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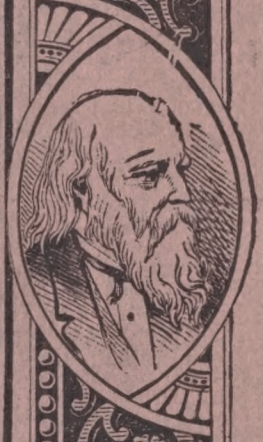

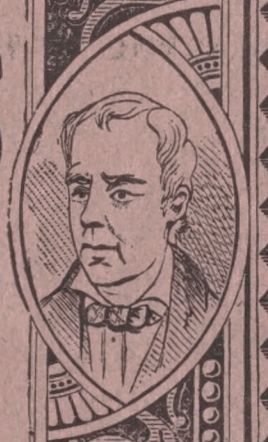

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BY HENRY GREVILLE.

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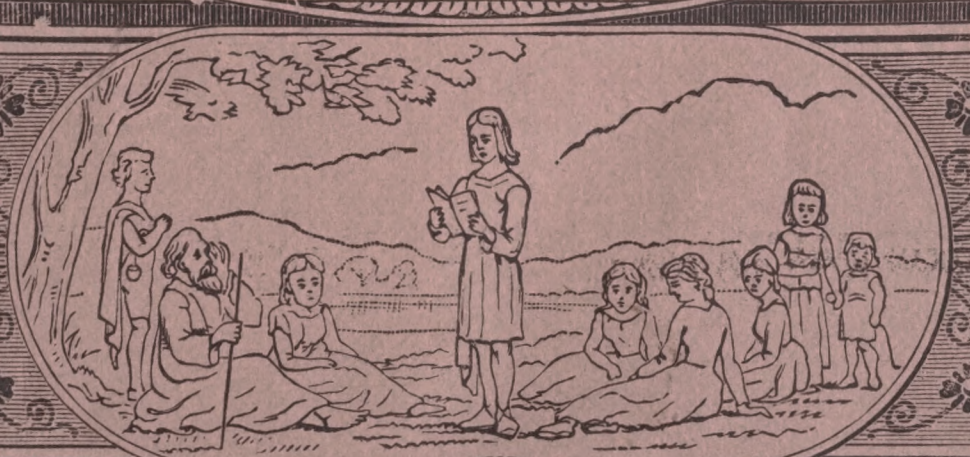

WILD OATS

[Folle avoine]

BY HENRY GREVILLE.

Presented by Henry Durand

TRANSLATED BY DR. F. C. VALENTINE.

40 Munro

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(1884)

WILD OATS.

By HENRY GREVILLE.

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CHAPTER I.

"Is he asleep?" asked Mme. Romanet in a low tone, as her husband appeared on the threshold of the dining-room. M. Romanet raised his hand to warn her to be silent, advanced on the tips of his toes, which made the floor creak horribly, and seated himself near his wife, in the circle of light formed by the shade of the lamp.

The great clock, with a noise like the beating of iron, was about to strike ten. Mme. Romanet looked at it anxiously, wishing that it would stop, but how could she prevent the clock from striking? The dining-room clock had never stopped a minute since the memory of man. It had only been cleaned by blowing into it; from time to time the head of the family touched the wheels with a little feather dipped in oil, and that sufficed for months, sometimes for years. Then the clock struck, awakening the echoes from the glass and silver on the side-board.

When the last stroke had ceased to vibrate, M. Romanet replied to his wife, who had shown some signs of impatience.

"He is asleep," said he, "and sleeps so soundly that I could scarcely hear him breathe."

"Poor child! he must have been very weary to have gone to bed without his dinner."

"He will make up for it to-morrow," replied M. Romanet. "Really, he has a very good face, though somewhat tanned and bronzed in the military service. He is no longer your rosy boy, as pretty as a girl, my dear wife. He is a man now."

"He was handsome before, but he is handsomer still now!" proudly responded the mother. "He is twenty-two years old. He is no longer a child. But being a volunteer has spoiled his hands and feet."

"The volunteer service has some good features," said M. Romanet, sententiously. "Let us speak well of it."

The mother sighed lightly, and did not persist in the discussion. For some hours she had no longer been angry with the volunteer service, which had deprived her of her son for an entire year. Had he not returned to the dear paternal fireside, never to leave it again? There he was so much loved, so much petted, that his

father had sometimes feared lest military life should be too rough to this child, who had until then known only pleasure.

Ah, well, till then life had been very easy for him. In the regiment Lucien Romanet was generally liked, so that many little trials had been spared him. Those which could not be avoided were not too painful, imbued, as he was, by his father's very comfortable optimistic philosophy. And, besides, his good nature brought him many indulgences: a precious gift; he knew not malice, therefore he knew not the meaning of the word hatred; neither did he know it at school, as he had no jealousy during the time that he prepared himself for the examinations for the double baccalaureate.

The father and mother remained up late, talking of their son, before the logs, which were covered with impalpably fine ashes. Lucien was the constant subject of their conversation, and it seemed to them that they had never before had occasion to mutually confide in each other on his account.

This return to the parental roof after a year of absence seemed to render their son, in some way, a new being. Arriving at nightfall, half dead with fatigue, Lucien had only exchanged a few words with his parents, and had gone off to bed, in order to make up for the sleep that he had lost while traveling. Mme. Romanet did not say two words to him; why should she lose, in talking, the few moments in which she could embrace the dear being whose presence she had so long missed? The next day M. and Mme. Romanet could learn the changes which this year of absence and discipline had wrought in the soul of their child.

When the old clock struck midnight, the husband and wife started, surprised to find themselves up so late, and they arose hastily.

"If we should go to see him asleep?" suggested the mother.

The father smiled, but did not say no. Shading their lamp with their hands, they went stealthily toward Lucien's chamber, and stopped at the threshold to look at him without arousing him.

He slept a profound, dreamless sleep. His handsome fair head and somewhat tanned face rested on his pillow as carelessly as that of a child. His fine mustache threw a shadow over his mouth, the smile of which his mother adored, and his eyes, although closed, seemed, under their thick black lashes, about to look at his parents.

"How handsome he is!" murmured Mme. Romanet.

"How absurd mothers are!" replied M. Romanet, gently, closing the door with great care.

"Tell me that he is not beautiful?" insisted his wife.

"You know very well that I will not say that," said the father, smiling. "Let us acknowledge that we are both absurd."

CHAPTER II.

THE next day, before breakfast, on receiving their morning journals, all Mantes learned that young M. Romanet had arrived the evening before from his regiment. At the hour of

the general promenade, all the ladies of the town who were more or less acquainted with Mme. Romanet remembered that they had not been out to take the air for some time, and that it was truly a beautiful day for November.

Therefore the island presented the unusual spectacle, for a week-day, of the whole female population, coquettishly attired, and having an insane desire to try the effect of their new winter hats; the more daring even took out their muffs, while others still clung to their parasols.

The beauty of the day made both desirable. They stopped, they chatted, they told each other a thousand interesting things; thus the afternoon advanced, and the sun rapidly descended into the delicious blue-green of the sky which was reflected in the Seine. Several ladies had already regretfully left the more distant paths where the arched branches, leafless at this season, formed a strange lattice-work against the sky like a delicate tracery in the wood carving of a cathedral.

Mme. Orliet appeared at the end of the path accompanied by her daughter Annie.

"Annie has on a new dress," said Mme. Sergent to her neighbor.

"How absurd to dress that little one so richly!" replied that charitable person.

"Not at all! The Orliets have superb relatives in Paris, my good friend. They do not dress Annie for Mantes; it is necessary that she should be dressed for Paris as well."

"I do not say 'No,' but gray velvet and chinchilla—if it is suitable for her position, it is not suitable for her age. They dress her like that because they hope to marry her off soon!"

"She will marry without our help," replied Mme. Sergent.

Her own daughters had been married for a long time, and she felt a calm superiority over those mothers whose daughters were still on their hands.

Annie Orliet walked under the shadow of the high lindens with the calm grace of a young girl who knew nothing of life but its pleasures. Her mother adored her. She had lost her father when very young, but she had two uncles who loved only her and who endeavored to take her father's place.

Why did her mother live at Mantes when all her relatives should have drawn her to Paris? This was a part of Mme. Orliet's plan of education.

Born at Mantes in an old and magnificent mansion, the family homestead, she had never looked upon any other place as her home. The high ceilings of her house, the large latticed windows which looked upon the river, the terrace with its steps, in summer covered with pomegranate and orange trees, alone could give her the impression of home.

One of the pleasures of the widow's life had been to see her daughter Annie grow up in the place where she herself had learned to walk, and then to talk. When she saw her little daughter clad in the white muslin of the first communion, in the same place where her deceased mother had, eighteen years before, arranged the folds of her veil around her face, Mme.

Orliet had experienced one of those emotions which come only to those who have raised from childhood an altar for remembrances in their souls.

It was her own youthful self which walked before her in those snowy folds, it was a past whose memory floated around her in the moldings of the cornices, in the angles of the doors, in the lambrequins of the curtains. The materials of the curtains had been renewed, but that signified nothing. Did they not shade the same nooks in the windows?

Among these beloved surroundings, modified perhaps by small household details, where the color might change, but where the form remained immutable, Mme. Orliet wished to bring up her daughter. She had only cultivated the best side of the province; the rigid censure which instead of being exercised upon ourselves is often indulged toward others, that prudence which compels us in social life to weigh our speech and thoughts, order and economy even, all these were acquired here easier than in Paris.

These qualities, almost virtues, Mme. Orliet believed easier to teach her daughter at Mantes than elsewhere. Ordinary professors had been summoned from Paris. Twice a week, Annie and her mother took the cars and went to attend a course of lessons given by professors who could not come to them. Nothing was left undone to give the young girl a solid and brilliant education. But the injurious, unhealthy Parisian atmosphere had not yet spoiled the fragile petals of this white rose-bud. Annie was Annie, and she resembled no one else.

Mme. Orliet had not come to promenade under the trees impelled by the same motives that actuated the other ladies of the town; the news of the day had not yet reached her: what attracted her was the supreme and wholly artistic charm of the outlines and colors, and the atmosphere of this extraordinary corner of the earth at the hour of sunset. The river reflected in the clear sky, objects already becoming gray, losing their distinct forms and assuming exaggerated ones.

"Out so late?" said Mme. Sergent going toward her.

"You know it is my favorite hour," replied Mme. Orliet.

They exchanged a few words, then Annie and her mother continued their walk to the end of the island, toward the setting sun, where the rays joined the emerald waves, which at that hour were tipped with silver.

They stopped at the end of the lawn, where the path ended, and gazed around them. On the right the hills arose, obscured in the gray mist of twilight; on the left houses surrounded by gardens, formed thick and somber shadows; the tall black trees seemed an impenetrable wall.

At their feet was the brilliant water, and above, behind the gardens, the rose-tinted sky, whose purple clouds mingled with those of an indefinite, soft green.

The red paled little by little, the green became more and more indefinite, while mother and daughter silently enjoyed this feast for their eyes.

"We are very late," said Mme. Orliet turning around. "It

is scarcely worth while to go under the trees, where we shall see nothing; we will go along the shore."

"What a pity! It is pleasanter under the trees, and then we are afraid——"

Then she gave a childish laugh.

"Mamma," said she, "let me sing, there is an echo here, you know, and there is nobody in this part of the island but the gardeners. Besides, nobody will think it is I."

Mme. Orliet did not forbid her; the young girl threw her pretty blonde head on one side and uttered a burst of melody which the echo sent back to her softened, and fading like colors that one sees in dreams. For a moment she amused herself with this play, then, to end off, she sung a complete scale with a trill in the highest note of her voice.

The river seemed to flow quicker, and to become clearer; the shadows deepened and the sandy path which the two women paced, sparkled like a ribbon of burnished steel.

When turning around Annie saw a human form a few steps off, she trembled and took her mother's hand.

"Are you afraid?" said she.

"Annie!" said a grave, sweet voice, "Madame Orliet."

"Lucien!" cried mother and daughter at the same time.

He advanced rapidly and took their hands.

"They told me at your house that you were here," replied he, quickly, like an agitatedman who wishes to conceal his emotion, "and I came to find you. Do you know it is imprudent to remain here so late. In this part of the island there are people who sometimes rob hen-coops, and they would rob you if they thought they could do so without being seen."

"Scold us!" said Annie; "that is agreeable. I like it."

Lucien stopped short.

"Really, it is very agreeable. Can you not understand that it is very pleasant to be scolded by one whom one likes?"

A mysterious silence fell upon this part of the island accompanied, not broken, by the surging of the water in the grass on the shore.

"When did you return?" asked Mme. Orliet.

"Last evening; my mother made me make calls all day. When we arrived at your house, you had gone out. Was that you, Annie, who were singing a little while ago? Do sing again. I beg of you."

"How do you know it was me?" said she, somewhat abashed.

"Is there another voice in the world like yours?"

"You might have thought it was a bird!" said the young girl with a gesture resembling the flapping of wings.

"Come, let us hear that trill once more, will you?"

She threw her head to one side and sang till she was out of breath, while he looked at her in admiration.

She appeared almost black to him on the light background; the velvet of her costume, clinging to her graceful form, made outlines like one of Jean Goujon's *bas-reliefs*. The face alone, illuminated by the light of the horizon and by the reflection from the water below, seemed to shine like mother-of-pearl. She

threw her trill to the echo, then turned toward him hanging her head.

"Is that it?" said she.

"Thanks. That was delicious! What a pity that it could not last forever!"

They walked toward the town. When they entered under the arch of the lindens, Mme. Orliet turned to the right to walk in what little daylight was still left them.

"Oh, mamma! let us go under the trees, I beg, since Lucien will accompany us!" said Annie.

They entered into the shadows, which are less dark when one walks in them, than when seen from a distance. Still it was very dark, and instinctively they walked close together. The dry leaves crackled under their feet sending forth a pungent odor. A small branch having turned under Annie's foot she extended her hand to remove it and encountered Lucien's arm, which made her laugh: she dropped it immediately and took that of her mother. They had talked while they were under this dark arch; when they arrived in sight of the lamps, in the crowded part of the town, they no longer wished to laugh. Silent and weary, as people who have passed a long day together, they went as far as the door of the Orliet mansion, and there they separated with a singular feeling of joy mingled with discontent.

Lucien returned to the home of his parents: the two ladies entered their own apartments. On turning around the young man saw a lamp burning in the window of the first floor.

"What a singular thing!" said he, continuing on his way. "It is Annie, and it is not she. One would say that there is something strange between us which was not there last year. What a marvelous voice! And how pretty she was there on the border of the river! Truly, she is not like anybody else."

During this time Mme. Orliet in vain smoothed the rebellious hair of her daughter, who was kneeling at her feet.

"It is very pleasant, mamma, is it not, that he should come to us like that? See what an extraordinary thing!" said she, raising her clear eyes to her best friend.

"That Lucien should have sought us, that he should know where we were?" said her mother, teasingly.

"No, that he should come like that, while I was sitting on the banks of the marvelous water. How lovely it was, mamma—the water, the sky, the trees, everything! And the echo, too. And the return in the dark—all darkness. Without him you would have come back by the lighter path, would you not, mamma? What do you think of Lucien?"

"I think that his hair is cut too short, and that it does not become him. I hope, too, that he will let his beard grow, for he is ugly without his beard."

Annie did not answer, and felt a sudden desire to weep.

Why should her mother, who was ordinarily so kind and so indulgent, judge the friend of her childhood so severely, upon the first hour of his return? That was not wholly just.

"But, mamma," said she, "you saw him only in the dark,

Wait, at least, till you have seen him by candle-light, as they say!"

Reassured by this thought, she laughed merrily.

CHAPTER III.

AT the end of a month, Lucien Romanet's hair and beard had grown out, and the most pronounced of his enemies, for he had a few, could not deny that he was very handsome. Everybody at Mantes conceded this, they even commenced to call him "the handsome Romanet," which annoyed him greatly.

But long before this, Lucien had rummaged to the bottom of an old trunk, that he had carefully locked the night before he went to his regiment, and taken out some tubes of paint, and a palette, which had been polished by use. From the garret he brought some old paintings that had been hanging there with their faces to the walls. Some of these he brought noiselessly down one morning before dawn, and hung on the walls of his own room, to his mother's great displeasure; but she did not dare to say anything, for fear of annoying her husband.

One afternoon an easel was surreptitiously introduced into the house, and the next day, about nine o'clock in the morning, when Mme. Romanet put her head into her son's room, thinking that he would still be in bed, she saw him before his window trying to choose which scene he should sketch.

"How, Lucien! you are not going to take up painting again?" said she, in such a discontented tone that he could not help laughing while he took her in his arms.

"What do you wish, my beloved mother? It is stronger than I," replied he. "I am afraid that after all you and my father will be obliged to make a painter of your only son."

"I had hoped that that would pass off with the regiment," frankly said the old lady.

"On the contrary, my fondness for it is only increasing by suppression. What do you wish, my cherished mother? All vocations are like that, the more you try to repress them the more imperious they become."

Mme. Romanet seated herself upon the bed, and remained some time in silent consternation.

"What will your father say?" said she at last.

"My father will say that he loves me; that he will not deny me anything that will make me happy, and that, as I am his only child, he cannot wish to do me harm. Seriously, my dear mother, I know well what objections you will both make; that one can never earn money at painting! I am aware of it; that is true until the day when one does earn something, and then one earns a great deal. I have not discovered that truth to-day, or rather it is not I who discovered it, but Jalbrun——"

"Who is Jalbrun?"

"A friend of mine, a very talented musician, who does not earn any money. He said this to me: 'Painting is a profession for the rich, or, at least, people in easy circumstances. Whoever is not sure of being able to live for several years without

earning a cent, ought never to adopt that profession.' Ah, well, mother, it seems to me that we possess these desired conditions. I very well know that we are not immensely rich; but you have put money aside for me, to buy me a law practice, if I should not wish to succeed to my father's. I shall be obliged to study law three years, a profession for which I have not the slightest taste. Give me three years to become a good painter, and I will then take care of myself."

