing vacantly after the retreating carriage. He took two cigars from his pocket, lighted one of them at the lantern of a good woman who sold eau-de-vie and coffee to the workmen, the street urchins, the market-gardeners, and all that portion of the population of Paris that rises before dawn; then he walked away, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, smoking his cigar with disgraceful nonchalance.

“Ah! a cigar's an excellent thing! It's the one thing a man will never tire of,” he said to himself.

To the Girl with the Golden Eyes, upon whom all the fashionable youth in Paris doted at that period, he barely gave a thought! The idea of death interjected in the midst of pleasure, fear of which had again and again clouded the brow of that fair creature, who was connected with the houris of Asia by her mother, with Europe by her education, and with the tropics by her birth, seemed to him to be one of the wiles by which all women try to make themselves interesting.

“She is from Havana, the most Spanish country in

the new world; so she preferred to feign terror rather than throw agony and obstacles and coquetry and duty in my face, as Parisian women do. By her golden eyes, I am infernally sleepy!"

He spied a cabriolet standing at Frascati's corner, waiting for some belated gambler. He woke the driver, was driven home, went to bed, and slept the sleep of the *mauvais sujet*, which by some strange freak that no ballad-writer has ever turned to profit is as profound as the sleep of innocence. Perhaps it is an exemplification of the proverbial saying, "Extremes meet."

About noon de Marsay woke, stretched his arms, and was conscious of the dog-like hunger that all old soldiers can remember feeling on the morrow of a victory. So that he was glad to see Paul de Manerville in his apartment, for nothing is more agreeable at such a time than to eat in company.

"Well," said his friend, "we all imagined that you had been closeted for ten days past with the Girl with the Golden Eyes."

"The Girl with the Golden Eyes! I've forgotten all about her. Faith! I have many other cats to whip!"

"Ah! you're playing the discreet lover."

"Why not?" laughed de Marsay. "My dear fellow, discretion is the shrewdest of devices. Listen — But no, I won't say a word. You never tell me anything and I am not inclined to throw away the treasures of my policy. Life is a river that serves the needs of commerce. By all that is most sacred on earth! by cigars! I am not a professor of social economy for the use of simpletons. Let us breakfast. It's less expensive to give you an omelet *au thon* than to lavish my gray matter on you."

“Do you count cost with your friends?”

“My dear fellow,” said Henri, who rarely disregarded a sarcasm, “as it may happen to you as well as another to have need of discretion, and as I am very fond of you — Yes, I am very fond of you. On my honor, if it only needed a thousand-franc note to keep you from blowing out your brains, you would find it here, for we have n’t mortgaged any of the property as yet, eh, Paul? If you were to fight to-morrow, I would load the pistols and measure off the distance so that you would surely be killed according to the rules. And if any other person than myself should be so ill-advised as to speak ill of you in your absence, he would have to reckon with the blunt gentleman who lives in my skin. That’s what I call a friendship that will stand any test. As I was saying, when you stand in need of discretion, my boy, remember that there are two sorts: active discretion and negative discretion. Negative discretion is the variety adopted by fools who resort to silence, denial, a crabbed manner, the discretion of closed doors — mere helplessness! Active discretion resorts to affirmation. If I should say at the club to-night: ‘On my word, the Girl with Golden Eyes was n’t worth what she cost me,’ everybody would exclaim when I had gone: ‘Did you hear that conceited ass of a de Marsay trying to make us believe he has already had the Girl with the Golden Eyes! He’d like to get rid of his rivals that way; he’s no fool!’ But that is a vulgar and hazardous trick. However grossly stupid the remark that we let fall, there are always some idiots who may believe it. The best of all the varieties of discretion is that used by clever women when they want to throw the dust in their husbands’

eyes. It consists in slandering a woman for whom we care nothing, or with whom we are not in love, or whom we have never had, to preserve the honor of one we love enough to respect her. That is what I call the 'woman-screen.' Ah! here 's Laurent. — What have you brought us?"

"Some Ostend oysters, monsieur."

"You will learn some day, Paul, how amusing it is to cheat the world by concealing from it the secret of our affections. I take immense delight in escaping from the senseless jurisdiction of the crowd which never knows what it wants or what somebody induces it to want; which takes the cause for the result, and which adores and curses, erects and destroys, in turn. What joy to force emotions upon it, and to receive none; to subdue it and never obey it! If a man may be proud of anything, is it not of a power acquired by his own efforts, of which he is at once the cause and the effect, the source and the result? Well, no man knows whom I love or what I want. Perhaps people will know some day whom I have loved and what I have wanted, just as one knows all about a drama that is closed; but let any one see my hand? that would be weakness, gullibility! I know nothing more contemptible than strength hoodwinked by adroitness. I am initiating myself, laughingly, in the profession of ambassador, assuming that diplomacy is as difficult as life. But I doubt it. Have you any ambition? Do you want to amount to something?"

"Oh! you 're laughing at me, Henri; as if I were n't commonplace enough to attain to anything!"

"Good, Paul! If you go on making fun of yourself, you 'll soon be able to make fun of everybody else."

After breakfast, when he had lighted his cigar, de Marsay began to view the events of the night in a strange light. Like many great minds, his perspicacity was not spontaneous, he did not go at once to the very root of things. As is the case with all those who are blest with the faculty of living largely in the present, of squeezing out the juice, so to speak, and consuming it, his second sight needed a something like sleep in order to identify itself with causes. Cardinal de Richelieu was built the same way; but that fact did not deprive him of the gift of foresight essential in the conception of great designs. At first de Marsay used his weapons only to the advantage of his diversions, and did not become one of the most profound and far-seeing politicians of the present day until he was thoroughly sated with the pleasures by which a young man is engrossed first of all when he has money and power. Man becomes bronze by this means; he wears women out so that they may not wear him out.

At this moment, then, Henri discovered that he had been fooled by the Girl with the Golden Eyes, viewing as a whole that night whose pleasures had flowed gradually at first, to end by rushing forth in torrents. He was able to read that glittering page, to divine its hidden meaning. Paquita's purely physical innocence, the artless amazement of her ecstasy, a word or two, then obscure but now clear, which had escaped her in the midst of her joy, — everything tended to prove that he had posed for somebody else. As no form of social corruption was unknown to him, as he professed utter indifference on the subject of every variety of caprice, and considered that they were all justified by the very fact that they could furnish their own gratification, he did not shy at vice; he knew it as one knows a friend; but

he was wounded to the quick by having served as pasture for it. If his presumptions were well founded, he had been insulted to the very quick. The mere suspicion put him in a frenzy; he uttered such a roar as a tiger might utter upon being taunted by a gazelle, the roar of a tiger combining the power of the beast with the intelligence of the evil one.

"Well, well! what's the matter?" said Paul.

"Nothing!"

"If any one should ask you if you had anything against me, I would n't care to have you answer with a 'Nothing!' like that; if you did, we should certainly fight the next day."

"I fight no more duels," said de Marsay.

"That sounds even more tragic. Do you murder, pray?"

"You play with words. I execute."

"My dear friend," said Paul, "your jests have an unpleasantly gloomy flavor this morning."

"What do you expect? pleasure leads to ferocity. Why? I have no idea, and I am not sufficiently interested to seek the reason. These cigars are excellent. Give your friend some tea. Do you know, Paul, that I am leading a brute's life? It is high time to select some occupation, to employ my time in something that's worth the trouble of living. Life is a strange sort of comedy. I am really alarmed, although I laugh at the utterly inconsequent conduct of our social class. The government cuts off the head of a poor devil who has killed a man, and gives patents of nobility to wretched creatures who despatch, to speak medically, a dozen young men a winter. Morality is powerless against a score of vices which are ruining society and which it is

impossible to punish. — Give me another cup! On my honor, man is a buffoon dancing over a precipice. We hear a deal about the immorality of ‘*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*,’ and some other book, — I don’t know what it is, — with the name of a *femme de chambre*; but there’s another horrible, filthy, ghastly, corrupting book, always open, which never will be closed — the ledger of society; to say nothing of another book, a thousand times more dangerous, which contains all that is whispered about among men, or said behind their fans by women during the evening at a ball.”

“There is certainly something abnormal going on inside of you, Henri; that is plain enough despite your *active* discretion.”

“True! Look you, I must kill the time until evening. Let us go and play eards. Perhaps I shall have the good luck to lose.”

De Marsay rose, took a handful of bank-notes and stuffed them in his cigar-case, dressed, and took advantage of Paul’s carriage to go to the Salon des Étrangers, where he killed the time until dinner in the exciting alternations of losing and winning which are the last resource of strong characters when they are constrained to exert themselves in emptiness.

In the evening he kept his appointment and allowed his eyes to be covered without remonstrance. Then, with the resolution which none but men of really powerful will can command, he concentrated his attention and put forth all his intelligence to make out what streets the carriage passed through. He was almost sure that he was driven to rue Saint-Lazare, to the small gate of the garden of the hôtel de San-Réal. When he passed through that gate, as on the previous



occasion, and was placed on a litter, borne doubtless by the mulatto and the coachman, he heard the crunching of the gravel under their feet, and realized why they took such extraordinary precautions. If he had been free, or if he had been walking, he might have broken off the branch of a shrub, or have looked to see what sort of gravel was on his boots; but being transported aerially, so to speak, into an inaccessible house, he could conclude only that his love affair would continue to be what it had been hitherto — a dream.

But, to man's undoing, he can never do anything in other than an imperfect manner, be it good or evil. All his works, intellectual or corporeal, are signed with a colophon of destruction. It had rained a little and the earth was moist. Certain vegetable odors are much stronger during the night than by day, and Henri smelt mignonette all along the path by which he was carried. That bit of evidence might guide him in the search that he proposed to make for the house that contained Paquita's boudoir. He noticed carefully, too, the turns that his bearers made inside the house, and thought that he could recall them.

He found himself, as on the preceding night, on the ottoman with Paquita, who removed his bandage; but she was pale and changed. She had been weeping. Kneeling like an angel at prayer, but a depressed and profoundly melancholy angel, the poor girl bore little resemblance to the inquisitive, impatient, ebullient creature who had taken de Marsay on her wings and borne him aloft into the seventh heaven of love. There was something so genuine in her despair, although partly veiled by joy, that the redoubtable de Marsay was conscious of a thrill of admiration for that latest

chef-d'œuvre of Nature, and forgot for the moment the chief interest (to him) of that meeting.

"What is the matter, my Paquita?"

"My love," she said, "take me away this very night. Hide me somewhere where no one can say when he sees me, 'Here is Paquita,' and where no one will reply, 'There is a girl here with a golden glance and with long hair.' There I will give you all the pleasure you care to receive at my hands. And when you cease to love me, you can leave me; I will not complain, I will say nothing; and your leaving me will cause you no remorse, for a day with you, a single day during which I have gazed at you, will be worth a whole lifetime to me. But if I stay here I am lost."

"I cannot leave Paris, little one," Henri replied. "I am not my own master, I am bound by an oath to the fate of certain persons who are devoted to me as I am to them. But I can provide you with a place of refuge here in Paris where no human power can reach you."

"No," she said; "you forget female power."

Never did words uttered by a human voice express terror more eloquently.

"Who could reach you, I pray to know, if I place myself between you and the world?"

"Poison!" she replied. "Doña Concha suspects you already. And," she continued, as the tears rolled down her cheeks, "it is easy to see that I am not what I was. Well, if you abandon me to the rage of the monster who will devour me, may your blessed will be done! But come; let there be all the heavenly joys of life in our love. And then I will implore, I will weep, I will shriek, I will defend myself, and perhaps I can escape."

"Whom will you implore?" he asked.

“Hush!” said Paquita. “If I obtain my pardon, perhaps it will be because of my discretion.”

“Give me my gown,” said Henri insidiously.

“No, no!” she replied quickly; “stay what you are — one of the angels whom I had been taught to hate, and in whom I saw only monsters, while you are the most beautiful object under heaven,” she said, smoothing Henri’s hair. “You have no idea what a fool I am. I have learned nothing. Since I was twelve years old I have been closely confined and have seen nobody. I can neither read nor write, and I speak only English and Spanish.”

“How happens it that you receive letters from London?”

“My letters? see, here they are!” she said, taking some papers from a tall Japanese vase. And she handed de Marsay a number of letters in which he was amazed to see strange figures like those of rebuses, drawn with blood, and representing pictorially words alive with passion.

“Why,” he exclaimed, as he gazed at those hieroglyphics, inspired by clever jealousy, “are you in the power of an infernal genius?”

“Infernal!” she repeated.

“But in that case how did you succeed in going out?”

“Ah!” she replied, “that is the cause of my undoing. I placed Doña Concha between the fear of instant death and the wrath to come. I had the curiosity of a demon; I was determined to break through the circle of brass that had been built between myself and all creation; I was determined to see what young men were like — for I knew no man except the marquis and Cristemio. Our coachman and the footman who attend us are old men.”

“But you were not locked up all the time. Your health required —”

“Oh! we went out to drive, but only after dark and into the country along the Seine — away from everybody.”

“Are n't you proud to be loved like that?”

“No,” she said, “not now! Although it is full enough, a secret life of that sort is like darkness compared with the light.”

“What do you call the light?”

“You, my beautiful Adolphe, you for whom I would give my life. All the things I have heard about passion, all the passion I ever inspired, I feel for you! There used to be times when I did n't understand life at all; but now I know how we love and I see that before this I was just loved; I myself never loved. I would leave everything for you, — take me away. Take me as a plaything if you will, but let me stay with you until you break me.”

“You will have no regrets?”

“Not one!” she said, letting him read her sincerity in her eyes, whose golden tinge was still pure and limpid.

“Am I the preferred one?” Henri asked himself, being disposed at that moment, although he suspected the truth, to forgive the insult in favor of so ingenuous a passion. “I shall see!”

Although Paquita owed him no account of the past, the slightest memory thereof on her part became a crime in his eyes. He had therefore the inopportune strength of mind to form a plan of his own, to study his mistress and pass judgment on her while abandoning himself to the most entrancing joys that ever peri from the skies bestowed upon her beloved. Paquita

seemed to have been created for love, with special solicitude on the part of Nature. Since the preceding night her woman's ingenuity had made rapid progress. Great as was the young man's strength of will and his indifference in the matter of pleasure, and sated as he had been the evening before, he found in the Girl with the Golden Eyes a whole seraglio, such as a loving woman is able to command, and upon which a man never turns his back. Paquita gratified the passion that all truly great men feel for the infinite, — a mysterious passion graphically described in "Faust," and poetically interpreted in "Manfred," and which impelled Don Juan to search the hearts of women, hoping to find therein the boundless idea which so many hunters of spectres attempt to find, which scholars think that they catch glimpses of in science, and which the mystics find in God alone.

The hope of possessing at last the ideal being with whom the struggle might be constantly renewed without fatigue delighted de Marsay, who for the first time in many months opened his heart. His nerves relaxed, his coldness melted in the burning atmosphere of that heart, his cynical doctrines vanished, and happiness tinged his existence with white and rose-color, like the boudoir. Feeling the spur of a superhuman ecstasy, he was carried beyond the limits within which he had theretofore confined passion. He did not choose to be surpassed by that girl, whom a love in some measure artificial had trained in advance, in accordance with the necessities of her being; and he found, in that vanity which impels a man to be the victor in everything, sufficient force to subdue her; but by the same token, being drawn beyond the line where the mind ceases to be mis-

tress of itself, he lost himself in those blissful regions which the common herd absurdly call "imaginary spaces." He was loving, kindly, and communicative, and he made Paquita almost mad.

"Why should n't we go to Sorrento or Nice or Chiavari and pass our whole lives thus? Will you?" he asked her in a penetrating tone.

"Do you need to say: 'Will you?'" she cried. "Have I a will? I am something outside of you only that I may be a source of pleasure to you. If you would choose a retreat worthy of us, Asia is the only country where love can unfold its wings."

"You are right," said Henri. "Let us go to the Indies, where the spring is never-ending, where the earth never bears aught but flowers, where man can display all the pomp and circumstance of a sovereign without being talked about as in the absurd countries where people try to realize the senseless chimæra of equality. Let us go to the country where one lives amid a nation of slaves, where the sun always lights up a palace that remains white, where perfumes are sown in the air, where the birds sing of love, and where one dies when one can love no more."

"And where we die together!" murmured Paquita. "But let us not start to-morrow, let us start instantly — and take Cristemio."

"Faith! pleasure is the finest ending of life. Let us go to Asia; but in order to go, child, we must have much money; and to obtain money we must arrange our affairs."

She had no comprehension of such matters.

"As to money, there's some upstairs — as much as that," she said, raising her hand.

“It is n’t mine.”

“What difference does that make? If we need it, let us take it.”

“It does n’t belong to you.”

“Belong!” she repeated. “Have n’t you taken me? When we have taken it, it will belong to us.”

He began to laugh.

“Poor innocent love! you know nothing about this world’s affairs.”

“No, but this is what I do know!” she cried, drawing Henri to her.

At the very instant when de Marsay had forgotten everything and really contemplated appropriating that bewitching creature forever, he received a dagger-thrust which pierced his heart through and through,—his heart, thus put to shame for the first time. Paquita, having raised him in the air with extraordinary strength, as if to gaze at him, suddenly exclaimed:—

“O Margarita!”

“Margarita!” shouted the young man with a roar of rage. “I know now all that I preferred to doubt.”

He leaped at the cabinet which contained the long dagger. Luckily for Paquita and for him the drawer was locked. His rage was intensified by the obstacles; but he recovered his calmness, took his cravat, and strode toward her with an expression of such savage meaning that, although she knew not of what crime she was guilty, Paquita realized nevertheless that it was in his mind to kill her. Thereupon she flew with one bound to the other end of the room to escape the fatal noose that de Marsay proposed to pass about her neck. There was a battle. Suppleness, activity, and strength were equal on both sides.

To put an end to the struggle Paquita threw a cushion between her lover's legs which brought him to the floor; and she profited by the respite that that advantage gave her to press the spring that rang a bell. The mulatto entered abruptly. In the twinkling of an eye Cristemio pounced upon de Marsay, threw him down, and planted his foot on his breast, with the heel turned toward the throat. De Marsay understood that if he continued to struggle he would instantly be crushed to death at a sign from Paquita.

"Why did you try to kill me, my love?" she asked.

De Marsay did not reply.

"Wherein have I offended you? Speak: let us understand each other."

Henri maintained the phlegmatic bearing of the strong man who feels that he is beaten: an impassive, silent, thoroughly English demeanor which gave expression to his sense of dignity by a momentary resignation. Indeed, he had already reflected, despite the blind fury of his wrath, that it was far from prudent to compromise himself with the law by killing the girl on the spur of the moment, before he had paved the way for the murder in such a way as to be sure of impunity.

"Speak to me, my beloved!" continued Paquita; "do not leave me without a loving farewell! I do not want to keep in my heart the terror that you have just implanted there. Will you speak?" she added, stamping the floor angrily.

In reply de Marsay cast a glance at her which said so plainly, "You shall die!" that Paquita rushed to his side.

"Well! will you kill me? If my death will give you any pleasure, kill me!"



She motioned to Cristemio, who took his foot from the young man's breast and stepped aside, with no indication on his face that he thought well or ill of Paquita's conduct.

"That is a man!" said de Marsay, indicating the mulatto with a menacing gesture. "There is no devotion worthy the name except that which obeys the voice of friendship without passing judgment on it. You have a true friend in that man."

"I will give him to you if you wish," she said; "he will serve you as devotedly as me if I tell him to do so." She awaited a word of reply, then added in a tone overflowing with affection: "O Adolphe, do say a kind word to me! It will soon be day."

But Henri did not reply. The young man had one unfortunate quality; for people consider everything that resembles strength a great thing, and men often worship excess. Henri did not know how to forgive. The *ability to retract*, which is surely one of the noblest qualities of the heart, was meaningless to him. The ferocity of the Northmen, with which the blood of Englishmen is markedly tinged, had been transmitted to him by his father. He was immovable in his good and evil sentiments alike. Paquita's exclamation was the more shocking to him in that he had been cheated of the sweetest triumph that had ever swelled his vanity as a man. Hope, love, and all the sentiments had reached the greatest intensity; in his heart and in his intelligence there had been naught but fire and flame; and then those flaming torches, lighted to illumine his life, had been blown out by a cold wind.

In her distress the stupefied Paquita had only strength enough to give the signal for him to go.

"This is no longer of any use," she said, throwing away the bandage. "If he has ceased to love me, if he hates me, it is all over."

She awaited a glance, but did not obtain it, and fell to the floor almost lifeless. The mulatto gave Henri a glance of such terrible meaning that he caused the young man, to whom no one denied the gift of rare personal courage, to tremble for the first time in his life. "If you don't love her truly, if you cause her the slightest pain, I will kill you!" was the meaning of that swift glance.

De Marsay was escorted with almost servile attention along a corridor lighted by windows near the ceiling, from which he passed by a secret door to a hidden staircase leading to the garden of the hôtel de San-Réal. He followed the mulatto with cautious steps along an avenue of lindens, which came to an end at a small gate opening on a street which at that time was uninhabited.

De Marsay took careful note of everything. The carriage was waiting, but this time the mulatto did not accompany him. When Henri put his head out of the door for a last look at the gardens, he met Cristemio's white eyes. The glance they exchanged was on both sides an insult, a challenge, a declaration of savage warfare; a duel in which ordinary rules would be disregarded, in which treachery was allowed. Cristemio knew that Henri had sworn that Paquita should die. Henri knew that Cristemio proposed to kill him before he could kill Paquita. They understood each other wonderfully.

"The affair is becoming decidedly interesting in its complications," said Henri to himself.

"Where will monsieur go?" inquired the coachman.

Henri bade the man take him to Paul de Manerville's.

## VI.

FOR more than a week Henri was absent from his apartment; and no one knew what he did during that time, or where he lived. This retirement from public view saved him from the mulatto's rage, and caused the destruction of the poor creature who had placed all her hope in the man whom she loved as mortal never loved before.

On the last day of that week, about eleven at night, Henri arrived in a carriage at the small gate of the garden of the hôtel de San-Réal. Four men accompanied him. The coachman was evidently a friend of his, for he stood up in his box, like a watchful sentry, listening for the faintest sound. One of the other three stood just outside the gate, in the street; the second was in the garden, leaning against the wall; the last, who had a bunch of keys in his hand, went with de Marsay.

"Henri," said he, "we are betrayed."

"By whom, my dear Ferragus?"

"They are not all asleep," replied the chief of the *Devorants*; "it absolutely must be that there is some one in the house who has neither eaten nor drunk. See, look at that light."

"We have the plan of the house; where does the light come from?"