"But, my poor child," said Mme. Romanet, judiciously, "in three years, if you have not been successful, you will not have learned your profession, and you will have lost three years."

"You calculate like Bareme, my incomparable mother," replied Lucien. "But if in the three years I shall not obtain the success which I hope to deserve, you may do with me as you please. I will not offer the least resistance; while now, if you will not assist me to convince my father, you will see me very sad and unhappy for three years. Confess now, that it is not worth while to make me unhappy?"

They talked for a long time, and his mother was convinced; could Mme. Romanet wish for anything but her son's happiness?

The father was not so easily won over. M. Romanet, a notary of Mantes, had, early in life, succeeded his father; in thirty years he had amassed a pretty large fortune, with the greatest honesty, and without attempting to become rich too quickly, he had increased his wealth little by little.

To be rich was very agreeable to him, as it would be to most others; but to be esteemed, to know that nothing, not even the slightest stain, sullied the ermine of his robe, to feel that the respect that he enjoyed was only justice, and above all, to know that wherever his name was mentioned it could be only with true reverence, was one of the greatest pleasures that swelled the heart of this honest man.

What, then, was more natural than for such a father to wish the same career for his son, surrounded by the same honors, but—as everything nowadays is accomplished more quickly than in the days of our predecessors—less work and more time for rest—and to enjoy his prosperity.

Yet M. Romanet, while professing these principles, had felt that to be the notary of Mantes, from which position he would soon retire, could not be his son's ideal. He had nominally preserved his profession by having many assistants, because he could not easily renounce the dearest wish of his life; he held out the hope to Lucien that, if he did not like Mantes, he would arrange for him to live in Paris.

The first time that Mme. Romanet indicated to her husband, by a discreet word, that her son's taste was wholly for painting, he frowned.

"Painting," said he, "is an honest and agreeable pastime, but it would be foolish to adopt it for a profession. You have made a mistake, my dear wife."

Patiently, giving in one day only to broach the subject again

on the morrow, Mme. Romanet laid siege to her husband: her maternal love furnished her with arguments which would have surprised herself, even, if she could have recalled them afterward. Her tenderness and her good sense led her to speak of the drawbacks of an uncongenial vocation, and to that M. Romanet found no reply—retrenching himself in impregnable silence.

Upon the advice of his mother, Lucien no longer spoke of his works; not that he made any mystery of them, but he was awaiting a favorable opportunity. Besides, not pleased with what he had done since his return, he was happy that nobody asked to see his studies.

He could often be seen, a little before nightfall, on the bridge which unites the two branches of the Seine. A portable easel and a canvas under his arm, he directed his steps toward the eastern extremity of the island, where he installed himself in the grass near where the two arms of the stream met.

The ladies and young girls of the village had often tried to stop him in his walk. Amiable and polite though he was, he smiled and continued his way without turning around. The curious, pretty girls wanted to go to see what he was painting there; but dare they go so far under the eyes of all the town? Thanks to that prudent reflection, the secret of Lucien's work was guarded.

One day, as bright and clear as the one after his return, he presented himself at about two o'clock at Mme. Oriiet's. It was one of the days in which they did not go to Paris to attend lessons, and he found the mother and daughter both leaning together over a large frame, as they were embroidering a design worthy of the hands of Queen Mathilde, who made the Bayeux tapestry.

It is no longer the fashion in our day, and such embroidery is left to the hands of skillful workmen; but what is more charming to the eye of a spectator than the movements of an elegant, young woman bending over the outstretched canvas?

The hand holding the needle raising or lowering it with graceful gestures; the pensive head inclined toward the colored frame, as the wools and silks form patches of brilliant or somber color on the general tone of the work.

While looking at this home-picture, Lucien understood that landscape painting, which now absorbed him, would not always satisfy him. But he had come here for something else than to think of Velasquez.

"Good-day, Lucien," said Mme. Orliet gayly. "What have you under your left arm?"

Since the first day of his return, when Mme. Orliet had rallied him before her daughter, she had tried to be friendly toward him. Surprised a moment by that vague jealousy which the best of women and the most tender of mothers could not help feeling when she saw, or thought she saw, a new sentiment enter her child's heart, of which sentiment she was not the object, Annie's mother had shaken off that bad impression,

first by reasoning and then by her great generosity of soul. Thenceforth the young man was always welcome at her house.

"If I should tell you what I bring," said Lucien, seating himself, "you would tell me to go away at once. So I will not tell you till by and by, when I shall be ready to oblige you."

"What great prudence," said Annie, raising her needle in the air to the end of the thread of silk thrown over her little finger as if the hand and the whole body were waiting for a reply.

"I wish first to ask you if you do not want to take a walk on the shore of the island, like the first evening of my return; do you remember?"

A slight blush colored that part of the cheek that Lucien could see. Annie, with her head lowered, continued to attentively count her stitches.

"For us to take a walk? For what?" asked Mme. Orliet absently, as she tried to match two skeins of wool.

"Firstly, to take a walk in a hygienic point of view, as is essential in fine weather, and to-day it is superb; and then I have an idea that we should go to see the red sun set in the green sky, which is, you know, the *ne plus ultra* of picturesque enjoyment."

"I had intended to devote the whole afternoon to my tapestry," said Mme. Orliet, laying down her skeins with a discouraged air; "but I cannot find the shade that I want, and that destroys my work. What do you say, Annie, about going to the end of the island?"

"I do not say 'no,'" said the latter, working very rapidly.

Suddenly her wool broke; who can tell why? And the young girl raised her smiling face toward the friend of her childhood. She leaned upon her frame, searching among her silks for the one that she wanted; but before she found it, she stopped and remained pensive, and her face grew a little paler than usual.

"Ah, well, Annie, go and get ready," said Mme. Orliet, rising.

"Put on your gray velvet dress, I beg," said Lucian, with a hesitating smile.

"My best dress! Why?"

"To please me—and besides, I have an idea—you shall see!"

"Will you show me what you have inside there?" she asked, pointing to the box which Lucien had not put down.

"Yes."

The young people looked at each other and smiled. There had been such confidence between them for years, that they were always sure of understanding each other.

The two ladies were soon ready, and they commenced their walk. The mystery of their first return in the darkness had nothing in common with the daylight which pierced through the trunks of the trees in the beautiful paths, and whose large proportions were well shaded. It was like another world; they took the path by the shore to enjoy the light. The sun was rapidly declining.

At last they arrived at the end of the island, and Lucien conducted them to the place where he had found them. A little

boy seated on a stone was taking care of the easel and the paint-box.

With an indefinite fear of being refused, the young man approached Annie.

"Would you," said he timidly, "place yourself there, and remain still for a few moments? I wish," he added, turning toward Mme. Orliet, "to get the profile of——" he hesitated, and for the first time in his life he called her mademoiselle—"of Mademoiselle Annie in this landscape, which you thought so beautiful. See, the daylight is disappearing and it will be like the last time."

"But, seriously, are you going to make a picture?" asked Mme. Orliet, surprised to see the young man prepare his colors in asomewhat nervous manner.

"Alas!" replied he laughing—"you will allow me, will you not?"

"I do not ask anything better. But what can you do with a landscape that is fast disappearing, and a model which is hardly visible?"

"I will soon show you if Annie will remain there for ten minutes. No, not now, I beg of you!" on seeing the movement of the two ladies to look at the small canvas that he had just placed upon the easel.

Annie, trembling with a singular emotion, stationed herself on the border of the yellow lawn.

"Your head a little more back," said Lucien. "Thanks."

She remained thus, hardly breathing; experiencing a strange sensation, in which mingled a great respect for the work of which she was the object. She had no desire to laugh, she felt more like weeping, but her tears would not have been painful.

After a while, Lucien, who had worked ardently, told her she could rest. She seated herself at some distance on a large stone, and looked at the water which was flowing rapidly toward unknown shores.

"It is like the future," she said to herself. "The water does not know where it is going, neither do we. And nevertheless we go quickly, always in haste, awaiting to-morrow with impatience, because it may bring us some pleasure—and we never return to the shore where we have enjoyed happiness."

An almost painful melancholy seized her soul. Annie looked at the stream, the trees, the sky which had become red, as if they were the witnesses of a passage in her life that she wished to retain forever.

"Will you place yourself there again just a moment?" said the voice of Lucien.

She arose immediately and resumed her place. He worked a few moments, then he said to her, "Thanks." Soon she approached the easel, behind which her mother was standing, and remained silent,

The canvas was not large, the artist was scarcely yet proficient in his profession, but the impress of that twilight which had produced such an effect upon them all was there. The landscape with its deep mysteries, the veiled light of the sky, the

somber and elegant profile of the young girl, formed a delicious whole that carried the soul further toward the unknown regions to which one is ever eager to return.

"Do you know, that is very good!" said Mme. Orliet, leaning her hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Do you think so?" said he with a little shiver of joy.

"It is extraordinarily well done!"

She looked at it in silence. Annie went close to her, and looked also, her hands and her chin leaning on her mother's shoulder.

"I am not wholly ignorant of painting," said Mme. Orliet, "and I declare that that is very well done. Not that it is without defects, but there is an originality about it that individualizes even the defects. It is astonishing that you could have done that——"

"I have worked at it since my return," said Lucien, with a timidity of which he had never suspected himself capable. "I made a sketch of Annie from memory, but I wanted to see her here again to catch the right tone."

The day faded. Lucien quietly collected his materials, which he confided to the boy, and took his canvas in his hand.

Annie had not said a word.

"Does it please you, too?" murmured he, without looking at her.

"Yes," said the young girl, in a low tone.

Silence reigned among them: evening came, they could scarcely see enough to distinguish colors.

"Will you sing as you did the last time?" asked Lucien.

"I cannot," answered the young girl, in a choked voice.

"Let us return," said Mme. Orliet; "it is very cold."

They went back toward the town. Mme. Orliet could not recover her astonishment. It was in vain to question Lucien about the first works in his vocation, that only revealed to her the material side, not the moral character of this instinctive art.

"It is a vocation," said she, at last. "When one has that, he is a painter, and a true one."

"Do you think so?" said Lucien, filled with a proud joy.

"Positively. And what do your parents say about it?"

"My mother wishes just as I wish, but it is different with my father. He considers art in general as a profession for idle people. If you could only speak for me! Do you know, you are the oracle at our house?"

"I will certainly do it, and without delay," replied Mme. Orliet. "It would be a great pity not to allow you to follow your inclination. You will never accept any other profession; what you seek is art—pure art. Certainly you must be a painter: a good painter, instead of a bad notary! Can they hesitate? But your father is not aware of the talent that you have; that is why he does not consent. I will see him very soon; you may depend upon me."

She gave her hand to the young man and they went toward the Orliet mansion, while he, dazzled with a result which surpassed his hopes, looked at her as he went away, with his heart

full of gratitude which could not find words. Suddenly Annie turned around.

It was wholly dark: the light of the lamp which fell upon her person, defined its singularly graceful outlines. Lucien felt a great throb of joy and tenderness toward that elegant and somber figure which fled before his look.

"Annie! dear Annie!" thought he, "it is for you that I have ambition, it is you who inspire me! Dearly loved one!"

He looked around the island, now perfectly dark, which formed a black, majestic mass above the brilliant water.

"How I love her!" said he, suddenly forgetting himself. This truth revealed itself to him in all its intensity. "I love her! I love her!" he repeated to himself two or three times. The music of this word harmonized with his joy.

Lucien's was not a commonplace soul, nor one of those who possessing particular gifts profaned them, or lessened them by leading a more or less coarse life.

The sentiment which possessed him was the first that had spoken to his heart. The few emotions that he had experienced before this had vanished into dust before the splendor of this new aurora. In feeling that he loved, he understood that he had never loved before, and life appeared to him a marvelous edifice, the threshold of which he had not yet crossed.

On this threshold stood Annie, in bridal vestments, extending her hand to him. He knew that she would give him her hand. At the same time that he discovered his own love, he divined that of the young girl.

"Will they give her to me?" asked he of himself, troubled, momentarily, in this vision of happiness. "Yes! since we love each other!" his youth triumphantly replied.

And he returned to his room, his body worn out with fatigue, his spirit no longer dwelling upon earth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE big clock at the Romanets' struck happy hours that evening.

After a delicate dinner had been cleared away, and the table covered with a large purple woolen cloth, according to the custom of the country, the guests remained seated in the pleasant warmth of the great chimney, where an old beech log was burning.

Groups formed, little by little, according to tastes and ages. A dozen persons in all had come to partake of this Christmas feast, all old friends of the family. Annie and Lucien alone represented the new generation; naturally they were seated near each other.

Yet they hardly spoke. Formerly their chattering never ceased, and even when on the threshold, to go into the street, they remembered some important thing that they had forgotten, and returned to tell; for some days they had been constantly together, but now they seemed mute, and their looks were absent.

What passed between them during this time, each one felt, but did not like to tell. What words are sufficiently delicate to depict sentiments that are as tender, as delicate as the first blushes of dawn in the morning splendor?

They loved each other, but from time to time they appeared not even sure of it; a delicious uneasiness would suddenly seize them, and they would ask themselves if in such a look, in such a smile they had not been mistaken. Should they question each other? They dared not think of it without fright. What if their hopes should fall shattered at their feet, like a fragile crystal bowl thrown down by an impatient hand!

And yet, from their slightest gestures, from their voices, from their looks which avoided each other, from the fleeting changes of color in their faces, they were led to the ardent and deep conviction that they loved each other.

To love and not to know whether one is beloved is almost as sweet as reciprocated love, for it is the doubt that gives pleasure.

Love took hold of their beings gently, without any shock, like a thread entwining itself around a finger. They felt their hearts touched by an invisible and gentle hand, which led them to each other, little by little, producing in them such sweet ecstasies that they dared not move, fearing to disturb them. They had no need to look at each other; with eyes cast down, each felt the other's presence; a fold of Annie's dress, the end of Lucien's sleeve was enough for both.

These two pure souls had nothing to conceal. Annie did not fear to be seen in full daylight. Lucien had done nothing in his short life which should cause him to blush; they waited, side by side—for what? They did not know. The ray of light which could perhaps illumine this delicious twilight of their hearts, perchance would unite their hands, perchance it would call forth the word which would seal their destinies.

Their parents and friends, accustomed to see them together, were not surprised at their intimacy. When addressed, they answered. Sometimes one answered for the other; but then, instead of laughing, as formerly, when they looked at each other they smiled without raising their eyes, and each understood this furtive and tender smile on the face of the other.

They talked gayly of the Christmas gifts. Although no longer a child, one has long foregone the joys of life if he can pass that season without experiencing the pleasure of surprising and being surprised. Each told what he intended to give. M. Romanet allowed himself to be teased by two or three of his friends, but he absolutely refused to tell what he intended for his wife.

Mme. Orliet interrupted him suddenly:

"And what will you give Lucien?" said she.

"A big boy like him does not want Christmas gifts. He should give them to me, I think."

All eyes were turned toward the young man.

"That idea has not yet come to me," said he, "for I still have the habits of the very young, my dear father. But I will try to correct them."

"Shall I tell you what you should give your son?" said Mme. Orliet.

"I ask nothing better, provided it will not be too expensive."

"It will cost you nothing."

"Granted, then. What is it?"

"I will tell you to-morrow, about eleven o'clock, my old friend," replied Annie's mother, "if you will come to see me."

"Very well," said the notary, who thought that some debt of his son, concealed from his parents, had been confessed to this family friend. He felt himself in a very indulgent mood. The presence of so many good friends around him, the joyous atmosphere of the room, his pride as a host, all combined to make him self-satisfied and complacent.

"And what will you give me?" said Lucien to Annie, in a low tone.

A ray of innocent, affected spite darted into the young girl's eyes.

"Nothing at all," said she. "And what are you going to give me?"

"That is a secret."

She looked at him, laughing, and suddenly her eyes became troubled. The had just read in those of Lucien a passionate tenderness that she had never known before and with which she was dazzled.

"Tell me!" said she, trying to conceal her emotion.

"Do you wish it?"

"I beg of you."

Nothing can describe the tone in which these two commonplace phrases were pronounced. A whole oath of fidelity—a declaration were exchanged in them.

"You will not tell anybody; not even your mother?"

"Do not ask me that," said Annie, softly.

"Be it so. I will not ask you to keep the secret, but I know that you will keep it. I wish to give you my little landscape of the island."

"Do you not wish to keep it?" said Annie, quickly and anxiously, divided between her joy in having him offer her what she prized most in the world, and regret to think that Lucien cared so little for it that he would let it go away from him.

"I have made a copy of it," said the young man, in a low tone.

Annie closed her eyes, but she saw reflected within herself the look with which Lucien had accompanied these words.

She did not dare reply, and turned her head toward her mother.

That lady was astonished at the expression of the young face, and approached the young girl to examine her more closely.

"What is the matter with you?" said she, leaning forward to embrace her.

Annie smiled, blushed, and returned the kiss.

"Nothing, mamma," said she.

Mme. Orliet still questioned the face of the coy girl, who had

turned toward her, lending herself to this examination. Lucien, somewhat embarrassed, had left his place and had gone over to the older people; Annie's mother seated herself near her child, whom she did not leave till they took their departure.

In the vestibule, where they went for their wraps, the young man appeared with the two ladies' cloaks, which he had put aside. He helped them to put them on, and then wished them good-night. Mme. Orliet gave him her hand as usual; Annie held out only the tips of her fingers, then drew them back, hesitatingly. He hardly touched the little, chilled hand, but all night, in his waking and in his dreams, he felt the tender, momentary contact.

The next day, about eleven o'clock, M. Romanet presented himself at his old friend's house. Although he had a great affection for her, he seldom saw her at her own house, he preferred to see her seated before the chimney of his own dining-room; besides, his visits to the Orliet mansion seemed very ceremonious to him.

He was ushered into the large drawing-room, the wood-work of which was white, embossed with gold, and which was hung with superb tapestries; all was at the same time sumptuous and cheerful in this hospitable house, even the fire seemed to send forth a welcome in its joyous crackling.

M. Romanet mechanically approached the fireside, then turned around, and took in at a glance all the surroundings.

"Hm, hm," said he, "all this is more beautiful than at my house. Except my old dining-room wainscoted in oak, I have nothing at my house of any real value; but notwithstanding the beautiful mansion, and the three farms of my good friend, I am probably as rich as she. All my money will go to Lucien, all of hers will go to her daughter. Our children will have nothing to complain of."

His friend entered, dressed in a simple yet rich home costume. He kissed her hand and then looked at her from head to foot in farcical admiration.

"You wish to win me over to your cause? And is your cause so bad that you make yourself so very beautiful in order to turn my head?" laughed he.

"Precisely," said Mme. Orliet in the same tone.

She struck the iron while it was hot, not wishing to lose any of the good nature that her guest appeared to have brought with him.

The struggle was long and bitterly contested. In the chamber above, Annie listened to the sound of their voices with great anxiety—she could not distinguish the words. Lucien's future had become a vital question to her. If he should be prevented from following his inclination, she felt that she should suffer as much as he. M. Romanet's voice sometimes exploded like a trumpet. That was when he found some peremptory objection, some unanswerable argument.

In the silence which followed, Mme. Orliet's clear, sweet voice, plead like a strain of melody after the thundering of a whole orchestra, and Annie, whose heart beat quickly, re-

proached herself for listening; still she heard nothing, though her ear was on the watch for the slightest sound from below.

At last the two voices were hushed, then they seemed in unison like a duo, and the drawing-room door opened into the vestibule.

"You can truly say that it is to please you," said M. Romanet.

"You knew that you could not refuse me that," responded Mme. Orliet.

"Evidently; but is the bargain concluded? If the opinion should be unfavorable, the subject must not be mentioned to me again."

"And if it should be favorable, you will make no further objections?"

"It must be, since you have my word!" said the notary sighing. "And this pretty girl, where is she? Let her come that I may kiss her."

Annie descended the staircase as lightly as a willow leaf, before her mother had time to call her, and threw herself upon the neck of the old man, whom she embraced with all her heart, as she had done ten years ago. He said some affectionate words to her, and went away after a last promise.

"Well," said Annie, who had remained motionless, looking at the door which had just been closed.

"He has promised to defer to the judgment of two painters, my friends, who will tell him whether his son ought or ought not to adopt the profession of an artist. And one could not reasonably expect more from the first skirmish."

Annie's little face lengthened.

"Only that?" she said, sadly. "We have not advanced much."

"Dear me," said her mother, smiling, "you wish everything all at once! Such is not life, my darling; you must learn to wait."

To wait! That is the most difficult thing in the world. To renounce what you wish with your whole soul, to keep your eyes from a door which will not open to you for a long time, perhaps to shut your ears to external noises, which will announce to you far off in the future—you know not when—the event which you desire or fear; to remain passive, deaf, insensible and mute, when your body and your soul are struggling in this constraint, until silence and immobility become an intolerable torture.

Youth waits with impatience; age is less exacting, because it pretends to be more patient. Is it not rather because the vital forces are less? Do we ever learn to wait? We learn, perhaps, more easily to suffer.

Yet Annie waited.

Six days passed before the painters appointed a day to give their judgment. On the day fixed Mme. Orliet, M. Romanet and M. Lucien, who did not say a word, departed for Paris, in order to hear them pronounce the verdict which would decide the young man's future.

A thousand obstacles met them everywhere. It was about three o'clock, in the last light of a beautiful winter's day, under

the skylight of a great studio, that the judges chosen by Mme. Orliet, after having examined ten of his studies and the little landscape of the end of the island, looked at each other in silence.

Then one of them addressed to M. Romanet this question,

"Monsieur, has your son a fortune?"

"I have one," replied the notary haughtily.

"Ah, well!" said the other painter, "then let him follow his vocation. Upon my soul and conscience, I declare to you, that if he will work, he will excel. But he has everything to learn."

"If he were without a fortune," said the first, "I should advise you to dissuade him; but since he can wait, and he wishes to paint, let him do it."

At the same time conquered and satisfied, M. Romanet thanked the judges, and led his son out on the staircase.

They were scarcely alone before he seized him by the neck.

"You have talent," said he. "It is true then! Embrace me!"

Mme. Orliet who had remained behind to obtain a more catagorical opinion, found them thus occupied.

"Well?" said she to the father, "are you satisfied?"

"I?" replied he, "I am furious! Behold this young rascal, who upsets all my plans, who has just destroyed the future that I had laid out for him, and you wish me to be satisfied!"

"Really, you were not going to bite him just now, were you?" said Mme. Orliet, who could not help laughing.

"Since he has talent, that flatters me, you understand. But do not believe that being flattered will prevent my being much vexed!"

Grumbling and beaming with joy, he reached Mantes, where the friends hastened to communicate the result of their interview to Mme. Romanet.

Lucien contented himself with pressing Mme. Orliet's hand very warmly, as he could find no words to express his feelings.

When they entered the notary's house, the young man ran directly to his mother, and embraced her with such force that she had no need to ask any explanation. A moment of confusion followed, then Mme. Orliet asked if Annie had been there.

"She came in a while ago for a moment," replied Mme. Romanet; "I was such a sad companion, as you can believe, that she went away."

Mme. Orliet left immediately, and refusing the escort of either Lucien or her father, returned to her house alone.

CHAPTER V.

THE light of the lamp shone from the young girl's window; as soon as her mother entered she went up the stairs, almost uneasy at not seeing her daughter come to meet her, as she usually did, at the sound of the door-bell.

The door of Annie's room was open, she was standing there, waiting.

"We have won," said Mme. Orliet joyously,

With a cry of joy, Annie threw herself upon her mother's neck and burst into tears.

Mme. Orliet took her by the waist, and held her from her to look at her.

"What is it?" said she anxiously, and almost guessing the truth.

"Oh, mamma," said the young girl, unconsciously betraying her secret, "if he had been forbidden to follow his vocation I think we should have both died of grief."

Mme. Orliet took off her hat, unhooked her cloak, and threw it back, then she led her daughter to a small sofa.

"Do you love him as much as that?" said she, deeply troubled at the thought of that formidable unknown Love, which had entered into the life of her only child.

"After you, mamma, I love nobody more than Lucien. You know it well!" said the girl, trying to find plausible reasons for her tenderness. "He was my companion in childhood; and you, too, mamma, you love him well!"

Mme. Orliet shook her head. Whether she had or had not a feeling of friendship for this young man, he had not the less become her rival in a heart of which until then, she had been the passionately loved idol.

"Does it vex you, mamma?" asked the young girl timidly, ceasing to caress her mother.

At that question, Madame Orliet remained silent, and Annie's arms, as she withdrew them from her neck, seemed to take off her daughter's heart with them.

"No," said she, with a sort of jealous anger, "that does not make me angry."

"But it grieves you, nevertheless; tell me?" insisted Annie.

"Yes," murmured the mother, and, pressing her child to her heart, she burst into tears.

This troubled moment passed, and they found themselves seated side by side holding each other's hands. Mme. Orliet, after having reassured her, gently questioned her daughter upon the affection which she had for Lucien.

Nothing was more innocent or more pure. She had always loved him. When children, they had developed the same tastes and the same habits; youth, although separating them, had endeared their rarer meetings to them. Then Lucien had become a young man; she had been slightly afraid of him, fearing lest he would no longer care for her; when he had gone away to his regiment she was a little sorrowful, saying to herself that upon his return he would have other thoughts, and that then the Orliet mansion would not be the same thing to him.

"And then?" asked the mother, who listened, smilingly, not without brushing away an occasional tear, which Annie, who was buried in her arms, could not see.

"Then, when he came to seek us down there, at the end of the island, I knew well that our house had never been forgotten, and—I was very happy. It was delightful, then, mamma; he came to us from time to time, and it gave me great pleasure to meet him; and when he did not come, I was very sure that he

was thinking of us all the same. And then that day, when he took me down there to finish the picture, I understood suddenly that it was no longer the same as it was before; he has never said to me a word of what he thinks, but—I am sure—it seems to me, at least, that it is not the same thing. Christmas-eve he did not say two words to me; well, yet I knew that he was thinking of us all the time!"

She said "us," trying thus to take away what was too personal in this recital of her impressions, and from time to time she raised her clear, gray eyes to her mother, but she immediately lowered them, when she saw her saddened look.

When she was silent, she took Mme. Orliet's finger, upon which she wore her wedding-ring, and respectfully kissed it, after which she buried her face in her adored mother's hands and threw herself upon her knees.

Mme. Orliet counseled her daughter. Her youth came to her lips while she taught her prudence, and modesty, and patience, which protect against all deceptions. She had little advice to give her, and nothing for which to defend her, for Annie was as innocent, as pure as the snow-flakes which were falling from the sky at that moment. The virgin soul of the young girl could not understand doubt or trouble. She loved, she believed herself to be beloved, and she dreamed of nothing beyond that.

"Only," said Mme. Orliet, "it is not necessary to say anything to him about it."

"And," said Annie, pushing aside her hair to see her mother better, and blushing, "if he should ask me?"

Worldly wisdom, maternal prudence, how insignificant you are in comparison to the cry of a young heart which ignores you, and which flies away from you, as a swallow, born in the spring-time, tries the strength of its wings.

How should she reply to this? Advise her to use the hypocrisy of a coquette?

Mme. Orliet had no such thought.

"Try to avoid it," said she; "but if it should happen, do not reply."

Not to reply would be an eloquent consent; but the excellent mother hoped to have time to avoid, momentarily at least, what she could not wholly prevent.

She would speak to Lucien—she would know if this love had the same importance to him that it had for Annie. She thought them both very young; it could not possibly be a question of marrying yet; time would only confirm the attachment, if it was really serious.

She thought of all this in the sweet silence which followed this overflowing of heart, between these two who loved each other so sincerely. They had to go to dinner, and then all confidential conversation was necessarily interrupted.

After the repast, the two women returned to the small drawing-room, where they usually spent their evenings; each took her needlework, more from habit than from any serious desire to work. The door closed on the footman, and they looked at

each other with a smile, and then resumed their interrupted chat.

The door-bell rang, and Lucien's voice was heard in the anteroom. Mme. Orliet glanced around her; it was impossible to send her daughter away without meeting the young man. She understood, by his firm footsteps, she knew not what, but something that was surely important.

He entered rapidly and ran up to her.

"I wish much to thank you," said he with such warmth that all the conventional barriers that Mme. Orliet had intended to raise were immediately thrown aside.

He took her in his arms, as if she had been his mother, and embraced her with all his heart. She let him do so, smiling, overcome by that frank emotion which gives so much pleasure to those who see it when they themselves have passed the age to experience it.

He looked at her again a moment, his eyes full of gratitude; then he turned toward Annie.

She had remained standing, motionless, her eyes lowered, her face flushed.

"Have you nothing to say," said he, "are you not pleased?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, raising her beautiful, luminous and tender eyes to his face.

In this look he read all that she had said to her mother, and something more, of which she was not conscious herself, what her betrothed husband, and no one else, should read there.

"Annie," cried he, stretching out his arms to her, "I adore you!"

She did not approach; he did not take a step toward her, but clasped his hands, which he stretched out to her.

Mme. Orliet had not made a gesture or said a word.

"You are grace and joy; you are life, you are love," said he to her, as if he were addressing a prayer to some immaculate saint. "You are everything that is good and charming in this world, my little sister in the past, my friend and wife in the future. Do you not wish it?" added he, turning around to Mme. Orliet with his hands still clasped.

"I do not know anything about it," said the latter. "You have a way of taking people by surprise that takes their breath away. Remember, my child, that you have just been absolutely absurd."

"I know it," said Lucien, kissing her hands with effusion, "but you have done so much for me that I should consider myself dishonest if I did not tell you what I feel. I have said nothing of this to her, except in your presence; you understand that I am an honest man."

"An honest child, rather," replied Mme. Orliet.

Lucien cast down his eyes; his youth was an argument against him, and one that he could not contradict. Annie, who until now had remained motionless and silent, took a step toward him and said in a clear voice:

"Do not be sad."

He looked at her; she was near her mother, who rapidly twined her arms around her.

"Be reasonable," said Mme. Orliet, seating herself without leaving her daughter. "You are going to be married, Lucien, and you know enough of life to know all the drawbacks of a long engagement. Have you reflected well? Are you not simply imprudent and led away more by your heart than by your head? Think, my child, that it is not only your own happiness that you are playing with, it is that of my only daughter, my only joy——"

Her voice failed her. Lucien threw himself upon his knees before her.

"I have always loved her," he said, with ardor. "I know enough of life, as you have said, to know that she alone can be my companion, my wife. I am young, it is true. But, then, we shall have all the more time in which to be happy."

The vision of her own happiness, so quickly removed from her, brought tears to the widow's eyes.

"But," said she, smiling through her tears, "it is only to-day that you renounced an independent career, to adopt a profession that will compel you to depend upon your father for the means of existence, and this is the day that you chose to ask my daughter in marriage!"

"I did not come expressly for that," murmured Lucien, somewhat confusedly.

Annie raised her pretty head, which had reclined on her mother's shoulder, and looked at the latter with a supplicating air:

"Oh, mother!" said she, "am I not rich enough for both?"

Mme. Orliet had no defense; she embraced her daughter tenderly and looked at the young man at her feet.

"Your father will put obstacles in your way!" said she.

That was as much as to say, clearly, that she would no longer do so. Lucien understood it so and, without useless discussion, said to her in a low tone, "Thanks!"

Then he seated himself opposite the two women, and all three remained silent, full of grave thoughts. Annie had not left her refuge. Occasionally she looked at Lucien, then turned her eyes toward her mother, and no one, herself least of all, could tell what dreams of unheard-of happiness passed through her mind during this silence.

"It cannot be for a long time yet," said Mme. Orliet, at last.

"Oh, why?" asked Lucien in the tone of a prayer.

"Because—for a thousand reasons, the best of which is, that a young man of twenty-two should not marry."

"Do you believe that I shall be any better at twenty-five?" he asked.

"Perhaps not better; but probably wiser."

"Then you think that I should become a prey to all possible tortures for three years before gaining paradise?" said he. "Will it be your charitable hands that will cast me into this furnace?"

"There is much to say about that," said Mme. Orliet, "we will talk it over at our leisure,"

"You will influence my father in this?" said Lucien, joyously.

"Am I to do it all? Do you know that the part that you assign me does not please me at all? And by and by you will accuse me of interesting myself too much in your affairs."

"Oh!" exclaimed both the young people at once.

Then they all began to laugh.

"Come; go home," said Mme. Orliet; "we have had emotion enough for one day. We will leave the rest for to-morrow."

Lucien went out of the little drawing-droom regretfully, after having kissed the widow's hand. Annie looked at her mother, and divining that she would not be forbidden, advanced toward the threshold. She presented her hand to the young man, with a timid gesture. He took it and kissed it with so much respect, so much tenderness, that Mme. Orliet was affected. Annie returned to her mother. The moment that he put his foot on the terrace, he was assailed by a gust of snow and hail; he turned around and saw in the frame of the open lighted door the charming group of the two women: Annie, with her arms around her mother's neck, her head thrown a little back with the grace of a child. She had evidently thanked her with all her heart.

The door closed and Lucien went away triumphant, under the snow. A June sky never seemed to him more brilliant, and the snow-flakes which the storm made cling to the glass of the lamps, seemed to him like stars.

CHAPTER VI.

M. ROMANET raged in a fury.

Firstly, it was absurd, then it was ridiculous, and then it was dishonest! A gentleman who had just made it impossible to earn a cent for himself for years, now wished to be married! What did he expect to live upon?

"Annie said that she had enough for them both," said Mme. Orliet mischievously.

The notary raved all the more. Did any one suppose that he would accept such a situation? To be supported by his wife? For whom did they take M. Romanet? Even if his family had no title, were they not as good as any of the nobility in the land? This was intended for Mme. Orliet, who had renounced her title to marry a commoner, a member of the bar. No one should humiliate him, however much they might tempt him.

"Then," replied the mediator, "let us consider the most important questions. Annie has fifteen thousand francs as her dowry. What will you give your son?"

"Nothing at all!" cried Romanet, furious to have allowed himself to be caught in so simple a snare.

"That is little, but I will be responsible for the necessary sum," said his beautiful adversary.

"Ah! I do not wish that he should marry!" replied the notary.

"You may regret this later," calmly replied Mme. Orliet. If you turn your son actually against marriage, you throw him into what is called a bachelor's life, a loose sort of existence which may last longer than you wish. In the society of artists, which he will now frequent, manners and customs are, you know, not the most severe."

"Why did he choose this society and these manners? You know very well that he did it against my wishes!" cried the infuriated father

"At first; but you consented afterward, and not without some pride to find your son so highly gifted!"

"But he did not speak to me then of marrying!"

"Do you disapprove of his choice?"

Romanet was a notary in vain; he could not have the last word. After a struggle of two hours, he laid down his weapons; he was conquered.

"But, at least," said he, as he gave up the contest, "you cannot expect that they will marry now. That would be trifling with us."

"Not now, certainly; very much later."

"That is the first sensible word that I have heard from you to-day," groaned the notary.

"Always gallant!" said Mme. Orliet, laughing. "Ah, well, when I asked you Christmas-eve what present you were going to give your son, you little thought it would be your consent to his marriage."

"And Annie," said the notary, almost good-naturedly. "How long is it since she gave up playing with her doll?"