"I don't need a plan to know," said Ferragus; "it comes from the marchioness's bedroom."

"Aha!" exclaimed de Marsay; "she must have arrived from London to-day. That woman has probably

robbed me of my revenge! But if she has anticipated me, my dear Gratien, we will turn her over to the law."

"Listen! the thing 's done," said Ferragus.

They both listened and heard faint cries which would have touched the heart of a tiger.

"Your marchioness must have forgotten that sounds will come out through the chimney," said the chief of the *Devorants*, with the laugh of a critic delighted to find a flaw in a fine work.

"We alone know enough to provide for everything," said Henri. "Wait for me. I am going to see what 's happening up yonder, so that I can learn how their family quarrels are managed. By the name of God, I believe she 's roasting her at a slow fire."

De Marsay ran rapidly up the staircase which was familiar to him, and recognized the way to the boudoir. When he opened the door, he had the involuntary shudder which the sight of freshly spilled blood causes the most resolute of men. Moreover the spectacle before his eyes was astounding to him in more ways than one. The marchioness was a woman: she had planned her revenge with that absolute perfection of treachery which characterizes the weaker animals. She had dissembled her wrath in order to assure herself that the crime had been committed, before punishing it.

"Too late, my best beloved!" said the dying Paquita, turning her lustreless eyes toward de Marsay.

The Girl with the Golden Eyes was drowning in blood. All the torches lighted, a delicate perfume that assailed the nostrils, and a certain disorder in which the eyes of a man addicted to love-affairs were sure to recognize the antics common to all passions, proved that the marchioness had artfully questioned the culprit. That

white and gold apartment, where blood showed so plainly, bore the traces of a long contest. The shape of Paquita's hands was imprinted in blood on the cushions. Everywhere she had clung to life, everywhere she had defended herself, and everywhere she had been struck. Long strips of the fluted hangings had been torn down by her bleeding hands, which plainly had fought long and valiantly. She must have tried to climb to the ceiling, for there were the marks of her bare feet along the back of the divan, where she had doubtless run. Her body, slashed with dagger-cuts by her murderess, told how desperately she had fought for a life which Henri made so dear to her. She was lying on the floor, and, as she died, she bit the instep of Madame de San-Réal, who had her dagger, drenched with blood, in her hand. The marchioness's hair had been torn out by the handful, she was covered with bites, several of which were bleeding, and her torn dress showed her half naked, her breasts scratched and torn. She was sublime so. Her eager, furious face inhaled the odor of blood. Her panting mouth was half open, and her nostrils were not sufficient to accommodate her breathing. Some animals, when they are driven into a rage, pounce upon their foe, put him to death, and, becoming calm again at the moment of victory, seem to have forgotten everything. There are others that circle about their victim, keep close watch on him, lest some one take him from them and, like Homer's Achilles, make the circuit of Troy nine times, dragging the enemy by his feet. Of these latter was the marchioness. She did not see Henri. In the first place she believed herself to be so entirely alone that she need fear no witnesses; and, in the second place, she was too much

intoxicated with fresh blood, too excited by the conflict, to notice all Paris, if Paris had formed a circle about her. She would not have felt the lightning. She had not even heard Paquita's last sigh, and fancied that the dead girl might still be listening to her.

"Die without confession!" she cried. "Go down to hell, monster of ingratitude; be nobody's mistress henceforth but the devil's. For the blood you have given him, you owe me all yours! Die! die! suffer a thousand deaths! I was too merciful, I took only a moment to kill you, and I would have liked to make you suffer all the torments you bequeath to me. I shall live! I shall live in misery, for I am reduced to loving God alone!"

She gazed at Paquita's body.

"She is dead!" she said, after a pause, with a violent revulsion of feeling. "Dead! Ah! I shall die of grief!"

She started to throw herself on the divan, overwhelmed by a despair that took away her voice, when she saw Henri de Marsay.

"Who are you?" she cried, rushing at him with up-lifted dagger.

Henri seized her arm, and they gazed at each other, face to face. A ghastly shock caused them both to feel the blood turn to ice in their veins, and they trembled on their legs like terrified horses. In truth, the two Dromios were not more alike. They asked in one breath the same question:—

"Is Lord Dudley your father?"

And they both bent their heads in assent.

"She was true to the blood," said Henri, pointing to Paquita.

"She was as little blameworthy as possible," replied

Margarita-Euphémia Porrabénil, throwing herself on Paquita's body with a cry of despair. "Poor girl! Oh! I would that I could bring you back to life! I was wrong — forgive me, Paquita! You are dead, and I — I am alive! I am the more to be pitied."

At that moment the revolting face of Paquita's mother appeared.

"You propose to tell me that you did n't sell her to me to be killed," cried the marchioness. "I know why you've come out of your den. I'll pay you for her twice over. Hold your peace!"

She took a bag of gold from the ebony cabinet and tossed it contemptuously at the old woman's feet. The ring of the metal had the power to bring a smile to the Georgian's impassive countenance.

"I have come opportunely for you, sister," said Henri. "The law will call upon you —"

"For nothing at all," rejoined the marchioness. "There was but one person who could call me to account for this girl, and Cristemio is dead."

"And the mother," said Henri, "won't she keep bleeding you forever?"

"She is from a country where women are not persons, but things, with which one does what one chooses — buys, sells, kills, in short, uses to gratify one's caprices, as you use your furniture. Besides, she has one passion before which all the others surrender, and which would have destroyed her mother-love if she had loved her daughter; a passion —"

"What is it?" said Henri, eagerly interrupting his sister.

"Gambling, from which may God preserve you!" replied the marchioness.

"But whom will you get," said Henri, pointing to the Girl with the Golden Eyes, "to help you to remove the traces of this whim, which the authorities would hardly overlook?"

"I have her mother," replied the marchioness, motioning to the Georgian to remain.

"We shall meet again," said Henri, thinking of his friends' anxiety and feeling that he must go.

"No, brother," she said, "we shall never meet again. I am for returning to Spain to enter the convent of Los Dolores."

"You are too young, too beautiful," said Henri, taking her in his arms and kissing her.

"Adieu," said she, "I can never be consoled for having lost what seemed to us both to be infinite."

A week later Paul de Manerville fell in with de Marsay at the Tuileries on the Terrasse des Feuillants.

"Well! what has become of our lovely Girl with the Golden Eyes, you old villain?"

"She is dead."

"What was the matter?"

"Consumption."

PARIS, March, 1834-April, 1835.



SARRASINE.

TO MONSIEUR CHARLES DE BERNARD DU GRAIL.

## SARRASINE.

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### I.

I WAS buried in one of those profound reveries to which everybody is subject, even a frivolous-minded person, in the midst of the noisiest assemblage. The clock on the *Élysée-Bourbon* had just struck twelve. Seated in a window-recess, and concealed behind the undulating folds of a silk curtain, I could observe at my leisure the garden of the house at which I was passing the evening. The trees, partly covered with snow, were dimly outlined against the grayish background formed by a cloudy sky, scarcely lightened by the moon. Seen through that unreal atmosphere, they bore a vague resemblance to spectres carelessly enveloped in their shrouds, — a gigantic image of the famous “Dance of Death.”

Then, turning in the other direction, I could see the dance of the living. A magnificent salon, with walls of silver and gold, and glistening chandeliers ablaze with candles. There all the prettiest, richest, most high-born women in Paris had gathered in flocks, and were fluttering about, resplendently arrayed and gleaming with diamonds. Flowers on the head, at the breast, in the hair, sprinkled over the gown, or strewn in garlands at the feet. And, with it all, graceful movements and voluptuous steps that caused the lace and muslin and

gauze and silk to float about their slender forms. What sparkling glances flew hither and yon, eclipsing the lights and the blaze of the diamonds, and fanning the flame in hearts already over-ardent! One could detect also significant motions of the head for lovers and repellent attitudes for husbands. The loud voices of the gamblers at each unforeseen *coup*, the jingle of gold, mingled with the music and the murmur of conversation; and to put the finishing touch to the intoxication of that throng, already excited by all the seductions that society can offer, a cloying odor of perfumery and the general effervescence reacted upon their over-stimulated imaginations.

Thus I had at my right the sombre, silent image of death; at my left, the respectable bacchanalia of life: on the one side, cold, gloomy nature, clad in mourning; on the other, men and women making holiday. And I, on the dividing line between those two widely contrasted pictures, which, being repeated times without number in diverse forms, make Paris the most diverting, most philosophical city in the world, — I indulged in a sort of moral medley, half jocose, half solemn. With my left foot I kept time with the music, and I fancied that the other foot was in a coffin. In fact, my leg was benumbed by a draught of the sort that congeals one half of our body, while the other half perspires in the moist heat of a salon — a not infrequent occurrence at a ball.

“Monsieur de Lanty has n’t owned this house very long, has he?”

“Why, yes; it’s nearly ten years since the Maréchal de Carigliano sold it to him.”

“Ah!”

“These people must have an enormous fortune?”

“They must, indeed.”

“What a superb affair this is! It is fairly arrogant in its magnificence!”

“Do you suppose they’re as rich as Monsieur de Nucingen or Monsieur de Gondreville?”

“Why, have n’t you heard —”

I put out my head and recognized the two speakers as members of that prying tribe who in Paris give their attention exclusively to the “Whys?” and the “Hows?” and “Where did he come from?” “Who are they?” “What’s the matter with him?” “What has she done?” They lowered their voices and moved away, to talk more at their ease on some isolated couch.

Never had a more productive mine been opened to the seekers after mysteries. No one knew what country the Lanty family came from, or whether their fortune, reckoned at several millions, owed its origin to business, spoliation, piracy, or an inheritance. All the members of the family spoke French, Italian, Spanish, English, and German so perfectly as to lead one to believe that they had lived long among those different peoples. Were they gypsies? Were they filibusters?

“They may be the devil’s progeny,” said certain young politicians, “but they entertain wonderfully well.”

“If the Comte de Lanty had plundered some *Casbah*, I would marry his daughter all the same!” exclaimed a philosopher.

Indeed, who would not have married Marianina, — a girl of sixteen, whose beauty realized the supernatural conception of Oriental poets! Like the Sultan’s daughter in the tale of the “Wonderful Lamp,” she should

have been always veiled. Her singing eclipsed the incomplete talent of the Malibrans and Sontags and Fodors, in whom some one predominant quality always mars the perfection of the whole; whereas Marianina had the art of uniting purity of tone, susceptibility to emotion, perfection of gesture and of accent, correct expression and sentiment, heart and mind. She was the type of that secret poesy which is the connecting bond of all the arts, and which always eludes those who seek it. Sweet and modest, learned and clever, as she was, no one could outshine Marianina unless it was her mother.

Have you ever met one of those women whose blinding beauty defies the assaults of time, and who, at thirty-six, seem more desirable than they could have been fifteen years earlier? The face is an impassioned spirit — it emits sparks; each feature gleams with intelligence; each pore has a brilliancy of its own, especially in the light. Their alluring eyes attract, deny, speak, or keep silent; their gait is innocently sophisticated; their voices reveal the melodious treasures of tones most coquettishly soft and melting. Based upon comparisons, their praise flatters the most susceptible self-esteem. A movement of their eyelids, the slightest play of the eyes, a curl of the lip, strikes to the hearts of those whose lives and happiness depend upon them. A young girl, without experience in love and amenable to soft words, may allow herself to be seduced; but with such women as we are speaking of, a man must have the courage, like M. de Jaucourt, to refrain from crying out when, having hidden in a closet, the lady's-maid breaks two of his fingers in the crack of the door. To love one of those omnipotent sirens is to risk one's

life. And perchance that is why we love them so madly! Such a woman was the Comtesse de Lanty.