"Do not be such a grumbler as that! Annie will be afraid of you, and will not love you any more?"

"Let her try it!" said Master Romanet, laughing heartily.

The next day—the first of the year—there was a brilliant sky. The snow which had fallen the preceding days had filled the ravines near the hills; it drifted into the fields far and near, and gave the ground a curious appearance. The island sparkled in the sun like an immense chandelier, seen from above. On one side the bare lindens shadowed against the azure sky; on the other, a capricious network of trees, curiously interlaced, gave an idea of the vegetation of the wild and uncultivated part of this otherwise lovely place.

Lucien went down the Rue de Paris to the Orliet mansion, to wish his friends there a happy new year. As hurried as he was, when he turned at the quay, he could not avoid stopping to admire this admirable winter landscape, and his instinct as a landscape painter caused his heart to beat with a throb of pleasure.

"How beautiful it is!" said he to himself. "And this will be eternally beautiful. Earth will always offer me new marvels, let winter be icy or summer be fervent—the sky and surroundings are always varied."

His eyes turned toward the Orliet house, the snowy terrace of which was sparkling under the sun.

Art and love! What could one dream of more, to fill out a most beautiful life, even were it the longest, the best employed? He walked rapidly toward the house where he was expected.

His picture, which he had sent in the morning, had the place of honor in the embrasure of a window. The two bouquets of white lilies which had accompanied it were placed upon a table, and perfumed the air of the drawing-room. Annie, dressed in white cashmere, bordered with swan's-down, seemed to him a snow-flake fallen from Heaven to please his eye.

It was with deep emotion, with incomparable felicity, that Lucien took in, at a glance, this whole which served as a frame for the being whom he loved. All this belonged to him, since the hearts of the two women who possessed it denied him nothing. His artistic sense enhanced the value of all beautiful things, and he experienced a great joy, void of all common feelings, in thinking that this wealth, which could give so many intellectual pleasures, was in the hands of beings who were capable of understanding and appreciating it.

This thought passed rapidly through his mind, when Annie came to meet him, saying to him, her bright eyes full of tenderness and gayety:

"I wish you a happy New Year, my betrothed!"

He kissed her pure forehead and thought of nothing but her.

"When shall we be entirely happy?" he asked Mme. Orliet, who held him maternally in her arms.

"Ah!" said she, "there are those who say: 'The later the better!' I am not one of those."

"I know it," said Lucien. "You allude to my father. You cannot imagine with what a strangely bad grace he tries to make me happy! I know it by instinct, and I know what he conceals under it. I do not trouble myself; I know I should spoil all. But you, O my benefactress! tell me, when will you let us be married?"

"When I can no longer prevent it," cried she, laughing.

CHAPTER VII.

THE projected marriage was kept as secret as possible; and, astonishing thing! the secret was kept. Nothing could better prove how much Mme. Orliet was loved and respected by her servants.

The two young people then had the exquisite joy of loving each other in all secrecy, without blushing for it. Their conversation was generally in the presence of one of their mothers, but sometimes they were alone together. The wisdom of the honest women who had brought them up made them confide in them, and they did not abuse this confidence. Many times, before they loved each other, Annie and Lucien were left together, and why should they now, in that atmosphere of avowed love, hurt them, tempt them, by signs of distrust?

They saw each other oftener and with the least constraint in

the home of the Orliets. At the Romanets', too, though they were very hospitable, there was more formality and ceremony. The house was more elegant and at the same time more cheerful, and there was always a more seductive charm in the presence of Mme. Orliet.

Annie leaned over the large frame and embroidered; opposite her Lucien chatted and sometimes sketched, and often stopped in a state of delicious idleness, thinking of his happiness.

This happiness had come so quickly, so easily, that it seemed almost a dream, and often while reading Lucien would stop, surprised, and ask himself if this were all true. During the days that he passed in Paris, in his master's studio, where he learned the great laws of painting, he tried to forget everything but Art. Led by his passionate nature to give himself up entirely to what interested him, he saw only the model, he troubled himself only with the outline, that tyrannical mistress without which Art, however curious it may be, is only an incomplete reverie.

At the end of these hours of work, he went away staggering under the vertigo of this assiduous labor, with tired eyes and a sort of heavy dullness which follows all excessive work. He walked for some time in the open air before recovering himself, and during this time his thoughts wandered from the labors of the day to some landscape seen the day before, and then returned again to his master's lessons.

The present seemed to him a confused fog from whence emerged a few immortal principles, some magnificent outlines, some spots of never-to-be-forgotten color. Then he went to the St. Lazare Station, and, invariably, Annie's image appeared to him.

From that moment on he gave himself up to his love.

That love, so young, already had its memories. Lucien recalled, with deep joy, how Annie had looked at him on such a day, at such a moment. The dress that she wore, the carriage of her head at such a moment, were engraved upon his memory and came up before him like a picture by Terberg, in the Orliet mansion.

These memories and these hopes shortened Lucien's railway journey. He arrived at Mantes, happy; in the evening, after dinner, while his father buried himself behind a wall of newspapers, and his mother knit innumerable stockings for the poor, the young man hastened to his friends' home where he passed an hour or two.

Spring-time came. March had been cold. April was fairy like.

On every side, in the gardens, in the orchards, in the valleys by the hillsides, so gently sloping that he knew he was in Normandy, on the banks of the stream, on the borders of the roads were the pink blossoms of the apple-trees, A wonderful sun, warm and golden, shone in the calm air; the flight of a bird made the branches tremble, a shower of white petals fell slowly on the lawn, strewn with buttercups; peace and silence held their enchanted reign.

Lucien was so struck with this silence and tranquillity at midday, that a longing seized him. Without saying anything about it, for he never spoke of his works except to those who loved him, he set up a large canvas in an orchard that belonged to his father, a little outside of the town, and in a week he had finished a study that was unequaled in color and in fidelity.

While he worked everything appeared easy; after he had finished, he was frightened. His work seemed valueless to him, he saw only its defects which were enormously magnified. Not daring to show it to his father, he appealed to his usual confidantes, Annie and her mother.

The air was warmer than usual, the sky more blue, a penetrating sweetness seemed to fill the atmosphere, one day when Mme. Orliet and her daughter went into the orchard.

Sheltered by her umbrella, Annie advanced slowly between the hedges of white flowers. The sun threw shadows of oddly interlaced branches upon her dress.

She was afraid—afraid of everything. What she experienced gave her a sensation of exquisite sweetness that she had never known before, and which made her almost weep. She was afraid to look at Lucien's picture, which she had dreamed was very beautiful; she was afraid, also, of what she really felt. It seemed to her that no eye, not even her mother's, had a right to question her agitated face; that no voice should break the silence of her soul. She was, perhaps, also afraid of what she was going to experience, for she imagined that something very serious and inexplicable threatened her.

She walked along slowly, in the grass, the long stems of which bowed before her, and appeared again from under the hem of her dress as she passed on; this light rustling was the only noise in the field except the confused humming of the insects, which were startled and sometimes flew against her parasol.

She stopped when her mother stopped, a little behind her, hardly daring to raise her eyes. Lucien was there, more agitated than she, but with so grave an air that he appeared calm. She did not look at him, although she saw the slight trembling of his nervous fingers. At last Annie raised her head and looked at the canvas.

It was the orchard itself with something less, which was life, and something more, which was immortal art, that part of himself which a true artist puts in his work.

Only a young, happy lover could have painted the Romanet orchard with such effusion, with such boldness of color and such intensity of sentiment. He could never have known grief, never have found anything in his existence but pleasure, and that the best, to interpret thus triumphant youth and life.

"Happy child!" said Mme. Orliet, in her low, harmonious voice. "He dared everything and he has succeeded beyond everything! You have made a delicious thing—dazzling and sweet. You were born under a happy star; your godmother was a fairy truly!"

"Do you think it is well done?" asked Lucien, in an agitated voice.

"It is too well done! One fears that you can never do better!"

"Oh, I shall do better than that!" cried the young man, innocently.

He turned round to find Annie.

She had let her parasol fall, her hands were hanging lightly clasped before her, and she was looking at her betrothed's work; a sweet smile played on her lips, but her eyes smiled still more.

Lucien approached, and took up her arm, which he placed in his.

"And are you pleased?" said he, gently.

She nodded her head, not daring to reply.

Mme. Orliet asked the young man some questions, made some remarks, and one or two minor criticisms. Lucien said yes to all. The joy of the artist, the intoxication of the place, the young girl, and his love had suddenly made him lose his head. It seemed to him that Annie was his wife, that she would follow him, no matter where, that the world was his kingdom, and that this dream would never end.

"Let us go away," said he in a very low tone.

Annie looked at him surprised and turned away her blushing face.

"Well,"-said Mme. Orliet, "what is the matter?"

She saw at a glance that Lucien was agitated. Uneasy, without knowing why, she went near her daughter and asked her to walk about the field. Annie gently withdrew her arm from that of the young man and began to walk near her mother, but she no longer saw what was going on around her. She, too, felt something new enter her troubled soul; she questioned herself, but could not understand her own thought in the midst of these sensations.

They stopped in a shady corner of the field, under some tall poplars. Mme. Orliet turned around and looked at the trees, laden with white blossoms, so white under the blue sky that the eye was dazzled and could not discern their outline: then she turned her looks to her daughter.

More pink and white than the apple blossoms, more tender and pure than the clusters on the cherry-trees, Annie remained confused, her eyes almost closed under Lucien's passionate glance, as he stood some steps from her. At this moment they only lived for each other.

A movement from Mme. Orliet startled the young man from his waking dream.

"Give her to me," said he, supplicating her with look and gesture.

"We will speak of that by and by: this is not the place," replied she rather dryly. "Let us go back to your picture."

The charm was broken.

They returned chattering but awkwardly enough. After only a moment's attention to the canvas, Mme. Orliet wished to return home. Lucien asked permission to accompany her, which was refused, and she went out of the field with Annie, while the young man, left behind, followed them regretfully with his eyes.

Mme. Orliet was displeased. Until then she had lived tranquilly. After the first commotion, caused by the discovery that Annie loved, she had remained calm, seeing how much the young girl, in giving all her soul to her betrothed, lived in an ideal world, where trouble could not reach her. This was why she had allowed the young people to chat alone together, knowing well that Lucien would never sully the crystal purity of that young girl. But spring-time and youth had spoken; and Annie was agitated. Nothing now could give her back her former serenity. As a mother, Mme. Orliet felt a kind of anger take possession of her heart; as a wife, her second thought was better. How could she reproach these two children? Had they not obeyed a law that is stronger than human will? They loved each other—was it not natural and just to give them to each other, since they had been allowed to hope and to expect it? Were not the real fools those who tried to stop them in this inevitable end?

They were entirely too young: but what could be done about that? Would the situation be changed any after the struggle of months? And if, during that time, carried away by his youth and his love, Lucien should forget himself? If, while being the most honest fellow in the world, he should forget the respect due his betrothed, could they blame him, or those who through a feeling of worldly wisdom would violate nature itself?

Of all these thoughts, the saddest for Mme. Orliet was that perhaps her daughter would not rise to that moral elevation to which she had tried to lead her. Annie, as a wife, would be always Annie; but the young girl who would blush under the furtive kisses of him who loved her, this was not the incarnation of purity which had enchanted her mother's soul.

If Lucien felt himself reproved, and his love, freely shown till now to his family, should be lowered to secrecy! That was what Mme. Orliet could not admit for an instant. These dangers offered no middle course; they existed, or they did not exist. Annie's mother uttered a sigh as she said to herself that she could no longer withhold her consent to this marriage. Before speaking, she looked at her child.

The young girl walked at her side silently and almost calmly. The path ran between two hedges, sometimes between two garden or orchard walls; the shadows of the trees, with the foliage just shooting forth, were light and fantastic: the joy and pleasure of living seemed in that atmosphere, with an indefinable perfume of flowers, which feel nothing themselves—at least, one believes so—and yet they send forth a subtile aroma, like the charm of certain women, who have nothing in particular to recommend them to the eye, and yet they are loved more than some who are beautiful.

Annie was grave; she raised her eyes occasionally and looked around her in an astonished and nervous manner. Nature itself appeared a revelation to her. She had read in the eyes of her betrothed a troubled intoxication, which troubled her also: for the first time she felt that there was in love something else beside tenderness, and she thought of it without knowing what it

was, with a candor of soul, and the sincerity of one who had never been perverted by false principles. She had never been forbidden anything, why should she believe evil? Her modesty nevertheless trembled, instinctively affected, and that is what appeared in her face, which, though it was smiling, yet it also was a little fearful.

"Of what are you thinking?" demanded her mother in a sweet voice, in order not to draw her too abruptly from her thoughts.

The young girl smiled and blushed a little, but raised her eyes frankly to those which questioned her so gently. I was thinking, mamma, of the time when you were the betrothed of my father, and I asked myself if you were as happy as I am. One cannot be happier than I am. Tell me, is it possible to be?"

"Truly, it would be difficult to be more so," replied Mme. Orliet. "As much, perhaps, but differently. Your father was older than Lucien, and wiser; he was my friend as well as my husband. I considered him a judge from whom there was no appeal. You are two children."

Annie laughed, her pretty, contented laugh, the music of which had so much charm for the mother who adored her. "Not children!" said she, "not children who play at housekeeping! You will see, mamma, how wisdom will come to us! It has come to me already. I am much more serious, and Lucien also."

She was silent. In fact, Lucien became more and more silent when near her, and this gravity troubled her.

"If we should let you marry, you would not know how to keep house," said Mme. Orliet, with a smile.

"You will see. Do you think we may marry, mamma?"

The pure gray eyes put this question with great frankness.

"Do you wish it?" asked Mme. Orliet, with the same sincerity.

Annie did not blush. She had never been taught to blush or to deceive.

"Yes, and no," said she. "Yes, when I think of Lucien; I should like to be where I should never leave him; and no, when I say to myself that I shall no longer live so near to you, so very, very near, in your arms——"

The road was deserted, the two parasols fell on the sand; the mother and daughter tenderly embraced each other; then, laughing to conceal their emotion, they picked up their parasols and continued on their way.

Mothers have a right to complain. Before her child is yet born, it belongs wholly to her; after it is born, and is cared for by her, it is still a part of herself, and who knows if a secret instinct of jealousy does not sometimes make her regret the time when the public would not see it, when she only knew the secrets of its still obscure life? But later, when it is necessary to give part of it to society, when it learns to walk, it is a cruel grief. From this moment, each day detaches the mother from the being who makes a personal life for itself: it becomes egotistical—innocently—without knowing it, and the mother suffers; when it leaves its home, she weeps.

Much later on, having battled with life, and felt its sorrows, the child returns to its mother, who always consoled it, and who never forsakes it, its only consolation. Man's sorrows are heavy, but different from those of the child; those of the wife are not less hard, but the mother acquires patience. She learns to conquer her jealousy, to love more than herself the being born of her sufferings, nourished by her blood, trained by her care, and she teaches that adored being the great art of suffering without becoming hardened.

That is why our grandmothers are so tender.

From the moment of independent existence, which is the first, then the next most cruel hour in a mother's life is when her young daughter goes away with her husband. It is not only the separation, it is the gulf, the unknown.

Where is this smiling young woman going who puts her head out of the window of the railway carriage to see you for the last time? It is not to such and such a sunny country, or such and such a tranquil shore. It is into the redoubtable future, to all joys and all sorrows, to sickness and grief, to death, sooner or later, which will cover in the family tomb that woman who henceforth will bear another name to the end of her life.

During this walk on the dusty road, under the April sun, between two hedges of white flowers, Mme. Orliet felt the bitterness of the coming separation. Her heart was full of grief; her eyes, filled with tears, saw the shadows of the trees on the gravel-walk.

She did not wish to pain the innocent child who caused her grief; she endeavored to restrain herself. And when the struggle ended, when she felt that she had conquered herself, she returned home by the longest way, accompanied by the silent young girl, on whom she could now smile without fear of afflicting her.

The sacrifice was made. Mme Orliet decided to allow her daughter to marry.

Lucien came to supplicate her, but found her favorable to his wishes. His father would be more difficult to convince. M. Romanet had taken it into his head that his son should have a medal from the Salon before he was worthy to be married.

Lucien and his mother had in vain represented to him that, not having submitted anything, he could not obtain this distinction before the following year; the notary would not understand these reasons.

Mme Orliet was obliged again to come to the rescue. She spoke seriously, and with extreme delicacy, made the most of the motives which should not indefinitely delay the marriage, conquered the obstinate resistance of Father Romanet, and, after a week's severe struggle, they decided that the marriage should take place on the first of June.

CHAPTER VIII.

TIME flew by like a dream. Each day passed quickly, and at the end of the week, they were all surprised to find that Sunday

had come again. At last the long-wished-for day came without a cloud in the sky.

Annie awoke with the first rays of the sun, with the impression that something extraordinary was going to take place, and she was a little frightened.

She ran in her bare feet to the window and opened it wide before she was thoroughly awake. She felt life's realities return to her, with the tender light of day and the confused chirping of the birds.

"I am going to be married to-day," she said, abstractedly, as she leaned against the window of her balcony.

To-day! The evening before was so long that several months seemed to have passed since the moment that she received her mother's good-night kiss. It was then last evening, and now to-day had already come. After a few hours, Annie Orliet would be Mme. Romanet, junior. This idea made her smile, and drew her thoughts to Mme. Romanet, senior, who put on her glasses to knit, and this burst of gayety wholly awakened her.

Annie's window looked toward the south, so, at this hour, the delicious odor of the flowers which were begining to bloom, was wafted to her. The sun gilded the tops of the lindens; the orange-trees, white with blossoms on the terrace, seemed to offer her an immense wedding bouquet.

The young girl remained contemplating this garden which was so dear to her eyes and to her heart.