Filippo, Marianina's brother, inherited, like his sister, the countess's wondrous beauty. In a word, he was a living image of Antinous, upon a smaller scale. But how well suited such slender and delicate proportions are to youth, when an olive complexion, dense eyebrows, and the flash of a velvety eye give promise for the future of manly passions and noble ideas! If Filippo was enshrined in the hearts of all maidens as a type of masculine beauty, he was equally treasured in the memories of all mothers as the best *parti* in France.

The beauty, the fortune, the wit, all the charms of the two children, came from their mother alone. The Comte de Lanty was short, spare, and ugly; dark-browed as a Spaniard and wearisome as a banker. He was looked upon, however, as a profound politician, perhaps because he rarely laughed and was forever quoting M. de Metternich or Wellington.

That mysterious family had all the attraction of a poem by Lord Byron, the difficult passages being interpreted differently by every person in society: an obscure but sublime song, from strophe to strophe. The strict silence maintained by M. and Madame de Lanty concerning their origin, their past lives, and their relations with the four quarters of the globe, would not have been a source of wonder in Paris for long. In no country perhaps is *Vespasian's* maxim more thoroughly understood. There gold pieces, even when stained with blood or slime, betray no secrets and represent everything. Provided that aristocratic society knows the amount of your fortune, you are placed in a class with those whose figures approximate yours, and no

one asks for a look at your documents because everybody knows how much they cost. In a city where social problems are solved by algebraic equations, adventurers have excellent chances in their favor. Assuming that the family was of gypsy origin, it was so wealthy and attractive that good society could afford to pardon its little mysteries. But, unfortunately, the history of the house of Lanty was a never-ending subject of curious interest, like Mrs. Radcliffe's novels.

People of an observant turn, of the sort who are bent upon knowing where you buy your candelabra, or who ask you what rent you pay when they fancy your apartment, had remarked now and then, at the fêtes and concerts and balls and routs given by the countess, the appearance of a strange individual—a man. The first time he appeared was during a concert, on which occasion he had apparently been drawn toward the salon by Marianina's enchanting voice.

"I have been feeling cold for the last minute or two," a lady near the door said to her neighbor.

The stranger, who stood near, walked away.

"Well, this is very strange!" said the lady after he had gone; "now I am warm. You may call me a fool, but I could n't help thinking that my neighbor, that man in black who just went away, caused me to shiver."

Erelong the exaggeration that seems inborn in people in exalted society resulted in a multitude of the most diverting inventions, the most singular expressions, the most absurd tales, concerning this mysterious personage. Without being precisely a vampire, a ghoul, a hand-made man, a variety of Faust or Robin Goodfellow, he partook of the nature of all those anthropo-



morphous types. Occasionally a German would take these ingenious mystifications of Parisian evil-speaking for facts.

The stranger was simply an *old man*. Several young men, accustomed to decide the destiny of Europe every morning in a few well-turned phrases, chose to see in him a great criminal, possessed of boundless wealth. Certain romancers volunteered to narrate the old man's life, and would give you details that were really interesting of the atrocities committed by him while he was in the service of the Prince of Mysore.

Some bankers, being more positive folk, invented a specious fable.

"Bah!" they said, with a compassionate shrug of their broad shoulders, "the little old fellow's a *tête génoise!*"

"If it is not an impertinent question, monsieur, will you be kind enough to explain what you mean by a *tête génoise?*"

"It's a man, monsieur, upon whose life tremendous sums depend; and doubtless the income of this family is dependent on his good health. I remember hearing at Madame d'Espard's a mesmerist prove, by a very specious historical argument, that a certain old man, put under glass, was the famous Balsamo, called Cagliostro. According to this modern alchemist the Sicilian adventurer had escaped death and was amusing himself by making gold for his grandchildren. And the Bailli of Ferette claims to have identified this strange individual with the Comte de Saint-Germain."

Such nonsense as this, put forth with the clever and cynical air characteristic of a society without beliefs, kept alive vague suspicions concerning the Lanty

family. Moreover, by a curious combination of circumstances, the members of that family justified the conjectures of society by their somewhat mysterious conduct with the old man in question, whose life was shielded, so to speak, from all investigation.

If he crossed the threshold of the apartment he was supposed to occupy in the Lanty mansion, his appearance always caused a profound sensation in the family. One would have said that an event of the greatest importance had occurred. Filippo, Marianina, Madame de Lanty, and an old servant alone had the privilege of assisting the unknown to rise, to walk, to seat himself. Every one was on the watch for his slightest movement. It was as if he were an enchanted person upon whom the happiness, the fortune, or the lives of all depended. Was it fear or affection? Their social compeers could make no deduction which would assist them to solve the problem. Concealed for months at a time in the depths of some unknown retreat, that familiar genius would suddenly come forth, furtively as it were, unexpected, and appear in the middle of the salon, like the fairies of olden time who used to alight from their flying dragons to disturb festivities to which they had not been invited.

Only the most practised observers therefore were able to detect the uneasiness of the master and mistress of the house, who succeeded in dissembling their feelings with remarkable skill. But sometimes, while dancing a quadrille, the too artless Marianina would cast a terrified glance at the old man, following him with her eyes as he moved among the guests. Or Filippo would glide through the crowd and join him, and would remain by his side, affectionate and atten-

tive, as if the contact with other men or the least breath of air might annihilate the strange creature. The countess would attempt to join them without ostensibly appearing so to do; and then, assuming a manner and an expression marked no less by servility than by affection, by submission than by tyranny, she would say two or three words, with which the old man almost invariably complied; he would disappear, led, or, to speak more accurately, carried away by her.

If Madame de Lanty was not present, the count would resort to innumerable ruses to reach his side; but he seemed to have difficulty in inducing him to listen, and treated him like a spoiled child whose mother gratifies his whims, fearing a revolt. Some indiscreet mortals had ventured recklessly to question the Comte de Lanty, but that cold-blooded, reserved person never seemed to understand the questions.

The result was that, after many attempts, rendered fruitless by the circumspection of all the members of the family, people ceased to try to discover a secret so well kept. The aristocratic spies, the quidnuncs and politicians, weary of the strife, had at last ceased to busy themselves about the mystery.

But, I thought, it may be that at this very moment there are in these brilliant salons philosophical individuals who, as they take an ice or a sherbet, or place their empty punch glass on a buffet, are saying to one another: —

“I should n't be surprised to learn that these people are swindlers. That old fellow who keeps himself out of sight, and appears only at the equinoxes and solstices, looks to me very much like a murderer —”

“Or a bankrupt.”

“It amounts to the same thing. To kill a man’s fortune is sometimes worse than to kill the man himself.”

“I bet twenty louis, monsieur; there are forty due me.”

“Faith, monsieur, there are only thirty left on the board.”

“Well, you see how mixed the company is here! One can’t afford to play.”

“True. But it’s nearly six months since we saw the Ghost. Do you believe he’s a living being?”

“Ha! ha! barely that.”

These last words were said in my neighborhood by persons unknown to me, who walked away as I was summarizing in one final reflection my thoughts wherein black and white, life and death, were commingled. My riotous imagination, no less than my eyes, gazed alternately at the fête, now at the climax of its splendor, and at the gloomy tableau of the gardens. I have no idea how long I meditated upon those two sides of the human medal; but suddenly a young woman’s stifled laughter roused me. I was utterly dumfounded by the picture presented to my eyes.

By virtue of one of the most extraordinary caprices of Nature, the thought, clad in half-mourning, that was revolving in my brain, had emerged from it and stood before me, personified, living; it had sprung forth as Minerva sprang forth, tall and strong, from the head of Jupiter.

Escaped from his chamber like a madman from his cell, the little old man had evidently glided in silence behind a line of people spell-bound by the voice of

Marianina, who was just finishing the cavatina from "Tancredi." He seemed to have risen from underground, impelled by some stage mechanism. Motionless and frowning, he stood for a moment looking at the fête, the noise of which may have reached his ears. His absorption, almost like that of a somnambulist, was so complete that he stood amid the crowd without seeing the crowd. He had taken his stand without ceremony beside one of the most enchanting women in Paris, a beautiful dancer, and young, with a willowy figure and a face as fresh as a child's, white and pink, and so transparent that it seemed that a man's glance would pass through it as the sun's rays pass through glass. They stood there before me, so close together that the unknown touched the muslin gown and the wreaths of flowers and the wavy hair and the floating sash.

I had escorted the young woman to Madame de Lanty's ball. As it was the first time she had been in that house, I forgave her smothered laugh; but I hastily made her an imperative sign — I don't remember what it was — which left her covered with confusion and imbued with respect for her neighbor. She sat down beside me. The old man seemed loath to leave that sweet creature, at whose side he cast anchor, so to speak, capriciously and with the silent and apparently motiveless obstinacy to which very old people are subject, and which makes them like children. In order to sit beside the young lady, he was obliged to take a folding chair. His slightest movements were marked by the dull torpor, the stupid hesitancy which characterize the motions of a paralytic. He seated himself slowly on his chair, with great caution, mum-

bling some unintelligible words. His cracked voice resembled the noise made by a stone falling into a well.

The young woman nervously pressed my hand, as if she were trying to save herself from falling over a precipice; and she shuddered when the old man, at whom she was looking, turned upon her a pair of lifeless, greenish eyes, like nothing on earth but tarnished mother-of-pearl.

"I'm afraid," she said, putting her mouth to my ear.

"You can speak out," I said; "his hearing is very poor."

"You know him then?"

"Yes."

Thereupon she mustered sufficient courage to scrutinize for a moment that creature for whom human language has no name, — a form without substance, a being without life, or life without action. She was under the spell of that timid euriosity which impels women to seek dangerous excitement, to look at captive tigers and boa-constrictors, shuddering to think that they are separated from them only by insecure barriers. Although the little old man's back was bowed like a day laborer's, it was easy to see that he had never been of extraordinary stature. His excessive thinness, the smallness of his limbs, proved that he had always been of slender proportions. He wore black silk breeches, which hung in folds over his fleshless thighs, like a flapping sail. An anatomist would instantly have recognized the symptoms of a serious case of phthisis at sight of the tiny legs that upheld that strange body. One might have taken them for two bones crossed over a grave. A feeling of intense horror

of the man gripped the heart when an involuntary glance disclosed the marks of decrepitude upon that fragile machine.

The unknown wore a white waistcoat embroidered with gold, after an ancient fashion, and his linen was resplendently white. A ruff of English lace, decidedly rusty, but so fine that a queen might have longed for it, formed yellow ruffles on his breast; but on him the lace had the effect of a bunch of rags rather than of an ornament. In the middle of the ruff a diamond of inestimable value glistened like the sun. That superannuated splendor, that gem, priceless but in the worst taste, brought out in still stronger relief the extraordinary creature's features. The frame was well adapted to the portrait.

The dark face was everywhere full of angles and hollows; the chin was hollow, the temples were hollow, the eyes were lost to sight in yellowish orbits. The maxillary bones, made prominent by his indescribable thinness, overhung deep cavities in each cheek. Those elevations, with the light shining on them, produced shadows and reflections which deprived the face of the last vestige of any human characteristic. And the lapse of years had glued so fast to the bones the yellow, parchment-like skin, that it formed everywhere innumerable wrinkles, either circular, like the rings which form when a child throws a stone into the water, or star-shaped, like a crack in a pane of glass; but everywhere deep, and as close together as the edges of the leaves of a book.

Old men often present more revolting pictures; but what contributed more than anything else to make the spectre before us resemble an artificial creation was

the red and white paint with which he fairly shone. The eyebrows glistened in the light with a lustre that betrayed artistically executed painting. Luckily for the eyes of the observer, saddened by contemplation of such a mass of ruins, his corpse-like skull was covered by a light wig whose innumerable curls indicated an extraordinary attempt to appear youthful. Indeed, the feminine coquetry of that fantastic individual was exhibited plainly enough by the ear-rings hanging from his ears, by the rings set with superb stones which sparkled on his bony fingers, and by a watch-chain that shone like the bezel of a river of diamonds on a woman's neck.

Lastly, that Japanese idol had always on his bluish lips a fixed, unchanging smile, an implacable, sneering grin like that of a death's head. As silent and motionless as a statue, he exhaled the musk-like odor that emanates from the old gowns that a duchess's heirs exhume from old drawers while the inventory is being made. If the old man turned his eyes toward the throng, it seemed as if the movements of those dull globes, which had not the power to reflect a light, were governed by some invisible mechanism; and when the eyes stopped, he who had been watching them wondered if they had really moved.

To see, beside that mortal wreck, a young woman whose neck and arms and bust were bare and white as snow; whose rounded form, blooming with beauty, whose hair growing gracefully over an alabaster brow, inspired love; whose eyes did not receive but diffused light; who was sweet and fresh, and whose airy curls and fragrant breath seemed too heavy, too harsh, too powerful for that man crumbling to dust — ah! my thought was in very truth of life and death — an ara-



besque of the imagination, a chimæra half revolting, but divinely woman from the waist up.

“And yet such marriages are celebrated not infrequently in society,” I said to myself.

“He smells of the cemetery!” cried the terrified young woman, pressing against me, as if to make sure of my protection; and her excited movements told me that she was really in a great fright. “It’s a ghastly sight,” she continued; “I can’t stay here any longer. If I look at him again, I shall think that Death himself has come to fetch me. Is he really alive?”

She placed her hand on the phenomenon, with the courage that women derive from the very violence of their wishes; but the cold sweat started from her pores, for as soon as she touched the old man she heard a cry like the noise made by a rattle. That shrill voice, if voice it were, came from a parched throat. It was succeeded by a faint child’s cough, with a peculiar ring. At the sound Marianina, Filippo, and Madame de Lanty looked in our direction, and their glances were like lightning flashes. The young woman wished that she were at the bottom of the Seine. She took my arm and dragged me away toward a boudoir. Men and women, everybody, made way for us. When we came to the end of the reception-rooms, we entered a small semicircular cabinet. My companion threw herself on a divan, panting with fright, and unconscious where she was.

“You are mad, madame,” I said.

“Why,” she rejoined after a moment’s silence, during which I gazed at her in admiration, “was it my fault? Why does Madame de Lanty let ghosts wander about her house?”

“Nonsense,” I replied; “you are copying the fools. You mistake a little old man for a spectre.”

“Hush!” she retorted, with the imposing yet mocking expression which all women are so quick to assume when they are determined to put themselves in the right. “Oh! what a sweet boudoir!” she cried, looking about. “Blue satin is always lovely in hangings. What a fresh, cool effect! And oh! what a beautiful picture!” she added, rising and planting herself in front of a magnificently framed canvas.

We stood for a moment gazing at that marvel of art, which seemed to be the work of some superhuman brush. The picture represented Adonis lying on a lion’s skin. The lamp hanging in the middle of the boudoir, in an alabaster jar, threw a soft light on the picture which enabled us to grasp all the beauty of the execution.

“Is there such a perfect being in existence?” she asked me, after scrutinizing, not without a smile of satisfaction, the exquisite grace of the outlines, the attitude, the coloring, the hair, — in short, every detail. “He is too beautiful for a man,” she added, having completed such an examination as she might have made of a rival.

Ah! how keenly I felt the stab of the jealousy in which a poet would have tried vainly to make me believe! the jealousy of engravings, of paintings, of statues, in which artists exaggerate human beauty, as a result of the doctrine which leads them to idealize everything.

“It’s a portrait,” I said. “It is one of the fruits of Vien’s talent. But that great painter never saw the original, and your admiration will be less lively perhaps

when you learn that the portrait was made from a statue of a woman."

"But who is it?"

I hesitated.

"I insist upon knowing," she added eagerly.

"I believe," I said, "that this Adonis represents a — a kinsman of Madame de Lanty."

I was distressed to see that she was buried fathoms deep in contemplation of that face. She seated herself in silence; I sat down beside her and took her hand, and she did not notice it! Forgotten for a portrait!

At that moment I heard the light footstep and rustling dress of a woman. Young Marianina entered the room, more resplendent by her innocent expression than by her grace and her pretty gown. She was walking slowly and leading with maternal care and filial solicitude the clothed spectre that had driven us away from the music-room; as she led him along, she watched him with a sort of uneasiness as he slowly lifted his nerveless feet. At last, with some difficulty, they reached a door concealed in the hangings. Marianina knocked softly. Instantly there appeared, as by magic, a tall, spare man, — a sort of familiar spirit.

Before entrusting the old man to this mysterious keeper, the lovely child kissed the walking corpse with the greatest respect; nor was her pure caress devoid of the charming cajolery the secret of which is known only to a few highly favored women.

"*Addio! addio!*" she said, in the sweetest tone of her fresh young voice.

She added to the last syllable a roulade admirably executed, but under her breath, as if to give poetic expression to the outpouring of her heart. The old man,

as if suddenly struck by some recollection, stood in the doorway of that secret issue; and, because of the profound silence, we heard the long-drawn sigh that issued from his breast. He removed the most beautiful of the rings with which his skeleton fingers were loaded, and placed it in Marianina's bosom. The young madcap laughed, fished up the ring, slipped it on one of her fingers outside the glove, and darted quickly toward the salon, where we heard at that moment the prelude of a contra-dance.

She caught sight of us.

"Ah! you were here!" she exclaimed, blushing.

After looking at us as if to question us, she ran to her partner with the pert heedlessness of her years.

"What does that mean?" my young partner asked me. "Is he her husband? I fancy I am dreaming. Where am I?"

"You!" I replied, "you, madame, who are naturally excitable, and who, understanding so well the most undiscoverable emotions, are expert in implanting in a man's heart the most delicate of sentiments without withering him, without crushing him at the outset; you, who are so compassionate to pangs of the heart, and who combine with the wit of the Parisian woman an impassioned nature worthy of Italy or Spain —"

She realized that my words were bitterly ironical; and thereupon, without any indication that she noticed it, she interrupted me to say: —

"Oh! you fashion me to suit your own taste. What a strange kind of despotism! You will have it that I am not *myself*!"

"Oh! I will have nothing," I cried, dismayed by her stern manner. "At all events, it is true, is it not? that

you like to hear tales of the violent passions sown in our hearts by the enchanting women of the South."

"Yes. What then?"

"Well, I will come to you about nine to-morrow evening, and I will disclose the secret of this mystery."

"No," she retorted maliciously, "I insist upon knowing it now."

"You have n't yet given me the right to obey when you say: 'I insist!'"

"At this moment," she rejoined with maddening coquetry, "I have the most intense desire to know this secret. To-morrow, perhaps, I won't listen to you."

She smiled, and we separated, — she as proud and stern and I as ridiculous as ever. She had the audacity to waltz with a young aide-de-camp, and I stood where she had left me, angry, sulky, admiring, loving, and jealous by turns.

"Until to-morrow," she said to me about two in the morning, when she was leaving the house.

"I won't go," I said to myself, "I give you up. You are a thousand times more capricious, more erratic, than my imagination."

The next evening we sat before a bright fire, in a dainty little salon, — she on a *causeuse*, I on cushions almost at her feet, and with my eyes under hers. The street was silent. The lamp shed a soft light. It was one of those evenings grateful to the soul, one of those times that are never forgotten, one of those hours passed in peace and longing, the charm of which is always a source of regret in later life, even when we are happier. What can efface the vivid impression of the first solicitations of love?

“Go on,” she said, “I am listening.”

“But I dare not begin. The story has passages that are perilous for the narrator. If I become excited, you must make me stop.”

“Say on.”

“I obey.”

## II.

ERNEST-JEAN SARRASINE was the only son of an attorney of Franche-Comté [I continued, after a pause]. His father had honorably earned six to eight thousand francs a year, a professional income which seemed enormous in the provinces not long ago. Old Maître Sarrasine, having only one child, determined to leave nothing undone in the matter of his education: he hoped to make a magistrate of him, and to live long enough to see, in his declining years, the grandson of Mathieu Sarrasine, farm-laborer of Saint-Dié, seated on the lilies and sleeping during the session, to the greater glory of the parliament. But Heaven had not that pleasure in store for the attorney. Young Sarrasine, being placed in the Jesuits' hands at an early age, gave proofs of an unusually turbulent nature. His childhood was that of a man of talent. He would not study except at his own pleasure, often rebelled against authority, and sometimes remained for hours at a time absorbed in chaotic meditations, — now watching his schoolfellows while they played, and again summoning before his imagination the heroes of Homer.

If it did happen that he joined in the games, he displayed a most extraordinary ardor. When a dispute arose between him and one of his fellows, it rarely ended until blood had been shed. If he proved the weaker, he would bite. By turns active and inactive, either without any special aptitude or too intelligent, his abnormal temperament caused him to be feared by

his masters as well as by his comrades. Instead of learning the elements of the Greek language, he would draw the reverend father who was construing a passage of Thucydides, make sketches of the professor of mathematics, the prefect, the servants, the auditor, and besmear all the walls with meaningless daubs. Instead of chanting the praise of the Lord in church, he would amuse himself during the services by whittling a bench; or, if he chanced to have stolen a bit of wood, he would carve the face of some saint. If he had neither wood nor stone nor pencil, he would reproduce his ideas with bits of bread. Whether he copied the figures in the pictures that adorned the choir, or drew on his own imagination, he always left at his seat coarse sketches of a licentious cast that drove the younger fathers to despair; and evil-speakers declared that the old Jesuits smiled at them.

At last, if we are to believe the chronicles of the school, he was expelled for having carved a stout fagot into the semblance of the Christ, one Good Friday, while awaiting his turn at the confessional. The impiety embodied in that work of art was too flagrant not to draw down chastisement on the artist. He actually had the audacity to place that more than cynical figure on the very summit of the tabernacle!

Sarrasine came to Paris to seek a refuge from the threat of the paternal malediction. Having a powerful will of the sort that knows no obstacles, he obeyed the behests of his talent and entered Bouchardon's studio. He worked all day, and at night went about begging food. Bouchardon, amazed at the young artist's intelligence and rapid progress, soon discovered his impoverished state; he assisted him, became attached to



him, and treated him like his own son. Then, when Sarrasine's genius made itself manifest by one of those works in which the talent of the future struggles with the effervescence of youth, Bouchardon tried to restore him to the old attorney's good graces. The paternal wrath subsided before the authoritative voice of the famous sculptor, and all Besançon congratulated itself upon having given to the world a future great man. In the first enthusiasm of the ecstasy born of his flattered vanity, the miserly attorney put his son in a position to make a handsome appearance in society.