She had been happy, so happy, that she did not believe there could be more perfect happiness, or happiness more transparent.

Her mother was going to be alone. How large this house would appear to her!

"I am very wicked, very bad, to forsake mamma thus!" thought Annie, feeling the tears coming to her eyes.

She leaned on the balcony and wept for several minutes. They were gentle, quiet tears, which come from the soul without causing grief. She then dressed herself hastily, and returned to the window which attracted her.

Everybody still slept in the house. It was scarcely four o'clock in the morning. There was no noise except from the poultry-yards in the neighborhood.

The clock of Notre Dame struck the hour on the sonorous air, and Annie looked at the elegant towers which appeared almost pink under the blue sky. The swallows flew about with cries of joy; not a breath of wind stirred the garden. Annie recalled the field of apple-trees, and a deep flush suffused her face. To-day Lucien would take her away, and say to her all those words which, till now, she had only divined in his eyes—his eyes which would never be turned away from her after to-day. He would take her away and she should never leave him again, until death.

Death! Ah! She could never endure to lose him, this friend of her childhood, this love of her youth. If he should die, she should die also. At least, unless she had children, and then she should live for them, as her mother had lived for her. Yes, one

might die. But, except from death, Annie would be shielded from all sorrow. Life opened before her like a triumphal arch. Very soon, she would pass between the orange-trees, crowned with virgin white blossoms. The air was fragrant, the sky so blue, life so pleasant, and she loved so much! Forgetting herself, intoxicated with happiness, she leaned her head on her hands and wept.

Weeping for joy, at eighteen, the morning of her marriage! It is a dream of incomparable felicity!

As she raised her head, to gaze once more upon these scenes so dear to her, which had become a part of herself, she saw a human form through the ivy which twined about the garden gate.

Ashamed at being seen on this day, and at that hour, trembling lest the eye that saw her, might guess the secret of her happy tears, she arose: the early riser crossed the road, she saw him better, and recognized Lucien.

He had not slept, either; the dawn had found him up; an indescribable intoxication had kept him awake, and as soon as day had dissipated the morning dawn, he had left the house. For an hour, he had walked along the borders of the Seine, through the damp meadow-grass, with the overwhelming joy of a man who has reached the pinnacle of his desires; then he was returning slowly to the town. His betrothed's open window had attracted his attention, and in a moment he was there, only separated by the iron gate from her, from whom, before the day was over, he would never be separated again.

They looked at each other for an instant. They had not expected to see each other thus on that day: they smiled, overcome with joy. Suddenly Lucien jumped over the gate, which he cleared with agility, and ran toward the large orange-trees whose branches hung low under the weight of the opening buds: he hastily broke off several branches, which he tied together with long wisps of grass; then, going a short distance from the balcony, he threw this bouquet, which fell into Annie's hands.

"Forever yours!" said he, in a voice like a sigh, as he kissed his hands to her.

She put the virgin bouquet to her lips; Lucien, clearing the gate a second time, reached the road, where he remained motionless, still looking at her.

The sun rose; the church clock gravely sounded the hours, and the village awoke. Lucien fled, feeling that if he remained a moment longer he could not go away at all. Annie followed him with her eyes until he disappeared, then re-entered her chamber; she did not wish to see anything more outside, in order to preserve intact in her memory, in that aurora, the apparition of the man to whom she was going to give her life.

Soon the household arose. Mme. Orliet came to embrace her daughter, and slowly, without assistance from strange hands, she dressed her for the ceremony. The orange-blossoms that Lucien had thrown remained on the table: without knowing why, Annie took them before her mother could see them and put them in her jewel-box, of which she always carried the key. It was the first secret that she had ever had from her, yet

she had no remorse. It seemed to her that since the meeting this morning she belonged to her husband and only to him.

The hours passed, slowly to some, quickly to others; the good souls of the village criticised this, and had much to say of that: Annie's dress was too handsome, her mother's was not handsome enough; there was no ball, only a breakfast; the young married people were going away the same evening, in the English fashion—that was an innovation; among the old families there had never been a wedding with so little pomp.

Those most interested cared very little for this gossip, or for their ideas of etiquette. Mme. Romanet dreamed of nothing but the bridal pair. Master Romanet, full of his importance, felt himself the most conspicuous man in Mantes, and asserted himself as if he wished to impress upon others the majesty of his position, and that, since he approved it, this marriage was the most reasonable and most admirable that had ever taken place. Mme. Orliet was not affected the least in the world. She did all the honors with a calm grace, which some thought haughty, but which was only dignified. Annie and Lucien were not sure that they were living beings, but their dream was so delicious that they did not ask to be awakened.

The afternoon came, the guests went away; the young married people, after having changed their costumes, took the train to go to Rouen, to begin their wedding journey. A moment of confusion followed their departure. A quarter of an hour after the Romanets and Mme. Orliet were alone in the notary's grand dining room where the unfeeling clock had already sounded so many good-byes and welcomes.

"They are gone and we are all alone," said Mme. Romanet, wiping her eyes for the hundredth time in the hour just passed.

"They are not the ones whom I pity!" said her husband, with a gruff severity that he tried to affect.

"May they be happy!" thought Madame Orliet, who had not shed a tear.

"Thank God, they will never want for anything," replied Lucien's mother. "But they are so young, they will do so many foolish things."

"We are here to prevent that," said M. Romanet. "What foolish things will they do? spend too much money? We will take care of all that!"

"If Lucien only knew a little more about the world! I am so afraid that something may happen to him—some accident, which heretofore I have always guarded against. I do not know whether he understands a thousand little things——"

"You should have thought of that before!" said the father, sententiously; "now they are married; it is like a ship gone to sea, there is nothing more to do than to wish them a good voyage."

"Bon voyage!" said both mothers together, with a sigh.

CHAPTER IX.

"WHY, madame, did you not know that Friday is the day to go to the Hippodrome, and that Saturday is the day for the Circus? Don't you know anything?" said Jalbrun, opening his large eyes.

"Nothing at all," said Annie, laughing with all her heart.

"But you, Romanet, you ought to know these things! It is shameful, at your age, not to know where to take your wife when you wish to go somewhere for amusement."

Lucien bit his mustache, but did not reply.

"We are the two little children lost in the woods," said the young wife, "unless some generous passer-by should come to release us, we shall die neglected, and the little robin-redbreasts, as in the story, will be obliged to come all the way from England on purpose to bury us under the leaves."

At this they all three burst out laughing.

They breakfasted in the young married people's pretty little dining-room, which contained a bay-window filled with flowers, ornamented with tall side-boards filled with old, artistic silver, the gift of Mme. Orliet; it was a hospitable dining-room where the friends had a nice breakfast.

Jalbrun had become Annie's friend, as he was that of her husband.

If newly married husbands knew how much good-will their wives smilingly spend to make their homes agreeable to their friends, many little bickerings would be spared each other. A sort of timid curiosity mingles with a desire to please, a desire which is so innocent that it cannot be called coquetry; the young wife wishes to know how her husband, who is so attentive to her, lived among his friends. He appears to her under a new light, very different from what she has seen him till now, such as he has always appeared to others, except to her and her surroundings. She listens to him; she studies him; and however amiable and well-bred her husband's friend may be, only he pleases her if he presents in a favorable light the husband who is the king of her world.

The task had been easy with Jalbrun. He was a large well-developed man, as active as Lucien was contemplative, as brown as he was fair, as homely as he was beautiful, but his homeliness was so spiritual, so sympathetic that one could not help loving him. He was some years older than his friend, and it was on his conscience that he had urged him to become a painter.

Music was the art which Jalbrun affected; but after it was once understood that he was a musician, he only rendered to music a respectful and platonic worship. Every art attracted him; he painted tolerably well, modeled a bust without much effort, and thanks to these varied talents, perhaps still more to his small fortune, which allowed him to live in independence, he knew everybody, was disliked by some and adored by others. When Jalbrun entered a place life and gayety went

with him; and when he left, he seemed to take them away with him.

So much talent and so many charms should have made him many enemies; but he really had but few, and he said of those, "They will see when I shall have finished my symphonic poem!"

It would be unjust to say that Jalbrun did not work at this symphonic poem; from time to time he shut himself up for a week, and would not receive his friends. Then, after this excess of work, he gave himself a well-earned holiday for rest, and prolonged it till his idleness caused him remorse.

Then he would be seen in the most extraordinary places; among aristocrats in high-life, and in the doubtful *cafes* of the boulevard. Sometimes he dined behind Montmartre, in a second-class inn, frequented by a class of indifferent poets, at the risk of being assassinated when he went out by the rag-pickers, who not having found a full purse on their beat, hunted for one in the pockets of well-dressed people, where they were more likely to be found. The next day, serene in a white cravat, he might be seen entering Durand's, but with another sort of a friend, a senator, or a deputy.

Without belonging to the bohemian class, Jalbrun knew and was familiar with all the bohemians in art and literature; without knocking he entered an artist's studio when the middle classes, or financiers, tired of ringing the bell in vain, had gone down the stairs with noses a yard long. He did not always have the pass-word, but from his manner of ringing or scratching on the door, the artist, who was afraid of undesirable visits, said to himself: "It is a *confvere*," and he opened the door.

Romanet loved him like a brother. Nothing was more natural; when, discouraged by his father's scoldings and his mother's distress, Lucien said that he could do nothing well, and nothing that he had done was worth exhibiting, Jalbrun had remonstrated with him, stirred him up, and encouraged him; he had inspired his wavering soul with courage, assuring him of his talent, which he had begun to doubt. There is nothing that draws you to people as much as to feel that they have confidence in you. To feel that his talent is unrecognized, or under-estimated, is enough to chill the enthusiasm of any artist.

Jalbrun was an adept in the art of encouraging artist's weaknesses. It required the same courage to say to the acknowledged painter, "Your canvas is not worth anything;" or to the youthful sculptor, doubtful about his work, "Your cast is very good; try to model it a little better, and you will see it at the Salon!"

That is why so many young men, unknown to-day, celebrated to-morrow, spoke warmly of him and defended him courageously against those who were dissatisfied with him after he had told them some severe truths. Jalbrun listened to the stories of their epic struggles, with a smile upon his firm face, and said to all, either friends or enemies: "My dear children, how happy you must be because you are so young!"

Such was the view that he took of life.

He loved young men, those who had blood in their veins—no

matter if this blood was sometimes too effervescent—faith in their souls—faith in no matter what—in honor, in the ideal, in art, in the future, in their country, in a beloved wife!

"They are young!" said he, smiling, and this word excused their faults, their senseless quarrels, their useless susceptibilities. The only thing that he could not forgive in any one, at any price, was meanness.

"I understand," said he, "how one may stab with a knife when one's blood is up; but I do not understand how one can stab a man's calves with a pin, whether he be friend or foe."

Those who had small souls did not dare show it before him, for fear of being scourged by these terrible sallies, which branded like an iron, because they were just, and because the reproach was merited.

Immediately after their return from the wedding journey, Romanet had hastened to seek Jalbrun, to present him to his wife, who had seen him only among others on the wedding-day.

"You may not find it easy to get along with him at first," said Lucien; "but I beg you will try your best. If you but knew what a good and beautiful soul he has under that curious exterior!"

Annie did not have to make any effort. She possessed in a high degree the quality that Jalbrun prized above all others—sincerity. They understood each other from the first day.

Although she was a woman of the world, thanks to her severe education, she was always so natural that she could never be common-place. Although Jalbrun frequented the extremes of society, he retained within himself a height of moral elevation, which made this careless man to all appearance a gentleman perfectly correct in the presence of anything noble, above all a noble woman.

September passed; many who did not care for hunting returned to Paris, attracted by the intellectual life there. The newly married couple made their plans for the winter, and, naturally, Jalbrun was constantly consulted. He knew everything, where the best furniture was sold, the place where real Japaneze stuffs were for sale at a bargain, and possessed all the information they required.

What he also knew, and of which Lucien had no idea, was, where one could go and where one could not go. He found it very amusing to guide them in that part of the town where one elbows one's way, and does not speak to one's friends; he went with them, these two ingenuous beings, one as ignorant as the other, and capable of committing the most foolish mistakes, the mistakes of a provincial, fifty years old, fresh from Perpignan or Tarascon.

"One cannot do this, one cannot do that," said he all the time, and at the question, "Why?" asked by Annie, made such clever replies, gave such impossible reasons, which proved so very comical, that Lucien understood the truth, while his wife laughed till tears came, and in good faith accepted the explanations that were given.

Thus the winter began and continued. Lucien worked with

less enthusiasm than in the past, but with a very strong desire to make a name for himself. He seldom went to his master's studio, where his position as a married man had created a sort of coldness between him and his fellow-artists. They would have liked to rally him, but they did not dare; they respected their comrade's simplicity. Besides, they felt, from a cold light in Lucien's eyes, that their poking would not be well-received, and they restrained themselves. So they made no remarks to the young man upon his new situation, but this silence established a reserve between them, that became unpleasant; the young artist took no notice of these things, and continued his studies.

He also worked at home. His large and commodious studio allowed him to set up canvases of all dimensions; he brought a lot of interesting studies from his wedding-trip, and winter was not long enough to execute all the work that he had laid out.

During the fog the days were very short. When the light became gray through the large studio window, Annie entered ready for a walk; Lucien put away his brushes, and they went off gayly, walking closely together, under the pretense that they could walk more rapidly. They made calls sometimes. They liked society and society liked them. Young, handsome, amiable, rich enough to accept and return hospitality, they were equally sought by all their old family friends and by their new relations.

When it became time to send pictures to the Salon, Lucien had not finished what he intended to exhibit. He sent the *Romanet Orchard*, fearing that it would be refused. He was greatly surprised when he found that it had been received and declared a success, and then he became somewhat less modest.

On varnishing day this picture proved a brilliant success, which might justly have turned stronger heads than that of the young man. Friends stopped each other and said, "Have you seen the *Romanet Orchard?* Then go, if only to see that!"

People crowded around the picture, and praised its fresh and dazzling tints. True artists half-smiled; some envied; others declared that they could not understand this success; but the public was taken, and when the public is taken, there is nothing to say, for it likes or hates without knowing why. As a father, who knew his son well said: "He does not know what he wants, but he wants it intensely."

The first of May, that year, Lucien Romanet was celebrated. It is impossible to tell his mother's joy. His father was not less delighted, but he did not show it, believing that it is not best to tell children that you are pleased with them. This was the old system of education, which formerly resulted well if it were not pushed too far.

Really, no one was deceived; by the tone in which Master Romanet said, "I do not see what they find good in that!" In the mile that lingered around the corners of his mouth, in the burst

of joy mixed with affected malice which darted through his blue eyes, Lucien well understood his father's proud satisfaction.

Annie lived in a dream. She laughed as when she was a young girl, without any cause, carried away with foolish joy. Twenty times a day she threw her arms around her husband's neck and said to him:

"You know that you are a great artist."

He laughed and mocked her; but, in his heart, he welcomed without too much questioning, this praise which greatly pleased his vanity. He said to himself that he ought to work very hard, while he reveled in the thought that he was making a name for himself.

That year was an enchantment for him. He made a number of studies at Mantes during the summer, also in Britany, in the south, and wherever chance carried him; he took a bit of landscape here and a bit there, and returned to his studio with his head confused with these varied ideas. The following year he sent two landscapes to the Salon, and they were rejected.

That caused him to reflect. The shock was less for Annie than for him, for Mme. Orliet had predicted this result. She knew enough of men and things to know that her son-in-law, whose head had been turned by his success, would commit some blunders.

To console him, the young wife used the balm of tenderness with which wives know so well how to heal wounded vanity. Besides, she loved him so much that she would make any sacrifice to comfort her husband when he was sad. With a mixture of childishness and truth which pertains to those who love sincerely, she persuaded him to look at things in a light in which he had formerly refused to see them. It was Mme. Orliet who spoke through her daughter; she would not have succeeded herself. Annie, gained her cause, naturally.

Lucien began to work again; beginning to sketch, and from the commencement of the following winter returned to the right path; he almost finished an excellent work, and did much toward recovering the shock of the preceding Salon.

At the moment when a new success would distinguish his name, and restore him in the favor of the public, who only remembered his first brilliant success, Annie gave him a darling daughter, as pretty as the mother herself. A few weeks later Lucien received a third medal.

Jalbrun was radiant over his friend's happiness. That strange and sympathetic being loved or he did not love. Those whom he did not love he could not endure: those whom he loved were a part of his existence; he rejoiced in their happiness and he suffered in their griefs, as if they were his own. The family life which Lucien led appeared to him a delicious oasis in the more or less disguised Bohemian world which he constantly frequented.

In the eyes of this man who spent his life without a home, who dined at the restaurants, and who never returned to his rooms before one o'clock in the morning, the Romanet house-

hold had something of that serenity which seemed borrowed from the stars.

A home where dinner was served regularly, where servants went and came like shadows, where lamps burnt with a soft and shaded light, where the young wife moved about with tranquil grace, without any show of rich apparel, where no unnecessary noise was heard, it was a corner of a new world, such as one reads of in books, such as Jalbrun had never known.

He spoke of it so often to his friend and drew such favorable comparisons between it and the brilliant society that he frequented that at last Romanet became impatient.

"You seem to take us for Estelle and Nemorin," said he, one day. "But, the deuce, my friend, we are not so primitive?" Do you think that we do not know anything about the world?"

"Gently!" replied the musician. "The people of whom I speak are very refined, and Monsieur de Florian bears no resemblance whatsoever to that antediluvian! Your paradise is canopied with Oriental stuffs: the difference is not so great. But you are wrong to calumniate yourself, You and you wife are kind-hearted, and that is worth more than anything else."

Romanet was not satisfied. For some months, he had mingled more in the society of his *confreres* than formerly, and he fancied that he saw in the welcome that they gave him, mingled with a real or feigned recognition of his talent, a shade of very discreet raillery, hidden under extreme politeness, but which he could hardly misunderstand.