The prolonged and toilsome study demanded by the sculptor's art held Sarrasine's impulsive nature and intractable genius in check for a long while. Bouchardon, foreseeing the violence with which the passions would eventually burst into action in that youthful spirit, as powerfully constituted perhaps as Michael Angelo's, smothered his energy with constant tasks. He succeeded in restraining Sarrasine's extraordinary impetuosity within reasonable bounds, by forbidding him to work, by suggesting diversions to him when he saw that he was excited by some tempestuous idea, or by entrusting important commissions to him when he was on the point of plunging into dissipation. But with that passionate nature gentleness was always the most potent of all weapons; and the master acquired great influence over his pupil simply by arousing his gratitude by means of a true paternal kindness.

At the age of twenty-two Sarrasine was compulsorily removed from the salutary influence which Bouchardon exerted upon his morals and his habits. He incurred the penalty of his genius by winning the prize for sculpture founded by the Marquis de Marigny, Madame de

Pompadour's brother, who did so much for the arts. Diderot extolled Bouchardon's pupil's statue as a chef-d'œuvre. Not without profound sorrow did the king's sculptor witness the departure for Italy of a young man whose profound ignorance concerning the ordinary affairs of life he had fostered as a matter of principle.

As great a fanatic in his art as Canova afterward was, he rose at dawn, went to the studio, and remained there till dark, and lived only with his Muse. If he went to the Comédie-Française, he was dragged there by his master. He was so bored at Madame de Geoffrin's, and in the aristocratic society into which Bouchardon tried to introduce him, that he preferred to remain alone, and shunned the dissipations of that licentious age. He had no other mistresses than sculpture and Clotilde, one of the celebrities of the Opéra. And even that intrigue did not last long. Sarrasine was decidedly ugly, always ill-dressed, and of so intractable a character and so irregular in his private life that the illustrious *danseuse*, fearing some catastrophe, soon relegated the sculptor to love of the arts. Sophie Arnould perpetrated a *bon mot* — I don't remember what — on the subject. She was surprised, I think, that her comrade had been able to prevail over statues.

Sarrasine started for Italy in 1758. During the journey his imagination took fire under a sky of copper, and at sight of the wonderful monuments with which the fatherland of the arts is strewn. He admired the statues, the frescoes, the pictures; and overflowing with the impulse of emulation, he arrived at Rome, possessed by a frantic desire to inscribe his name between those of Michael Angelo and Bouchardon. During the first days, therefore, he divided his time between

his work in the studios and contemplation of the works of art which so abound in Rome. He had already passed a fortnight in the ecstatic state which befalls all youthful imaginations at sight of the queen of ruins, when one evening he entered the Argentina Theatre, in front of which there was an enormous crowd. He made inquiry as to the cause of that great assemblage, and a host of voices answered by calling out two names:—

“Zambinella! Jomelli!”

He entered and took a scat in the pit, crowded by two remarkably stout *abbati*; but he had an excellent place near the stage. The curtain rose. For the first time in his life he heard the music whose charm Jean-Jacques Rousseau had so eloquently extolled to him during an evening reception at Baron d’Holbach’s. The young sculptor’s senses were lubricated, so to speak, by Jomelli’s sublimely harmonious chords. The peculiar languorous quality of the skilfully blended Italian voices plunged him into an ecstatic frenzy. He sat perfectly still and silent, not conscious even of the crowding of the two priests. His whole being passed into his eyes and ears. He seemed to himself to be listening with every pore.

Suddenly a torrent of applause fit to bring the house down greeted the appearance of the prima donna. She came forward coquettishly to the front of the stage and bowed to the audience with indescribable grace. The bright lights, the enthusiasm of a whole city, the illusion of the stage, the extraordinary power of a costume which at that epoch was decidedly alluring, all conspired in the singer’s favor.

Sarrasine fairly cried out with pleasure. At that

moment he had before him the ideal beauty whose perfections he had hitherto sought here and there in nature, depending upon a model — often a low-lived creature — for the rounded outline of a perfect leg; upon another for the shape of the breast; upon another for her white shoulders, and taking from a young girl her neck, from a woman her hands, and from a child its smooth, plump knees; but never encountering beneath the cold skies of Paris the rich and felicitous creations of ancient Greece.

La Zambinella displayed, all throbbing with life and incomparably delicate, those exquisite proportions of female anatomy of which a sculptor is at once the sternest and the most passionate critic. She had an expressive mouth, eyes alight with love, a dazzlingly fair complexion. Add to these details, which would have enraptured a painter, all the marvellous beauties of the Venuses whom the chisel of the Greeks revered and reproduced.

The artist did not tire of admiring the inimitable grace with which the arms were attached to the body, the wonderful roundness of the neck, the graceful curves described by the eyebrows and the nose, and the flawless oval of the face, the purity of its clear-cut outlines, and the effect of the heavy, curved lashes that fringed the ample, voluptuous eyelids. She was more than a woman, she was a masterpiece! In that unhopcd-for creation of nature there was love to intoxicate all mankind, to say nothing of beauties that could not fail to satisfy the most exacting critic.

Sarrasine devoured with his eyes what seemed to him Pygmalion's statue descended from her pedestal. When Zambinella sang, it caused a sort of frenzy.

The artist shuddered with cold; then he felt that a fire suddenly blazed up in the inmost depths of his being, — of what we call the heart, for lack of a better word. He did not applaud, he said not a word; he was conscious of an insane impulse, a sort of frenzy which assails us only at the age when sensual desire has in it a something terrible and demoniacal. He would have liked to rush upon the stage and seize the singer. His strength, increased a hundred fold by a mental depression impossible to explain, since such phenomena take place in a sphere inaccessible to human observation, strove with agonizing violence to make itself felt. To one observing him he would have seemed merely an indifferent, stupid man. Glory, talent, future, laurel wreaths, life, all crumbled to dust.

“To be loved by her, or die!” Such was the sentence Sarrasine passed upon himself.

He was so completely intoxicated that he saw neither theatre nor audience, nor heard the music. More than that, there was no space between Zambinella and himself. She was his; his eyes, fastened upon her, took possession of her. An almost diabolical power enabled him to feel the breath of her voice, to inhale the fragrant powder with which her hair was covered, to observe all the details of her face, to count the blue veins beneath the satin skin. And that fresh, nimble voice, clear as a silver bell, flexible as a thread to which the faintest breath imparts a new shape, which it twists and untwists, and finally blows away, — that voice assailed his very soul so violently that he emitted more than once an involuntary cry, extorted by the convulsive ecstasy too rarely aroused by human passions.

Erelong he was compelled to leave the theatre. His trembling legs almost refused to support him. He was prostrated and weak, like a nervous man who has given way to a violent outburst of wrath. He had had so much enjoyment — or, it may be, had suffered so much — that his life had trickled away like the water from an overturned jar. He felt a void within, a deathly faintness like the fits of weakness which terrify persons convalescing from a serious illness. Assailed by an inexplicable melancholy, he sat down on the steps of a church. There, with his back against a pillar, he lost himself in meditations as confused as a dream. Passion had swept him off his feet.

On returning home he had one of those paroxysms of activity which disclose the presence of new elements in our lives. Aflame with the first fever of love, which is as closely akin to pain as to pleasure, he sought to allay his impatience and his delirious excitement by drawing Zambinella from memory. It was a sort of incarnate meditation. Upon one leaf of his sketch-book Zambinella appeared in the attitude — calm and cold in appearance — affected by Raphael, Giorgione, and all the great painters. Upon another she was turning her head coquettishly as she finished a roulade, and seemed to be listening to herself.

Sarrasine sketched his mistress in every conceivable pose: nude, seated, standing, lying down; modest or amorous; reproducing, thanks to the frenzy of his pencil, all the fanciful ideas that appeal to our imaginations when we are thinking ardently of a mistress. But his unbridled thoughts went far beyond his drawings. He saw La Zambinella, spoke to her, implored her, lived through a thousand years of life and joy with her,

placing her in all imaginable situations, — trying the future with her, so to speak.

The next day he sent his servant to hire a box near the stage for the whole season. Then, like all young men of forceful character, he exaggerated to himself the difficulties of his undertaking, and gave to his passion for its first sustenance the bliss of being able to admire his mistress without hindrance. This golden age of love, during which we take delight in our own passion and in which we are almost happy by ourselves, was not destined to last long with Sarrasine. The course of events surprised him when he was still under the spell of that spring-time delusion, no less sincere than voluptuous.

During about a week he lived a whole lifetime, occupied in the morning in shaping the clay with which he succeeded in copying *La Zambinella*, despite the veils, the skirts, the waists, and the knots of ribbon which concealed her from him. At night, installed betimes in his box, alone, half reclining on a couch, he fashioned for himself, like a Turk drunken with opium, a happiness as ample and as fruitful as he could wish. First of all, he familiarized himself gradually with the too intense emotions which his mistress's singing caused him; then he tamed his eyes to look at her, and finally was able to gaze upon her without fear of the explosion of dumb rage which had surprised him the first day.

His passion sank deeper as it grew more tranquil. But the shy sculptor could not endure that his solitude, peopled as it was with images, embellished with the fanciful visions of hope, and overflowing with happiness, should be disturbed by his friends. He loved with so much fervor and so sincerely that he had to



undergo the harmless scruples which beset us when we love for the first time. When he began to realize that he would soon have to do something, to lay plans, to inquire where La Zambinella lived, to find out whether she had a mother, an uncle, a guardian, a family; in short, when he reflected upon how he could succeed in seeing her and speaking to her, his heart beat so violently at those presumptuous thoughts, that he postponed such considerations to the morrow, as happy in his physical suffering as in his intellectual pleasures.

["But," interposed Madame de Rochefide, "I don't see yet where Marianina comes in, or her little old man."

"You think only of him!" I exclaimed, as testily as a dramatist when one causes him to miss the effect of a *coup de théâtre*.]

For several days Sarrasine made his appearance so regularly in his box, and his glances expressed so much love, that his passion for La Zambinella's voice would have been the talk of all Paris if this adventure had happened there; but in Italy, madame, every one goes to the play for his own pleasure, with his own passions, and with a heartfelt interest which leaves no leisure for playing the spy with opera-glasses.

However, the sculptor's madness was certain not to escape for long the eyes of the singers. One evening he noticed that they were laughing at him in the wings. It is difficult to say to what extremes he might not have gone, had not La Zambinella come on the stage. She cast at Sarrasine one of those eloquent glances which often say more than a woman intends to say. That glance was a revelation. Sarrasine was loved!

"If it's only a caprice," he thought, already ac-



cusing his mistress of a surplus of ardor, "she has no idea of the domination under which she is about to fall. Her caprice will last, I trust, as long as my life."

At that moment three light taps on the door of his box attracted the artist's attention. He opened the door. An old woman entered with an air of mystery.

"Young man," she said, "if you wish to be happy, be prudent. Wrap yourself in a cloak, turn your hat-brim down over your eyes, and about ten o'clock in the evening be on the Corso in front of the Hotel d'Espagne."

"I will be there," he replied, slipping two louis into the duenna's wrinkled hand.

He rushed from his box, after making a significant gesture to La Zambinella, who shyly lowered her voluptuous eyelids, as if she were overjoyed to be understood at last. Then he hastened home, to borrow from his wardrobe such charms as it was capable of lending him.

As he was leaving the theatre, a person whom he did not know stopped him by grasping his arm.

"Beware, Signor Frenchman," he said. "This is a matter of life and death. Cardinal Cicognara is her protector, and he is no trifle."

If a demon had caused the depths of hell to open between Sarrasine and La Zambinella at that moment, he would have crossed them at one stride. Like the horses of the immortal gods described by Homer, the sculptor had traversed immeasurable space in a twinkling.

"Though death await me on leaving the house, I will go the more swiftly," he replied.

"*Poverino!*" cried the unknown, and vanished.

To talk of danger to a man in love is like selling pleasure to him. Never had Sarrasine's servant seen his master so meticulous in the matter of dress. His finest sword, — a present from Bouchardon, — the sash that Clotilde gave him, his bespangled coat, his waistcoat of cloth of silver, his gold snuff-box, his priceless watches, all were taken from their receptacles, and he arrayed himself like a maid about to appear before her first lover. At the appointed hour, drunk with love, Sarrasine sallied forth with his nose in his cloak, to keep the appointment made by the ducna, who was awaiting him.

"You are very late!" she said. "Come."

She led the Frenchman through several narrow streets and halted in front of a palace of rather pretentious exterior. She knocked, and the door opened. She conducted Sarrasine through a labyrinth of galleries, stairways, and apartments, lighted only by the fitful rays of the moon, and soon arrived at a door where a bright light shone through the crack, and he heard several voices laughing and talking.

Sarrasine was fairly dazzled when, at a word from the old woman, he was suddenly admitted to the mysterious apartment, and found himself in a salon as brilliantly illuminated as it was richly furnished. In the centre was a bounteously served table, laden with sacrosanct bottles and smiling decanters whose ruddy sides gleamed in the light. He recognized the singers, men and women, from the theatre, with other charming women, ready one and all to begin an artists' orgy, and awaiting only him.

Sarrasine restrained an angry gesture and put a good face on the matter. He had hoped to find a dimly

lighted room, his mistress beside a brazier, a jealous lover within a yard or two, love and death, heart to heart confidences exchanged in undertones, hazardous kisses, and faces so close together that La Zambinella's tresses would have caressed his brow, laden with desire and burning with joy.

"*Vive la folie!*" he cried. — "*Signori e belle donne*, you will allow me to take my revenge later, and to express my gratitude for the welcome you bestow on a humble sculptor."

Having received the passably cordial greetings of most of those present, whom he knew by sight, he tried to make his way to the couch on which La Zambinella was nonchalantly reclining. Ah! how his heart beat when he spied a tiny foot, shod in one of those slippers which, allow me to say, madame, used to give a lady's foot such a coquettish, voluptuous expression that I cannot understand how the men could resist them. The white stockings with green clocks, the short skirts, the pointed slippers with high heels of Louis XV's day, may have contributed in some degree to the demoralization of Europe and the clergy.

["In some degree!" interposed the marchioness. "For heaven's sake, have you never read anything?"

I resumed, with a smile: —]

La Zambinella shamelessly crossed her legs, and swung the one that was on top — a duchess's attitude which was becoming to her capricious beauty, instinct with a certain alluring indolence. She had laid aside her stage costume, and wore a gown that showed all the lines of a slender figure which was set off to the best advantage by paniers and by a satin skirt embroidered with blue flowers. Her breast, whose treasures were

hidden, with superabundant coquetry, by a bit of lace, was dazzlingly white. With her hair dressed *à la* Madame de Barry, her face, although overshadowed by a large cap, seemed all the sweeter, and the powder was very becoming. To see her so was to adore her.

She smiled graciously on the sculptor. Sarrasine, disgusted that he could not speak to her except before witnesses, seated himself courteously by her side, and talked with her about music, praising her marvellous talent; but his voice trembled with love and fear and hope.

“What are you afraid of?” said Vitagliani, the most famous male singer of the troupe. “You have n’t a single rival to fear.”

With that, the tenor smiled. The lips of all the guests copied the smile, in which there was a suggestion of lurking mischief certain to escape the notice of a man in love. The publicity of his passion was like a dagger-thrust in Sarrasine’s heart. Although blessed with great strength of character and although nothing could abate the violence of his passion, it had not yet occurred to him that La Zambinella was almost a courtesan, and that he could not enjoy at one and the same time the pure pleasure which makes a maiden’s love such a delicious thing, and the frenzied paroxysms whereby one must purchase the possession of an actress. He reflected and bowed to the inevitable.

The supper was served. Sarrasine and La Zambinella seated themselves side by side, without ceremony. During the first half of the feast the artists kept within bounds, and the sculptor was able to talk with the singer. He found her witty and bright; but her ignorance was surprising, and she was weak and super-

stitious. The delicacy of her physique was reproduced in her understanding. When Vitagliani drew the cork of the first bottle of champagne, Sarrasine read in his neighbor's eyes a shrinking fear of the slight report made by the release of the gas. The involuntary thrill that shook her whole body was interpreted by the amorous artist as an indication of extreme sensibility. That display of weakness charmed the Frenchman; there is so much of the element of protection in a man's love!

“You can make use of my strength as a shield!”

Is not that sentence written at the foot of every declaration of love? Sarrasine, who was too profoundly absorbed by his passion to make soft speeches to the fair Italian, was, like all lovers, grave and merry and thoughtful in turn. Although he seemed to be listening to the guests, he did not hear a word that they were saying, so given over was he to the bliss of being by her side, of touching her hand, of serving her. He was swimming in secret joy. Despite the eloquence of an occasional glance, he was surprised at the continued reserve of La Zambinella's attitude toward him. She had begun by pressing his foot and provoking him with the mischievous manner of an enamoured and unattached woman; but she had suddenly wrapped herself in maidenly modesty, after Sarrasine had told her of an incident which disclosed the extreme violence of his nature.

When the supper became a debauch, the guests began to sing, inspired by the *peralta* and the *pedroximenes*. There were enchanting duos, songs of Calabria, Spanish *segurdillos*, and Neapolitan canzonettes. Intoxication was in every eye, in the music,

in the hearts and voices of the guests. Suddenly there was an outpouring of fascinating animation, of cordial *abandon*, of true Italian good-fellowship, of which no words can convey an idea to those who know only the *assemblées* of Paris, the routs of London, or the "cercles" of Vienna. Jests and words of love were hurled about like bullets in a battle, amid laughter, blasphemies, and invocations to the Blessed Virgin or the Bambino. One man stretched himself on a sofa and fell asleep. A young girl listened to a declaration, unconscious that she was spilling wine on the cloth.

Amid all this disorder La Zambinella, as if terror-stricken, was grave and thoughtful. She refused to drink, and ate perhaps a little too much; but gluttony is a charm in woman, so 't is said.

While admiring his mistress's modesty, Sarrasine reflected seriously concerning the future.

"Doubtless she wants to be married," he said to himself.

Thereupon he abandoned himself to dreams of the bliss of marriage with her. His whole life seemed to him too short to exhaust the well-spring of happiness that he found in the depths of his soul. His next neighbor, Vitagliani, filled his glass so often, that about three in the morning Sarrasine, while not absolutely drunk, was powerless to restrain his delirious passion. In an outburst of frenzy he seized the woman and carried her to a sort of boudoir adjoining the salon, to the door of which he had more than once turned his eyes.

The Italian was armed with a dagger.

"If you come near me," she said, "I shall have no choice but to bury this weapon in your heart. Go!

you would despise me. I have too much respect for your character to give way to you thus. I do not wish to be unworthy of the sentiment with which you honor me."

"Ah!" said Sarrasine, "to stimulate a passion is a poor way to extinguish it. In Heaven's name, are you already so corrupt that, though old at heart, you would act like a young harlot, who incites the emotions upon which she trades?"

"But this is Friday," she replied, terrified by his vehemence.

Sarrasine, who was not religiously inclined, began to laugh. La Zambinella gave a leap like a young kid and darted into the banquet hall. When Sarrasine appeared there, running after her, he was greeted by a roar of demoniac laughter. He saw La Zambinella half swooning on a sofa. She was deathly pale, as if exhausted by the superhuman effort she had made. Although Sarrasine knew little Italian, he heard his mistress say to Vitagliani in a low voice:—

"But he will kill me!"

That strange scene bewildered the sculptor. Then his reason returned. He stood still for an instant; then, recovering the power of speech, he sat down by his mistress and protested his respect for her. He mustered strength to dissemble his passion and talked to her in a most exalted strain. To describe his love, he displayed all the treasures of his magical eloquence— a serviceable interpreter which women rarely refuse to believe.

When the first glimmer of dawn surprised the revellers, one of the women proposed that they go to Frascati. One and all welcomed with loud applause the idea of

passing the day at the Villa Ludovisi. Vitagliani went down to hire carriages. Sarrasine had the good fortune to drive La Zambinella in a phaeton. Once away from Rome, the jovial spirit, which had been suppressed temporarily by the fight they had all had with drowsiness, suddenly reawoke. All, men and women alike, seemed accustomed to that abnormal life, to that constant succession of diversions, to that restless enthusiasm characteristic of the actor, which makes of life a perpetual merry-making, wherein one laughs ceaselessly without thought of the morrow.

The sculptor's companion was the only one who seemed depressed.

"Are you ill?" Sarrasine asked her. "Would you prefer to go home?"

"I am not strong enough to stand all this dissipation," she replied. "I have to be very careful; but with you I feel so well! But for you I should not have stayed at that supper; a sleepless night takes away all my freshness."

"You are so delicate!" said Sarrasine, feasting his eyes on the fascinating creature's lovely features.

"Such orgies ruin my voice."

"Now that we are alone," cried Sarrasine, "and you no longer have to fear the vehemence of my passion, tell me that you love me!"

"Why?" she rejoined; "what is the use? You think that I am pretty. But you are a Frenchman, and your feeling for me will pass away. Oh! you would not love me as I should wish to be loved."

"How is that?"

"Purely, without the usual aim of a vulgar passion. I abhor men even more perhaps than I detest women.



I long to take refuge in friendship. To me the world is a desert. I am an accursed creature, doomed to understand what happiness is, to feel it, to long for it, and, like so many others, to see it shun me every moment. Remember, my lord, that I have not deceived you. I forbid you to love me. I can be a devoted friend to you, for I admire your strength and your character. I need a brother, a protector; be both of those to me, but nothing more."

"Not love you!" cried Sarrasine; "why, my dearest angel, you are my life, my happiness!"

"If I should say one word, you would spurn me with horror."

"Coquette! nothing can frighten me. Tell me that you will cost me my future, that I shall die within two months, that I shall be damned just for having kissed you —"

And he kissed her, despite her efforts to avoid that passionate caress.

"Tell me that you are a devil, that you must have my money, my name, all my celebrity! Do you want me not to be a sculptor? Tell me."

"Suppose I were not a woman?" faltered La Zambinella timidly, in a sweet, silvery voice.

"An excellent joke!" cried Sarrasine. "Do you think you can deceive an artist's eye? Have I not, for ten days past, devoured, scrutinized, admired your charms? None but a woman could have that soft, rounded arm, those graceful outlines. Ah! you are seeking compliments!"

She smiled sadly and murmured:—

"Fatal beauty!"

She raised her eyes toward heaven. At that moment

her glance had an indefinable expression of horror, so penetrating, so eloquent, that Sarrasine shuddered.

“Signor Frenchman,” she continued, “forget a moment’s madness. I esteem you; but as for love, do not ask it of me; that sentiment is smothered in my heart. I have no heart!” she sobbed. “The stage on which you have seen me, the applause, the music, the fame to which I am condemned, — all those are my life; I have no other. A few hours hence you will not see me with the same eyes — the woman you love will be dead.”