They treated him, with great respect, as if he were a young woman before whom they must not discuss certain subjects.

When any one launched out into the recital of some doubtful adventure, more than one look was turned toward Romanet as if to see how he would take it. There was a cold mockery in this behavior, a sort of a playful tap, all the more displeasing as it was impossible to specify in what the displeasure consisted and what could have been the cause.

More than once Romanet felt himself blush under these looks; if he addressed himself to the one who had looked at him thus, he encountered that irreproachable rather cold amiability which keeps one at a distance and which prevents all intimacy. He made one at a dinner, which are so often given by men in the same profession; elected by acclamation at the moment of his success, he had not found there what he had expected. Jalbrun, who had presented him, had made him acquainted with all his friends; after a few meetings, their acquaintance made no progress, he did not become intimate with any one, although they all esteemed him greatly.

During the summer each went his own way. Lucien almost forgot the singular manner of most of the people whom he knew. Annie, his little Louise and himself, settled themselves at Arcachon, where Mme. Orliet had preceded them; under the great pines, on the sea-shore, they passed many happy hours.

The cottage was somewhat isolated, which made them feel almost solitary; with his wife, his daughter and his mother-in-law Lucien passed a never-to-be-forgotten summer, whose memory he recalled later as a dream of paradise.

They did not avoid the other bathers, but their happiness kept them from mingling in promiscuous society. The mixed society around them seemed a sort of moving panorama, an animated kaleidoscope which amused them without creating any desire to mingle in it.

At the end of the first month, Romanet formed among the men some acquaintance with whom he walked on the beach, but whom he never invited to his house; taking a hand at a whist party, the flattering appreciations of an intelligent amateur are, at watering-places, sufficient excuses for attempts at continuing later, in Paris, acquaintances that might not prove altogether agreeable. August brought a great many people to Arcachon. They were less select, perhaps, but certainly more lively and gayer.

One evening, before dinner, Lucien smoked a cigar with a very well-bred gentleman for whose society he had taken a fancy on account of his very marked Parisian conversation, which skimmed all subjects without exhausting them. In age, M. de Noirmont was hardly a companion for the young artist, for he must have been nearly fifty; but men like him have no age, especially if they have frequented society and know all its by-paths well.

"At last," said Noirmont, adjusting his eyeglass, "there are some ladies! That element is conspicuous by its absence in our Eden."

Lucien followed his companion's look, and saw three or four beautiful persons, or, at least they made pretensions to beauty, which formed a group some distance from the terrace. It was impossible to misinterpret their social position; they had voluntarily announced it in the intended peculiarity of their costumes, by the exaggerated brillancy of their complexions and their hair, and even more by their constant attention to what was passing around them, a kind of restlessness, so different from the repose of those whose lives are not affected by chance.

"Do you know them?" said Romanet, indifferently.

"I know one of them; the others are new recruits, probably, or perhaps promotions."

Noirmont had risen carelessly: "Will you not come with me?" said he to Lucien, who remained seated, rapping the table with the end of his cane.

The young man hesitated a moment.

"No, thanks," said he, in a tone that resembled a regret. "I am expected at home."

"Then, good-bye," said Noirmont, who bowed and went away.

Half a second had not passed before Romanet repented having refused. Why had he not followed his companion? What false shame had held him back? After all, one often met such women without any consequences. One met them, for it was impossible to avoid them. More than once Lucien had met a woman of the class at the studio where she had gone to admire the paintings of one of his friends. What absurd prudery had seized him now?

He arose in a bad humor, scarcely understanding its cause. To go home he had to go within a short distance of this group of newcomers, where Noirmont was already joined by several gentlemen of his acquaintance. His recent refusal annoyed him, and he did not like being annoyed by so slight a cause. The clock struck seven; he could even now change his mind.

Lucien arose and went toward the door, going with an undecided gait.

When he was in sound of her voice, one of these women stared at him attentively, and he heard her ask:

"Who is that?"

"Lucien Romanet," said Noirmont, without lowering his voice.

The young man continued on his way without appearing to have heard, but there was less freedom than usual in his walk.

"He is not bad," said a female voice. "It seems that he has some talent, has he not?"

Lucien did not hear the reply; he started off hurriedly for his home. He was displeased with everybody, with these women, with De Noirmont, with himself and for a moment—like a flash—he believed that he was displeased with his wife.

What had Annie to do with all this? If anybody was above such thoughts, it was surely his pure and charming young wife! Then Lucien, shaking himself like a dog who has just been beaten, recovered his balance in a moment; without doubt he had been unsettled that day; sometimes one has this bitterness against the whole universe; the atmosphere of his home would drive it all away.

In fact, as soon as he entered his cottage, the accustomed atmosphere of his home, the familiar aspects that Annie and her mother had given to this little house, brought the young man's thoughts back to their usual channel. The sight of his wife, who came to him carrying the infant covered with embroidery, Mme. Orliet's smile, which always welcomed him, drew him again into the bosom of this loved family, and when he unfolded his napkin, some minutes after, he thought no more of the incident of the afternoon.

Neither did he think of it again the next morning, when he made his daily visit to the Casino to read the papers and to enjoy the air. Even the sight of Noirmont recalled nothing unpleasant; he chatted with him a few minutes, as he did every day, met some other acquaintances, exchanged a few words, and went away, pleased with himself and others.

The afternoon was not far advanced; a fresh wind covered the sea with silver white-caps, and gave one an inclination to move about. Lucien was seized with a fancy. He went to a livery-stable, ordered a little basket-phaeton harnessed, took the reins, and drove pell-mell to the cottage. At the sound of the wheels, Annie's head appeared at a window.

"Quick," said the young man, "put on your hat and a light wrap, and we will take a drive.

The young wife appeared in less than a minute, with a little cap on her head and a gauze veil around her neck—charmingly

pretty, smiling and gay, ready for this unexpected drive. She seated herself beside her husband, who gave the reins to the little Basque horse, and they started off at a rapid pace on the sandy road.

The air made them so lively that Annie and Lucien almost forgot that they were serious, married people; the playfulness of their childhood returned to them for the moment, and they laughed merrily at a thousand foolish things that nobody else would have found droll, but which seemed inexpressibly funny to them.

They wandered about for two hours, wherever their fancy led them; and then, seeing suddenly that the sun was going down, they turned to go back to the cottage, but went more slowly, for they had tired the little horse by the rapidity of the first half of their drive.

What was life to these happy ones? After the intoxication of their rapid drive, they enjoyed the gentle motion of their return, involuntarily leaning against each other, they liked so much to feel themselves side by side. The two years and more of their married life had taken away nothing of their love, and had added to their tenderness; the habit of never leaving each other, of leading the same artistic and social life, of loving the same things and the same people, had doubled their joys, until now they had come to resemble each other. They often opened their lips to say the same tnings at the same moment, which made them laugh.

The wind had fallen, the white-caps had disappeared, and the heat of the day made them languid. The little horse only walked, and Lucien had no desire to hurry him. The magnificent horizon under his eyes, Annie's charming and supple body leaning on his shoulder, he felt himself very happy, and little by little he became grave.

The young wife no longer spoke; she was gazing at the splendor of the sky and the sea; she looked without seeing, and appeared in a reverie.

"Of what are you thinking?" demanded Lucien.

"I thought—you will be very much surprised! I was thinking of our wedding-day, when you came in the morning, you know, and threw me the bouquet of orange-blossoms. I have preserved it—the bouquet; it is still fragrant."

Lucien smiled. Men feel themselves superior to such childishness.

"That was a happy moment, was it not?" said Annie, in a low voice.

The road before them was deserted. Lucien embraced his wife, instead of replying.

"It was like a dream," said she. "It is the first secret that I have concealed from mamma."

She smiled, and suddenly her eyes were filled with tears.

"We are so happy," said she, "that sometimes I am afraid."

"Afraid of what, my Annie?"

"Afraid that it will not last—afraid lest something may

happen. What if you should weary of me, and no longer love me?"

"Child, replied Lucien, you know that I shall always love you!"

"Truly?"

She put forward her pretty head, smiling, while two tears remained midway down her cheeks. Her husband brushed away the tears with his lips.

"Can I ever cease to love you, when I have loved you all my life?"

They looked at each other with unspeakable tenderness. A lark sung in the blue sky, lost to sight; its clear, piercing voice penetrated their hearts, they were much affected, and they listened as little children listen to hymns in the church, when they are taught to pray,

The lark flew down, and they could see it only as a black speck in the brilliant sky; it wheeled its flight like the movement of a gimlet, and as it approached the ground its song was more and more sweet and penetrating.

"Here it is," said Annie, in a low tone; Lucien stopped the horse.

The incomparable voice of the sweet bird slowly died away into a low murmur; its wings fluttered; at last it disappeared in its nest among the silver-green wheat, and they heard it no more.

"Lucien!" said Annie softly.

He looked at her. In truth, at that moment they were perfectly happy.

They heard the steps of a pair of trotters behind them on the road, and before they had time to turn a large, heavy carriage passed them; on the cushions, under the shade of a silk umbrella trimmed with a profusion of lace, was seated one of the women whom he had seen the night before, accompanied by a man who affected a grave air.

When the carriage passed the little basket phaeton the woman looked at Lucien in mock surprise, then at Annie with a disdainful air.

After a quarter of second, before the carriage disappeared at a turn in the road, the woman turned around and looked Lucien full in the face, laughing, as one would laugh at some ridiculous figure.

Annie noticed nothing of this.

What a dust they have raised!" said she calmly, while the cloud of dust slowly settled.

Lucien, without answering, seized the whip, which he had not yet used, and plied it vigorously upon the little horse.

The innocent creature, surprised at this unusual treatment, began to run with all his might toward the town.

"What is the matter with him?" said Annie, who did not understand this.

"He made a misstep," said Lucien, confused.

But he knew that that was false; it was not the horse that had

stumbled, it was his own fault—he knew not how—perhaps it was his conscience.

This unimportant incident had an unpleasant result: the young man had not yet arrived at that age when he was indifferent to the world's opinion; the thought that anybody would ridicule him annoyed him at first and afterward angered him.

It was in vain that he said to himself that the ridicule of that class of people was rather to his credit, that his moral sense, more elevated than hers, should raise him above such little attacks on his vanity: in the depths of his soul the young man felt an unexpressed discontentment, and at the same time a vague curiosity to explore the forbidden world which was known to everybody around him, and of which he alone was ignorant.

This dissatisfaction with himself was soon spread to others: he had scarcely returned to Paris before he began to complain of a series of petty annoyances that he had never considered of any consequence before. A door closed noisily, a draught of air, a dinner not so well served as usual, made him so ill-natured that Annie could scarcely understand him.

Since she had become a mother, she had not been able to devote as much time as formerly to her household affairs. The time that she spent playing with her little girl was taken partly from her house and partly from her husband. At first Lucien regretted very much when he no longer saw his wife's pretty head peep between the two portieres when he was at work; afterward he was satisfied, for then he had more freedom and more time to himself.

His time? He did not know what to do with it! When he left his house about five o'clock, he strolled down the avenue, he went very slowly, he did not know where to go. It was no pleasure to make calls without his wife: he would not subject himself to that disagreable task when his wife was not there to aid him. The fashionable cafés were not to his taste. Yet, for want of something else to do, having gone two or three times with some friends who were in the habit of frequenting them, it ended by his finding himself seated on the boulevard every day about six o'clock.

After a while he became interested there. The little journal about Parisian life that he picked up there gave him a thousand explanations of things of which he was ignorant. This new branch of his education struck him with surprise, and he wondered that he had never learned many things before. Others knew them, they understood the workings of what they called grand life—that life which made foreigners say and believe that all Parisian men were frauds and all Parisian women were lost. After three months of this theoretic instruction, Lucien had at his finger's ends all the gossip that he had learnt from this chronicle of scandal, and could name all the men and women who promenaded habitually up and down the Boulevard des Italiens.

He was seized with a mad desire to visit the houses of some of these women, to see what they were like, to discover how their lives differed from those of women of good society.

Suppressing his æsthetic as well as his moral sense, he tried to believe that a painted face was prettier than a fresh complexion, and dyed hair more beautiful than that which was natural.

His wife's satin skin no longer attracted his looks or his lips. When he examined her he could not help seeing that she was young and lovely, but to his perverted taste she appeared faded. Her natural carmine lips appeared too pale to him in comparison with the rouged lips that haunted his imagination. Annie's transparent and rosy skin was colorless beside the powdered cheeks and penciled eyebrows that he saw every day, and the sweet odor of violets which perfumed Annie's clothes, and appeared to emanate from Annie herself, was lost in the strong perfumes which he had now become accustomed to inhale.

"I am a fool!" Lucien suddenly said to himself one day, when he saw several young men of his acquaintance enter the Maison Doree, to dine there in brilliant company. "I do not know why I should voluntarily exile myself from this society! I know nothing about it, and I appear ridiculous!"

"And Annie?" whispered his conscience, "Annie will know nothing about it! Why should she know? Besides, if anybody should tell her, she would not believe it."

Here Lucien distinctly heard his conscience call him "Wretch!" This apostrophy had such an effect upon him that he immediately called a carriage and went home, taking his wife the most beautiful bouquet that she had received from him since their marriage. And, strange thing, and which proved the confusion in his disordered mind, while he was driving in the Boulevard Malesherbes, the subtile perfume of the bouquet resting in his lap, mounted to his head, and he imagined himself carrying a bouquet—why not the same?—somewhere else than home to his wife.

His mind was truly unsettled, for he could not drive away this sinful thought. An unconquerable timidity prevented him from asking any of his friends to present him at the house of any of these women; which would perhaps have destroyed his illusions at once in showing him that they were not so widely different from other houses which he frequented. He did not wish to go voluntarily; he wished to be pushed there, to be enticed there. He wished to do something extraordinary; some ordinarily shameless act would not appease his wounded vanity, he did not wish to commit any common prank, a simple excursion *extra muros*,—his imagination was intoxicated more than his senses, he longed for some unexpected encounter, in which there would be the charm of poetry, but still a result that would pertain wholly to earth.

Thus a part of the winter passed. Annie, who was happy with her mother, whom she saw every week, her husband and her child, knew absolutely nothing of all this.

CHAPTER X.

BEFORE the commencement of Lent the pupils of a celebrated studio organized a grand ball among themselves; a great deal was said about it and it promised to be, at least, curious.

All the old pupils who had become famous were invited and accepted their invitations, and a fortnight before it came off all artistic Paris knew the plan of the *fete* and the principal costumes.

There was a rumor that there would be many pretty women there, and that is sufficient to give an idea of the eagerness with which the tickets were sought.

"Can you obtain an invitation for me?" said Lucien, assuming an air of indifference, to Jalbrun, who had just described these projected splendors to him.

The musician looked at his friend in profound amazement.

"You?"

"Yes, I? Why not?"

"Surely, why not? Yet; well. No. I go back to my first astonishment—why? Because—— Do you think it would please your wife?"

"It is nothing to my wife," said Romanet, with impatience. "I have not asked for an invitation for my wife."

"I should hope not!" said Jalbrun in a roar of laughter.

"What do you find so extraordinary in my request," asked Lucien, becoming vexed. "Am I not an artist? Is it because I am not rich enough, young enough, or sufficiently well-known? Is there any reason why I should be eternally denied the pleasures that others enjoy, as if I were a black sheep?"

"There is no earthly reason," said Jalbrun gravely, seeing that his friend expected a reply.

"Well, then?"

"As you like! I am not a moralist," replied the musician, without losing his temper, "but it seems to me that a man like you—a talented artist, rich, as you said yourself, married to an adorable wife, father of a beautiful child, has nothing to gain by allowing himself to be seen there, and that he has everything to lose."

"What? My freedom?" said Lucien, with a spiteful laugh.

"Perhaps!"

There was silence; Jalbrun chewed his cigar with a weary air.

"Very well," said Lucien, rising. "I will ask some one else for an invitation. It cannot be very difficult to obtain."

"It is true; you may obtain one, but it is not so easy as you imagine."

"But ——?"

"But I think you had better remain at home. Come, now, do you want advice? Give a grand dinner on that day, twenty covers if you like, and invite all the best artists. You are able to do that. That would be a manifestation of good taste, in the eyes of those who respect themselves."

"If I should invite you on that day, would you come?" said Lucien, with an air of doubt.

"I? Never in the world! I shall go to the ball as a Turk, and I shall dance till seven o'clock in the morning."

"You see!" cried Romanet, with restrained anger. "I am the only one forbidden."

"What do you wish, my dear friend?" said Jalbrun, trying to turn off the difficulty by jesting. "There are men who are born to belong to the Institute; there are serious, well-regulated men, who are always well spoken of; in forty years from now it is intended by public opinion that you shall belong to the Institute. You may perhaps be a martyr, but it is certainly an honor, and you must merit it. Be resigned, then!"

"Then you refuse me?" said Lucien, who had not listened.

"Your wife would never forgive you!"

"What if I cause her to ask you for an invitation for me?"

Jalbrun was astonished.

"If you do that," replied he, after a moment's silence, "I shall have no motive in refusing you; but I still adhere to what I said: You would do better to give a grand dinner, etc."

"Very well. Come and dine with us and you will see."

"If you should influence Madame Romanet in advance, that will not be fair——"

"I give you my word not to speak to her about it except in your presence; besides, I promise that I will not leave you."

"Come!" said Jalbrun, rising.

A double ring at the bell announced the arrival of Lucien at his home. Jalbrun and he were in the hall when the soup was sent to the table. A moment after Annie, smiling and good-humored as usual, appeared in her place as mistress of the house.

There were evidences of easy circumstances in the arrangement of the apartments, in the whiteness of the linen, in the quality of the china, and the weight of the old silver; one felt that there was regularity in the house, that the accounts were well kept, the tradesmen paid, the servants well trained, and restrained by a fear of being sent away from a desirable situation, where they could obtain good references.

Even the steam which rose from the soup-tureen when the cover was removed showed the well-ordered regularity of the household. It was the *pot-au-feu*, the real family *pot-au-feu*, the national dish, of which cooks transmit the true recipe. Soup can be made in every country in the world; there has been such progress in chemistry in these days that soup can be made without meat and without vegetables: but all the different soups, decorated with the most sumptuous names, are worthless beside the French *pot-au-feu*.

It has given its name, in bitter derision, to a class of women who believe domestic duties above worldly pleasures, who trouble themselves less about the elegance of a dress or a hat than the comfort of the family, who value little superficial show if the foundation is not solid. They are courageous managers, these *pot-au-feu* of France; that is to say, the essence of all that nourishes and strengthens: this *pot-au-feu*, so necessary to the happiness of all that even its detractors, after they have finished

their tirades, hold out their empty plate and say: "I should like to have a little more, please."

Lucien offered his plate for more, and Jalbrun, who was thinking what has just been written, looked at him with an amused air. Annie, seeing this look, wanted to ask an explanation; but, seeing by the light in his eye that their friend was jesting, she changed her mind, and looked again at her husband.

"Do you like it?" she asked him, in a manner that was almost infantile.

"It is excellent," replied he, leaning back in his chair in the attitude of a happy man who is dining at home.

Jalbrun continued to look at him with an air that said: "Really, now! but Romanet ought to be contented."

Dinner continued without interruption until the roast was brought in, then the young husband recovered his energy at the sight of a chicken which it behooved him to carve.

"Annie, have you heard of the ball at the Studio Courtois?" said he, plunging his knife into the side of the fowl.

"Yes," she answered; "they say it will be very comical."

"I wish to go. Will it annoy you?"

"I? Why should it? Go, by all means, if you wish," said she, her good little face lighted up with pleasure. "Do you think that anything that would give you pleasure would displease me?"

Lucien appeared to be occupied with his fowl.

"Ladies in society cannot go there, you know—then," continued he.

"I think the men will not dance with each other," said she, laughing; "it will be a little mixed——"

"Very much mixed, there will even be a medley," suggested Jalbrun. "Not the men. Oh, no! the men will all be of the best; not from the Institute exactly—but outside the five Academies——"

"I understand," said Annie, smiling. "Are you going?"

"Alas!" sighed Jalbrun, comically.

"Well, why should Lucien not go?"

"He has no invitation," replied the musician.

"Can you not get him one?"

"Well, now?" said Romanet, triumphantly, raising the carving knife and fork, as rowers raise their oars to salute.

Jalbrun opened his pocket-book and drew from it a sheet of Holland paper which was engraved in a very pretty design; it was a blank invitation; placing the sheet on his plate he presented it to Lucien.

"Behold the keys of the city!" said he, with mock gravity.

Annie looked from one to the other with laughing eyes.

"This is to say, dear madame, that the doors of that world are open to your husband—take notice that I have yielded—to his wish and to yours."

The young wife examined with curiosity the bit of paper which represented so many things. It resembled all invitations of that kind, designed by a witty pencil—a little more highly

colored perhaps, than one would have been for a ball in the Monceaux quarter, that was all.

"What costume will you wear?" asked Jalbrun.

"Ah! must he wear a costume?" said Annie.

"I have an Oriental friend who has costumes of all colors, we will examine them," said Lucien, frankly.

After dinner, when they had gone to the studio to smoke, and the young wife went to see her little daughter sleep in her cradle, Jalbrun said to his comrade:

"You are wickedly mischievous. You acted that as well as one of Scribe's comedies."

Lucien smiled with an air of superiority disguised under an appearance of modesty.

"My wife has confidence in me!" he replied.

"Behold how misplaced that confidence is!" Jalbrun was going to say: he restrained himself and said nothing, which was infinitely wiser.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ball was at its height when Lucien entered with Jalbrun and a dozen others; they came in groups thus to make a greater effect, and those who wished to display themselves to advantage came very late. The little troop was applauded, as much on account of the persons who composed it as for the very beautiful costumes which they wore.

In about five minutes, in the general commotion, Lucien had lost his companions, and found himself alone, confused and wholly out of his element, with a vague moral impression that his tropical costume made him very cold about his legs.

Nothing makes one more awkward than to wear clothes to which one is unaccustomed; they are cold where they should be warm, and warm where they should be cold. They are loose where the habit requires tightness, and *vice versa:* the wearer is in a general state of torture that paralyzes his movements, and he is awkward because he is embarrassed, even if he is not so usually. To get rid of this disagreeable impression one should mingle in the riot of laughter and noise. Lucien felt himself quite alone, in the midst of this animated crowd. Solitude could never make him feel so sad or so neglected as loneliness like this. The brilliant, moving spectacle before his eyes, only increased his bitterness, for he felt himself a stranger, and he saw nothing there that was particularly agreeable to him.

A miscellaneous crowd elbowing each other where those little cliques of friends, had so skillfully banded together for their entrance was broken up by this contact. Badly assorted colors jarred upon each other; costumes that did not harmonize with the face or the figure of those who wore them—every one seeming desirous of dressing himself in what suited him the least; the richness and beauty of the materials, the correctness of the most splendid costumes, the beauty of the outline of which was lost in the multitude, and because of their too close proximity to bright colors—that is what constitutes a masked ball, when it

has not taken for its distinct feature, to the exclusion of everything else, a special epoch of a country or a century.

Yet it was undoubtedly a magnificent ball. More diamonds never glittered on women's necks, or richer and more tasteful costumes never adorned men; but how could they prevent one person from wearing a costume that would not destroy the effect of another's? How resist the power of human will which would choose to chat or to dance with, not the dress but the person who wears it?

Leaning against the wall hung with magnificent Flanders tapestry, Lucien thought of all these things, and said to himself that if he had given the ball, he would have known how to avoid all these incongruities. In an appropriate background, he would have united all the refined elegance of Watteau, the counterfeit country life of Trianon, with the splendors of the *Noces Aldobrandine*, and among the people dressed in the spirit of that time, these discrepancies of form and of color would not have appeared any more than they do in a drawing-room with modern surroundings.

But Lucien had not come here to be æsthetic; he did it because he had nothing else to do to keep himself company; he felt out of place and bored because he did not recognize his friends under their changed appearance. The wigs bothered him; one person whom he thought he knew by name had disguised himself as Sancho Panza, which made him resemble some one else altogether. Deceived by resemblances, misled by the changes of physiognomy, his face became as piteous as the victim who is condemned to remain in the middle during a game of "puss in the corner."

Jalbrun gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder.

"You play the part of the bored man admirably; do you not know your Gavarni? But you have not come here for that? Come over here, they are going to dance—here—this is the corner for lookers-on; but, certainly, you did not get yourself up as Palikare merely to come and look on, did you?"

While chatting, he drew Lucien away; he led him in the midst of a group of ladies, who were talking animatedly.

"Here is a gentleman," said he, "a real one, who dances. I caught him in the act; he dances in drawing-rooms. Take good care of him, ladies. Men who dance are very rare. You have to know them to appreciate their worth."

The orchestra played a new waltz, which was not as good as the old ones, perhaps, but it set the whole crowd into motion. Romanet not knowing exactly how it happened, soon found himself spinning around like the others, with a woman in his arms.

In society he was a good waltzer, but here he found himself embarrassed; yet his partner waltzed well, keeping exact step with the music; after having trodden two or three times upon the feet of passing couples the young painter regained his presence of mind, and for the first time looked at the woman whom he held in his arms.

She was neither ugly nor pretty, which saved her from one

drawback, which was, that she appeared better than she really was. Lucien became bolder as he went on; he began to recognize many of the female celebrities of the day among the dancers, and they did not appear so very ugly, or, at least, not uglier than in their street costumes. After awhile he began to see that even the prettiest of them were made ugly by their disguises; he had not understood this at first, and his error was a benefit to his companion.

When the orchestra stopped Lucien was near an Oriental divan, his partner threw herself down upon it, laughing; he seated himself by her side.

She talked to him for ten minutes without his having heard a word that she said; he replied at random, without caring what he said. During all this time he was looking around at the loud, noisy groups, and he thought;

"This, then, is the society that I wish to know?"

He was more surprised than charmed; he was annoyed that he did not experience any new sensation. What he saw there he had seen and felt before, and if he had been frank with himself, he would have acknowledged that he was greatly bored.

He did not know what to say, he had no reason to go too far and he felt that he was not expected here to pay the elegant compliments that a coquettish and pretty society-lady demands as her right, and who likes to hear herself praised, but with whom it is impossible to overstep certain bounds.

Little by little Romanet became more at his ease. Chance separated him from his first partner and he joined groups where he had friends. He was droll and amusing: some friendly tongues had whispered to charitable ears that this was the *debut* of a novice in this sort of society, and they all showed themselves very indulgent for the shortcomings of a newcomer.

After supper he was so amusing that he achieved a great triumph. His society manners mingled so comically with his desire to commit follies, and thus put himself upon a level with the others, that he went beyond all limits, and surpassed himself with infinite grace.

Toward three o clock, the woman with whom he had waltzed, went to him and took his arm to renew their tender conversation; she was a beautiful blonde with bold eyes, with whom he had exchanged several jests, and she planted herself audaciously before him.

"You have to talk with me," said she.

When he looked at her, Lucien recognized the woman who had passed him on the road at Arcachon and who had so undeniably ridiculed him. A fever of vanity seized him and he measured eyes with his adversary.

"You want to talk?" said he. "As much as you like."

He gave her his arm and they went away.

The St. Augustine clock struck seven when, on a rainy, gloomy March morning Romanet got out of a carriage, to the great amusement of some urchins who were passing by, still dressed in his Palikare costume.

He held his key in his hand for nothing in the world could have induced him to ring the bell; he entered almost fearful, certainly ashamed, and asking only one thing of Heaven, that he might be spared meeting any of his servants before he had dressed himself in his every-day clothes.

The antechamber was deserted, he stole into his studio like a thief, and closing and locking the door threw himself down on the divan.

"What is fast life? It is spending one's time like that that gives one the title of a man of the world!" He felt completely disgusted with it all; the supper had disagreed with him, the champagne had made his head ache, he was saturated with the dust of the ball, and that woman——

Since midnight until now he had not dared to think of Annie. Each time that her memory had come to him he had driven it away, as one frightens away birds, with abrupt motions and noise. But this was no longer possible; she was here, and he must go to see her.

At this thought he put his head in his hands with an unspeakable sadness, which increased more and more, like a wave ready to drown him.

How beautiful his love for Annie had been! How much he had longed for her without a single unworthy thought, and the day in which she had been given to him, with what deep joy, with what intense solemnity had he taken her in his arms!

Since then she had become even dearer to him; he could not remember a single day that she had not rendered herself precious to him by some endearing mark of tenderness, by some grace, some goodness, like a golden beam in his life.

What had she done that she should suffer? What had she done to deserve the torture that would afflict her heart if she knew? But she should never know, oh, never!

There was a noise in the antechamber. Lucien was seized with fright, and hastily tore off his masquerade costume and threw it from him, then he hurriedly put on his working clothes, and unbolted the door to allow any one to enter. As he passed by the mirror he turned and looked at himself, disgusted.

The household was stirring now; it would soon be necessary to show himself to those who loved him—who respected him. Fortunately, Mme. Orliet was at Mantes; he was exceedingly glad of that, for, under her sharp eyes, he would not know how to look.

Summoning all his courage, he crossed the drawing-room and entered his dressing-room. He wished to wash off all the contamination that had accumulated upon himself since last evening.

As soon as the water streamed from the faucet into the marble basin, with a gurgling noise, and he felt the cold, wet cloth on his body, his former elasticity came back to his weary limbs; he felt as if he had awakened from a bad dream.

With feverish haste he washed from his hair and his beard the strong perfume that he had brought home with him, and then he felt more like his usual self, and after he had perfumed him-

self with the sweet odor of the violets that Annie loved, he dressed, and felt master of himself again.

A door opened near him; he trembled, and saw by a glance in the mirror that he was very pale; but by a violent effort he pulled himself together, and went into his wife's room.

Lying in a great bed covered with blue silk, she had just opened her eyes, and still blinked at the daylight:

"Oh, Lucien!" said she, "here you are at last! I waited so late, so late for you! until four o'clock!"

Lucien bent over her to give her her usual morning kiss, but more than that he did not venture. She put her arms around his neck, and drew him down to her. He withdrew, discontented and uneasy.

"Why did you wait for me?" he asked. "I told you that I should not return till very late."

"One never does what one wishes," said she, raising herself on her pillow. "I made up my mind not to wait for you, and I went to bed; but then I waited after all—I read. Oh, if you knew how tiresome the book was that I read. Was it very late when you came?"

"Not very late, comparatively, but after you went to sleep."

"You came and I did not hear you! Was I sleeping very soundly, tell me?"

"Very soundly."

He lied badly; his lies cost him a horrible effort, and besides all that he lied without absolute necessity. He did not know why, but lying seemed an essential part of the life that he had led the night before.

"Was the ball amusing?" asked Annie, playing with the locks of hair about his face.

"It was amusing. There were many beautiful costumes."

"And the women. Tell me, Lucien, how were the women dressed?"

"Peuh!" said the young man, looking out of the window.

"You shall tell me all about it while we take breakfast. Will you ring the bell, and have the little one brought in?"

Romanet touched the bell. A singular impression of the badly learnt and badly rehearsed *role* that he was playing, haunted him since he had returned. He feared lest he should make some blunder that would betray him, which caused his movements to be very awkward.

"Where did you sleep last night?" suddenly asked Annie. "It was not here."

If a thunder-storm had burst over his head, Lucien could not have been more confounded than he was by this simple question.

He looked into his wife's eyes to see if she had any motive.

No, she had asked frankly, regretting a little that her dear husband, whose comfort she so tenderly cared for, might not have slept well elsewhere.

"Oh, I was on the divan in the studio," said he, with considerable presence of mind. "I made myself quite comfortable, with plenty of curtains and the Oriental tapestry."

Annie made a pretty face, and slightly shrugged her shoulders.

"Would it not have been better to have come here? You would not disturb me, as you say I was sleeping so soundly."

The nurse entered, bringing the baby, who was rosy and happy, as babies always are so early in the morning. Lucien had to submit to the ceremony of his daily caresses, and to play with his daughter as usual. But everything seemed false and empty to him; he had a taste of poison in his mouth, and a horrible pity for himself and for others in his soul.

At last the child was taken away.

Annie sent her husband away that she might dress, and Lucien took his chololate alone in the dining-room; he heard the servant sweeping and cleaning the studio.

"I am going to commence work at once," said he to himself—"only hard work can restore my equilibrium."

But he soon found that he was in no condition to work. Throwing aside his brushes, he went out to try to walk off his strange feelings.

Men of his circle, as was well known, did habitually what he had done! What was there criminal in it? Did he love his dear little wife any the less? On the contrary, she had become dearer to him. But then that kind of life—it cannot be denied—it was very amusing. The recollection of his success, the night before, caused him to smile. Success was not so difficult in the end. There were plenty of fashionable people who had not half as much wit as he, and as to the rest, ah! well, he had only done as others did. One could not suppose that he was going to spend all his life tied to his wife's apron-string. A love match—that was all very well—but love is not everything in life, and something is due to one's reputation. Had not that woman confessed to him last night, that for three years he had been held up to ridicule, a laughing stock, not only for himself but for his model family life. Now he was free! He had emancipated himself.

He felt himself so much so, that he intended to go to a restaurant to breakfast, instead of remaining at home: but as he still had some regard for the respect due his wife, he sent a messenger with a line to her begging her to excuse him, and giving as a reason an engagement that he had forgotten the night before. The messenger went off, and he felt perfectly at ease and breakfasted with a very good appetite.

After he had finished, it was so late that it was hardly worth while to go home; he went off to see a popular exhibition, then he returned to the boulevard in a roundabout way and sauntered about during the fashionable hour.

In less than three quarters of an hour he saw one-twentieth of the people whom he had met at the ball; the compliments that he received would have turned a stronger head than his.

The Romanet who had thus revealed himself did not in the least resemble the correct young man, "the favorite of the Salons," said those who rallied him. His success had been so great, that he had even excited envy, veritable condemnation,

indisputable and legitimate consequences of all dawning glory. Lucien was modest, just enough to show that he was not, so that the malicious amused themselves inflating him with praise. He had so much wit, so much drollery! Who would have thought it? Just when the young man found out by their extravagance that they were teasing him, Jalbrun came only to relieve him from this embarrassment, and they went off together.

"Ah, well," said he, "you have blossomed out! You will be welcomed everywhere now. Behold, you are one of us!"

He looked at his friend in such an odd way that Lucien blushed.

"You have made your debut, you ought to be satisfied! What you have lost is not worth what you have gained, but I warned you of that. Now, take care of yourself, I will not longer undertake to pilot you."

"Why?" asked Romanet.

"Because you appear to be able to pilot yourself alone!" replied the musician.

Time went on; Lucien felt that he ought to go home, but he had no desire to do so; he resigned himself, in a very bad humor, and took the longest possible route to pass off the time. At last he arrived there and soon found himself seated in his usual place, opposite Annie.

She was gay. After a tender little reproach to her husband for leaving her to breakfast alone, she spoke no more about it, but tried to make him tell her of the ball and the costumes there. But Lucien thought no more of that! No, truly, he had forgotten all about it!

Now she cried out, somewhat astonished, and looked at him a little haughtily.

"I do not understand that curiosity about people whom you ought not to have the slightest desire to know! Really, women of society no longer know how to maintain their dignity! What difference does it make to you about the dresses, the hair, the beauty of such and such a one for whom you have the most profound contempt?"

Annie looked down in her plate like a child who had been scolded.