The sculptor did not reply. He was overwhelmed by a paroxysm of rage which made his heart stop beating. He could only glare at that strange woman, with inflamed eyes that burned like fire. The feeble voice, the attitude, the gestures of Zambinella, instinct with melancholy and discouragement, rearoused his passion in all its intensity. Each word was a spur.

Just then they arrived at Frascati. When the artist took his mistress in his arms, to help her to alight, he felt that she was trembling from head to foot.

“What’s the matter? You would kill me,” he cried, seeing how pale she was, “if you should suffer the slightest pain, of which I was the cause, although innocently.”

“A snake!” she exclaimed, pointing to a serpent gliding along the edge of a ditch; “I am afraid of the disgusting creatures.”

Sarrasine crushed the snake’s head with his heel.

“How do you dare to do it?” queried La Zambinella, gazing with manifest terror at the dead reptile.

They joined their companions and walked in the forest of the Villa Ludovisi, which then belonged to

Cardinal Cicognara. The morning passed all too quickly for the lovesick sculptor, but it was marked by a multitude of incidents which revealed the coquetry, the weakness, the delicacy of that yielding and inert nature. She was the true woman, with her sudden panics, her inexplicable whims, her instinctive embarrassment, her causeless bravado, and her delicious delicacy of feeling. There was one time when, venturing out into the open country, the merry band of singers spied a number of men, armed to the teeth, whose costumes were not calculated to reassure. At the word "Brigands!" they all began to run, seeking safety within the precincts of the cardinal's villa. At that critical moment Sarrasine knew, by Zambinella's pallor, that she had not strength enough to walk; he took her in his arms and carried her for some time, running. When he reached a vineyard near by, he set her down again.

"Tell me how it is," he said, "that this extreme weakness, which in any other woman would be disgusting and would offend me, so that the slightest sign of it would be almost enough to kill my love, pleases me, yes, fascinates me in you? Oh! how I love you!" he continued. "All your faults, your fears, your frivolity, add I know not what charm to your personality. I feel that I should detest a strong woman, a Sappho brave and energetic and passionate. O frail, sweet creature! how couldst thou be other than thou art? That soft, angelic voice would have been an absurdity if it had come from a body different from thine."

"I cannot give you any hope," she replied. "Cease to talk to me thus, or you will be laughed at. It is impossible for me to forbid you to enter the theatre, but

if you love me, or if you are wise, you will come there no more. Listen to me, signore —” she added, in a serious tone.

“Oh, hush!” said the intoxicated artist. “Obstacles add fuel to the love in my heart.”

La Zambinella maintained an amiable and modest attitude; but she said no more, as if reflection had disclosed the imminence of some terrible catastrophe. When it was time to return to Rome, she entered a four-scated berlin, ordering the sculptor, with a cruelly imperious air, to return alone in the phaeton.

On the way Sarrasine determined to abduct La Zambinella. He passed the whole day forming plans, each more extravagant than the last. At nightfall, as he was going out to ask some one where the palace occupied by his mistress was situated, he met one of his friends in the doorway.

“My dear fellow,” said the latter, “I am sent by our ambassador to invite you to come to his house this evening. He is giving a splendid concert, and when you know that Zambinella will be there —”

“Zambinella!” cried Sarrasine, wildly excited by the name, “I am mad over her!”

“You are like everybody else,” rejoined his friend.

“But if you are really my friends, — you and Vien and Lauterbourg and Allegrain, — you’ll lend me your assistance for a *coup de main* after the concert?”

“There’s to be no cardinal killed? no —”

“No, no!” said Sarrasine; “I am not asking you to do anything that honorable men may not do.”

In a short time the sculptor arranged everything to ensure the success of his enterprize. He was among the last to appear at the ambassador’s, but he arrived in a

travelling carriage drawn by four stout horses and driven by one of the most enterprising *vetturini* of Rome.

The ambassador's palace was full of people, and it was not without difficulty that the sculptor, who was a stranger to all the guests, made his way to the salon where Zambinella was singing at that moment.

"Doubtless it is out of respect for the cardinals and bishops and abbés who are here, that *she* is dressed as a man, that *she* has a queue behind her head, her hair curled, and a sword at her side?" said Sarrasine in a tone of inquiry.

"She! what she!" rejoined the old gentleman whom he addressed.

"La Zambinella."

"La Zambinella!" repeated the Roman prince. "Are you joking? Where do you come from? Did ever a woman appear on the stage in Rome? And don't you know what sort of creatures take the female parts in the Papal States? It was I, monsieur, who endowed Zambinella with his voice. I paid all the rascal's expenses, even his teacher of singing. And if you'll believe it, he is so ungrateful for all that I have done for him that he has never vouchsafed to set his foot within my door. And yet, if he makes a fortune, he will owe it all to me."

Prince Chigi might have talked on forever; Sarrasine was not listening to him. A ghastly truth had forced its way into his mind. He was struck down as by a thunderbolt. He stood perfectly still, his eyes fastened upon the singer. His flaming glance had a sort of magnetic influence on Zambinella, for the *musicò* finally turned his eyes in Sarrasine's direction,

and thereupon his divine voice faltered. He trembled. An involuntary murmur arose from the throng, whom he held as if attached to his lips, and that completed his discomfiture; he ceased to sing and sat down.

Cardinal Cicognara, who had looked out of the corner of his eyes in the direction of his protégé's glance, saw the Frenchman; he turned to one of his clerical aides-de-camp, and apparently asked the sculptor's name. When he had obtained the reply that he sought, he scrutinized the artist most carefully and gave some order to an abbé, who instantly disappeared. Meanwhile Zambinella, having recovered his self-possession, finished the piece he had broken off so unceremoniously. But he sang wretchedly and refused, despite all the urgent appeals that were made to him, to sing anything else. It was the first time that he had exhibited that capricious despotism which subsequently made him no less famous than his talent and his enormous fortune, which latter, they say, was due to his beauty as much as to his voice.

"She 's a woman," said Sarrasine, thinking that he was alone. "There 's some secret intrigue behind this. Cardinal Cicognara is deceiving the Pope and the whole city of Rome!"

The sculptor immediately left the salon, assembled his friends, and placed them in ambush in the courtyard of the palace. When Zambinella had made sure of Sarrasine's departure, he seemed to recover some measure of tranquillity.

About midnight, after wandering about the salons like a man looking for an enemy, the *musicò* left the palace. As he passed through the gateway, he was adroitly seized by a number of men, who gagged him

with a handkerchief and deposited him in the carriage hired by Sarrasine. Frozen with terror, Zambinella cowered in a corner, not daring to stir. He saw before him the terrible face of the sculptor, who maintained the silence of the dead.

The journey was a short one. Zambinella, borne by Sarrasine, soon found himself in a bare, dismal studio. The singer, half dead, lay back in a chair, afraid to look at a female statue, on which he had recognized his own features. He did not utter a word, but his teeth chattered; he was paralyzed with fright.

Sarrasine paced the floor with long strides. Suddenly he halted in front of Zambinella.

"Tell me the truth," he demanded in a hollow voice; "are you a woman? Has Cardinal Cicognara —"

Zambinella fell on his knees, and answered only by hanging his head.

"Ah! you are a woman!" cried the artist in a frenzy; "for even a —"

He did not finish the sentence.

"No," he continued, "*he* would not be so contemptible."

"Oh! do not kill me!" cried Zambinella, bursting into tears. "I consented to deceive you only to please my comrades who wanted to enjoy the joke."

"Joke!" exclaimed the sculptor, and his voice had a demoniac ring; "joke! joke! You dared to make sport of a man's sincere passion!"

"Oh! mercy!" cried Zambinella.

"I ought to kill you!" said Sarrasine, drawing his sword violently. "But," he continued with cold contempt, "if I should search your whole being with this blade, should I find there a sentiment to destroy, any-

thing to wreak my vengeance upon? You are nothing. If you were man or woman, I would kill you! but —”

He made a gesture of abhorrence which forced him to turn his head, when he spied the statue.

“And that is a delusion!” he cried. “A woman’s heart was to me a place of refuge, a fatherland,” he added, turning toward Zambinella again. “Have you sisters who look like you? No? Then die! — But no, you shall live. To leave you in life is to doom you to something worse than death, is it not? It is neither my blood nor my life that I regret, but the future and the fortune of my heart. Your feeble hand has overturned my happiness. What hope can I extort from you in place of all those you have destroyed? You have pulled me down to your own level. To love, to be loved, are henceforth meaningless words to me, as they are to you. All my life I shall think of yonder imaginary woman when I see a real woman.” He pointed to the statue with a gesture of despair. “I shall always have in my mind a celestial harpy who buried her claws in my manly sentiments, and who branded all other women with a brand of imperfection. You monster, who cannot give life, have stripped the world of all women for me!”

He scated himself in front of the terrified singer. Two great tears rolled from his dry eyes down his manly cheeks, and fell to the floor; two tears of rage, two bitter, scorching tears.

“No more love for me! I am dead to all pleasure, to all human emotions.”

As he spoke, he seized a hammer and hurled it at the statue with such excessive force that he missed it. He thought that he had destroyed that monument of his



madness, and thereupon he took his sword again and brandished it, meaning to kill the singer.

At that moment three men entered the room, and the sculptor fell, pierced by three daggers.

“From Cardinal Cicognara,” said one of the men.

“’T is a benefaction worthy of a Christian,” said the Frenchman as he breathed his last.

The sanguinary emissaries told Zambinella of his patron’s uneasiness, and that he was waiting at the door in a closed carriage, to take him away as soon as he was set free.

“But,” said Madame de Rochefide, “what connection is there between this story and the little old man we saw at the Lantys’?”

“Madame, Cardinal Cicognara took possession of Zambinella’s statue and had it carved in marble; it is now in the Albani Museum. It was not until 1791 that the Lanty family discovered it there and commissioned Vien to copy it. The portrait which showed you Zambinella at the age of twenty, a moment after you had seen him as a centenarian, served later as a model for Girodet’s Endymion; you may have recognized his style in the Adonis.”

“But this Zambinella?”

“Must have been Marianina’s great-uncle, madame. You can understand now the interest Madame de Lanty has in concealing the source of a fortune that comes —”

“Enough!” said she, with a commanding gesture.

For a moment neither of us spoke.

“Well?” I said at last.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, springing to her feet and

paecing the floor. She gazed at me, and said in an altered voice: —

“You have sickened me of life and passion for a long time. In truth, do not all human sentiments end thus by ghastly disillusionments? If we are mothers, our children kill us by their evil behavior or their indifference. As wives, we are betrayed. As sweethearts, we are cast off, abandoned. Friendship! Is there such a thing? I would turn religious to-morrow if I had n’t the power to stand like an inaccessible cliff amid the storms of life. If the future of the Christian is still another delusion, at all events it is not destroyed until after death. Leave me.”

“Ah!” said I, “you know how to punish.”

“Am I wrong?”

“Yes,” I replied, in a burst of courage. “By finishing this story, which is well known in Italy, I can give you an exalted idea of the progress made by the civilization of to-day. Those wretched creatures are made no more.”

“Paris,” said she, “is a most hospitable spot: it welcomes everything, both shameful fortunes and fortunes stained with blood. Crime and infamy are entitled to shelter here; virtue alone has no altars consecrated to it. But pure souls have a fatherland above! No one will ever have known me as I am! I am proud of it!”

And the marchioness fell into meditation.

PARIS, November, 1830.





HONORÉ DE  
BALZAC'S WORKS

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XXXIII

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