"Then, Lucien, the men, anyway tell me about the men, they are proper! You cannot tell me that that is misplaced curiosity! Jalbrun, for example, whom did Jalbrun represent? Did he really go as a Turk, as he said he would? Really, that is not possible! And your friend, the other one, who always paints red women before a mirror, what was he? Do you not wish to tell me?"

Romanet could remember nothing, nothing but the spangles, the embroidery, the Oriental arms, the lights and the supper, then the drive home in the carriage.

"I had a horrible headache," said he, severely. "I did not wish to speak of it this morning, but you drove me crazy with your questions. I remember nothing but that it was a complete

hubbub—if you wish for the details ask Jalbrun, he did not appear to have a headache."

This phrase, so full of significance, led Annie to suspect that Jalbrun had committed all sorts of horrible things, and she blushed up to her ears.

Ask a man who, under such circumstances, had not even had a headache! Never! Annie would prefer to remain ignorant all her life as to what costume was worn by her husband's friend who made a specialty of painting red women standing before mirrors, or what any of his other friends wore, and any of the celebrated people who had compromised themselves in that doubtful society.

The newspapers the next day would tell her all that anybody could know, and she considered her curiosity as satisfied.

"You must go to bed early to-night," she said in a caressing tone. "We will have a little music, shall we?"

"I have to go out," said he, abruptly. "I shall not remain very late, but do not wait for me."

"Ah!" said Annie, disappointed. "I had hoped that we should spend such a pleasant evening together."

"Sorry, my darling, impossible. It is on business."

"An order?"

"Probably."

"Go, then," sighed the young wife.

After dinner, while smoking, he executed on the studio floor, a great variety of steps that expressed his indecision. Should he go or should he not go? Would it not be better to remain quietly at home? But then, down there, they would ridicule him. And besides he owed some attention to this woman for whom he had bought some jewelry during the afternoon. He had met her, certainly, in artistic surroundings, not in the street; he could not expose himself to be called that sort of a blackguard.

Toward ten o'clock, he put on his evening suit, ordered a carriage and went away.

His enchantress was not alone. She for whom, without love, without even the allusion of a sentiment, for a mere caprice, he had severed all his honest and tranquil past. They played a moderate game at her house, talking about stocks while handling the cards. Nothing in her conduct recalled the exaggerated hilarity of the preceding night in this interior which resembled nearly all others, only the laughter was a little more hearty, and conversation was, perhaps, a little louder. Lucien felt more and more ill at ease, and was suddenly seized with a desire to go away.

The lady of the house saw this on his face, for she approached him, and he made a place for her on his little sofa. He was going to take the jewel-case from his pocket, but she prevented him by a gesture.

"You will stay, will you not?" said she.

He was on the point of saying "No," but he looked at her, and in that woman's black eyes he saw something that he had not yet suspected: he understood that he was a child, as he was

the evening before—that one does not drain in a few hours the cup of deceitful voluptuousness, and this woman who looked at him with those eyes would tease him more than ever if he left her thus.

"I will stay," said he.

She placed her hand upon that of the young man for a moment and then arose. He remained there, stupefied, not knowing what to do nor what he wished to do. Meanwhile he trembled at something, he did not know what.

He went away at three o'clock in the morning completely dazed. The sullying breath which had just touched him had taken away forever the halo of his pure and happy youth. He was no longer himself, he was the prey to human passion.

When he re-entered his own house he no longer felt the pangs of remorse, the shamed embarrassment of the night before; but he was almost angry at the ties which constrained him to return and to lie about it.

Lucien went noisily into Annie's room. Why should he care whether he awakened her or not? It was necessary that she should become accustomed to seeing him return at all hours! Was he going to be eternally the slave of old-fashioned prejudices? He was a man, he was master in his own house, he did not have to render account of himself to any one, and they should soon see that!

By the light of a china night-lamp he saw that Annie was asleep. She scarcely opened her eyes at his approach, and then closed them immediately. A vague smile flitted over her lips; with a sleepy gesture she had tried to put out her hand to him, but sleep conquered her. Annie had not yet suffered. She did not know the pain of sleeplessness. Her sleep was peaceful and sound, as her days were peaceful and without sorrow.

Lucien had recoiled at his wife's movement, A terrible and insurmountable obstacle had suddenly raised itself between him and the gentle sleeper; how should he dare now to touch those pure lips with his that were sullied?

He had not thought of that. He had said to himself: "I have done only as others do!" and he had not foreseen that his honorable and faithful past should forbid him what others allowed themselves. At the moment when, saturated with the voluptuousness that he had sought, and feverishly waiting for the morrow to come, he found himself in the presence of his loved and respected wife, he felt that he could never hold her in his arms again for the guilty consciousness of having embraced the other one.

"The other one!" He trembled at the thought of the other one, whom he had just left, and asked himself what he should do if Annie should awaken at that moment and suddenly ask him: "Whence comes that perfume that I do not know?"

If she should press the matter, and, made courageous by her outraged modesty, say to him, "What are you doing here? Return, at once, where you came from."

He looked at her, thinking she moved. No, she slept, a sleep so calm, so peaceful that he could not hear her breathe.

"I can never endure this agony," thought he, "Anything would be better than this!"

Renounce the other? He never thought of that for the millionth part of a second. His feverish mind would not admit even that such a thing was possible. But to get rid of his wife, to get her away from there, to gain time—who knows? Perhaps in a few days he would be more master of himself. Perhaps, disgusted with what now intoxicated him, he could dispel the unwholsome dream as one awakens from a nightmare.

"It is necessary that she should go away," said he to himself. "I will send her to her mother's with the child."

This resolution weighed on his mind as a piece of lead which enters by force of its weight, and he felt himself capable of any severity to carry out the execution of his project. He no longer wished for anything but that—the rest was of little consequence.

And then, satisfied with his idea which seemed to remove all obstacles—he did not wish to think of the future—he slowly undressed and went to bed, thinking, with wicked obstinacy, that to-morrow he would be free.

His head scarcely touched his pillow before he slept a heavy dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

THE next day he awoke late. At the moment when he was asking himself what time it was, Annie's blonde head appeared in the half-opened window.

"You have well made up for your lost night," said she laughing. "It is eleven o'clock! yes, eleven o'clock! Oh! you lazy boy! And the sun is shining brightly as if to poke fun at you!"

Lucien tried to collect his ideas; still heavy with sleep, he feared lest he might say something that would betray him, and he no longer knew where he was. The caresses of the other's voice still sounded in his ears.

"Annie," said he.

She entered and went to him with her child in her arms.

"Look at mademoiselle," said the young wife, "see how beautiful we are to-day! I do not know what is the matter with her, but she has been laughing all the morning ever since she awoke; it must be the fine weather."

Annie drew aside the curtains and Lucien saw the sun shining on the avenue.

He was fully awake now, and his plan returned to him persistently.

"You must take advantage of this beautiful blue sky and go and visit your mother for a few days. It will do you and Louisette a great deal of good."

"That is a good idea!" said Annie, joyously. "When shall we go?"

"You can take the train at four o'clock," said the young man.

"Well, and you?" said she, rather anxiously.

"I? Oh, I am obliged to remain here. For several days I

have been idle, and I have heard that a rich amateur is coming to the studio. I wish to finish the picture that I have commenced. I have only eight days for that."

"Ah, well, nothing is easier. We will go to Mantes together after you have finished it."

"Are you sure that the sun will wait for you?" replied Lucien, with an effort. "I observe that Louisette has been a little pale for the last few days."

"Do you think so?" said the young mother, suddenly frightened.

He felt remorse for having caused this useless fear, but since she persisted in remaining near him, it was her own fault.

"Yes," replied he, repeating his falsehood. "She has not appeared to be very well."

The laughing air of the little girl belied him openly, but mothers are easily alarmed.

"Go with her at once," continued he; "and as soon as I shall have finished, I will go and join you. We will have a happy holiday down there."

"You will come—soon—this week?"

"Yes," replied Lucien, with a nod to each of these questions.

"Then I shall have to embrace you," sighed she. "Baby, embrace your wicked papa, who sends us away from him."

Baby extended her fat little hands to her papa, who absently caressed her.

"This evening you will dine alone—if I should not go until to-morrow," said Annie, regretfully.

"And if it should rain to-morrow, how can you go with the child in the rain?"

Annie had it on her lips to say:

"Is it so very necessary that I should go, after all?"

But there was something so hard and obstinate in her husband's eyes, as he looked at her, that she restrained herself.

"Very well," said she, "we will go."

She went away; and Lucien, when alone, congratulated himself upon the success of his ruse, while in the depths of his heart he was disgusted with himself for the part he had just played.

When the young wife came, just before her departure, to take leave of her husband, her face was sad. She embraced him tenderly and made the child embrace him; then, with the nurse, she went toward the antechamber, but turned to her husband and looked at him with her clear eyes.

"You will not go, decidedly?" said she, caressingly.

"You know very well that it is impossible," said he, with impatience.

"And you wish me to go? A word from you and I will remain—it will be so easy——"

"Heavens, my dear," said Lucien, nervously, "if you did not wish to go why did you not say so this morning? Now do not make yourself ridiculous by changing your mind for a whim, and before the servants, too."

Annie drew back a step, looking at her husband in a sort of terror.

"Can you speak to me like that?" said she.

Lucien put down his palette and took her in his arms.

"Come," said he, "do not be a child. You know that I dislike vacillation. Now, when the nurse is waiting for you in the antechamber, you ask if you shall remain; confess that it is absurd! Let us embrace each other and go quickly, or you will lose the train."

"I have time enough," said Annie, sadly. "I allowed myself plenty of time."

He did not reply, and returned to his picture.

"*Au revoir*, then," said the young wife. "Come soon, will you not, Lucien?"

"Oh, certainly; in a few days, more or less."

"*Au revoir*," she said again, walking regretfully toward the door.

She hoped that he would call her back, or at least turn around. He did not move; he appeared wholly absorbed in the canvas.

"*Adieu*," said she, as she stood on the threshold.

He turned his head toward her and made a slight sign without looking at her.

He felt horribly cruel and contemptible; but, to save his life, he would not have had her return.

The hall door closed, the carriage drove away, and Lucien felt himself alone. An unspeakable relief came to him in the midst of his remorse. Anything was better than to continue this miserable life of lies and of struggles. Now, at least, he would no longer have to resort to shameful subterfuges; he would go and come when he chose, without having to account to anybody for his conduct.

He felt such a joyous relief that he began to dance.

"Be serious," said he to himself. "What if she should miss the train and come back!"

He was going to enjoy himself—not to work—he had a horror of work, he would pass the time till half-past four in dressing himself, at his leisure. Then, after the clock struck, he said to himself that he no longer had anything to fear and he went out.

Those who saw him going down the Boulevard Malesherbes, with his joyous manner and his head on high, said to themselves: "There is a man who is thoroughly satisfied with himself!"

This proves only how deceitful appearances are: Romanet was satisfied, that was certain, but not with himself.

He went triumphantly to the house of *the other one;* she received him coolly, she was in a bad temper; her dressmaker had disappointed her about a dress, and her dog had the gout. For three-quarters of an hour she grumbled, pouted, and was impertinent. Lucien found it all charming. This was only a part of his apprenticeship, and he felt that he must go right along in the current. It all ended in their going out to a restaurant to dine together.

Everything amused Romanet in this trip to the forbidden country. He was young enough to be almost a child yet; he felt in his pleasure the kind of satisfaction that children feel after they have played a game that has been expressly for-

bidden by papa and mamma. He greedily devoured the apple for which the legend has blamed Eve (because that legend was invented by men), and he found in that rotten apple a sweeter perfume than that of the wild strawberry.

When, after dinner, that woman said to him: "Come, let us go to the theater," and for the first time in his life he entered a theater with a woman who was not his wife or relative, it gave the idea that he was perfectly at ease as a man of the world. His companion was scarcely pretty; she was large and elegant, and the use of various artifices had achieved a sort of dazzling beauty that deceived at the first glance. Such as she was, she did him honor, as far as it is possible for an intelligent man to be honored by this sort of thing.

Lucien did not return home that night. He did not condescend to any vulgar precautions, he did not attempt to explain to his servants why their master had not slept in his bed. It was very singular that though he would have been wretched to have Annie know that he had spent the night at an hotel and had retired very late, yet he made no attempt at concealment. His vanity revolted at the thought of being blamed, and out of *bravado*, he seemed to wish for a discovery. With what could he be reproached? He had done only what everybody else did!

The woman, whom he had thus advertised, believed that she had secured him, and she gloried in it. She held him through the bad side of his nature. When he talked sensibly and prudently, she held her sides laughing, and called him a cherub; she ridiculed his family, she treated him as if he were a student out for a lark; and he, though mortified, affected not to care for these drolleries, which, if they had been uttered by a man, would have ended in his knocking him down.

He did not like to be ridiculed—she constantly teased him; he could not endure reproaches, she wished to quarrel all the time; but the moment that he took his hat to go away, she looked at him in a certain way, went slowly to him, and he, despising himself, yet incapable of leaving, remained to find forgetfulness on the lips of that woman whom he loathed—and yet she was making herself necessary to him.

It was not she herself that was necessary to him; it was the excitement of that kind of life. All his life he had been honest; firstly on account of his father's teachings, and then from habit; and now Lucien wished for the freedom that he had never had.

The brutal instincts which lie dormant in every living being, and which are only repressed by a strong will—or perhaps by force of habit, which is equivalent to will—the irresistible desire to know all, to drink of every cup, however commonplace it may be—strange, but true—a desire to taste every human vice—all these ideas had seized Lucien with an unwholesome but imperious intoxication, and he no longer reasoned or raised his voice to protest.

He was now seen constantly in company with men who made pleasure their occupation; every evening he went to some place of amusement and felt a keen satisfaction in hearing people say behind his back;

"The elegant Romanet? Yes, that is he!"

He no longer worked. Work required a cool head and a firm hand.

Those who wish to live by work cannot permit themselves these excuses; they cannot deceive so exacting a master—if you betray him, he will leave you. So Lucien no longer went to his studio. He went home every day; it was necessary to change his clothes, but he did not take his meals at his house, preferring the doubtful cooking of the fashionable restaurants to the well-made dishes of his own cook. Besides he could not remain alone. He had to have the company of a friend, of two friends, of half a dozen friends, to prevent him from thinking. He had not allowed himself to reflect once, but he felt that the moment for serious thought would come, and that caused him a most disagreeable impression that he wished to drive away.

Days went by, each one bringing a letter from Annie. The little daughter was well, the weather at Mantes was fine, the garden was full of birds who were building their nests, the island was becoming greener and greener every day.

Then came the direct questions: "Is Lucien not coming? Was not his picture finished yet? Then leave it and come and take a little rest; he must be lonely to live away from his family so long."

Romanet replied by telegrams. This mode of correspondence which prevented any details accorded perfectly with the state of his mind.

But this could not go on forever, he must send a definite answer. It was surprising that Annie had not yet proposed to return; this reserve made Lucien somewhat uneasy; he would have been still more uneasy if he had known the cause of it.

When her daughter arrived, Mme. Orliet was at first enchanted. But they had scarcely dined together when Annie's assumed gayety forsook her, with the heightened color on her cheeks; her eyes had a melancholy expression, and notwithstanding her wish to appear happy, she could not conceal her secret sorrow.

Something was the matter with Lucien, that was sure! He had listened to her as he would to an importunate being. How could she have annoyed him? All winter she had been very much occupied—perhaps too much so—with her little daughter, and she had not had much time to importune her husband! They had scarcely gone into society five or six times; it was a long time since Lucien had made calls with her. He had declared that calls during the daytime bored him: this was not surprising, for few gentlemen who had occupations made calls during those hours; but the result was that she saw very little of Lucien except at meals.

She stopped there, fearing lest she had said too much. Mme. Orliet tried to find out more, but Annie looked at her furtively through the mist which covered her eyes. How she longed to throw her arms about her mother's neck, as she used to do, and tell her all those vague sorrows that made her young soul so sad! But what was there to tell her? Properly speaking, these sorrows

did not exist; they were only apprehensions without foundation, some puerile fears; and was it not calumniating Lucien to complain of him? Of what, in fact, could she reproach him, unless it was that he had suddenly sent her off to Mantes?

And, perhaps, he had some good reason for that, that he had not given her.

She was seized with a horrible idea. What if it was a duel? What if Lucien, at the ball about which he did not wish to speak, had had some unpleasant encounter, from which a quarrel had resulted?

She felt herself grow pale at the thought, which increased to a real persecution. Incapable of remaining silent toward her mother, she pretended that she had a severe headache and went to bed.

She wept half the night; clasping her hands she constantly repeated, "My God, my God! preserve him from all harm!" Overcome with fatigue she slept until daylight, and when she awoke she heard the cries of the newsboys, crying the daily papers. She immediately sent for the journals, perused them eagerly, and then to assure herself of his safety she wrote to him again.

The same evening she received a telegram in reply.

After twenty-four hours of agony, finding that no misfortune had happened to him, she tried to calm herself and confess her chimeras to Mme. Orliet.

"Can you understand," she said to her, "how I can imagine such things?"

Her mother was not so much surprised as Annie had fancied that she would be. Notwithstanding the silence that she had maintained, she understood that something had happened between the young couple. Not that she could understand, without other knowedge, the depth of the misfortune; she did not believe that the union of the two young people had been so deeply shaken; but she understood that Lucien, weary of his happiness, wished to embellish his life with a few adventures. He had had too much happiness; the regularity of his home had become monotonous to him; to take off the halter that he felt too heavy around his neck, he had sent his wife and his child to the country. All that was not serious. After a few lonely days, Romanet would become tired of the disorder which almost infalliby reigns when the mistress of the house is absent. Poor dinners and bad attention would soon disgust him with the liberty that he had so much desired.

Yet a week passed and Lucien did not speak of coming to Mantes.

"He will not come," said Annie one day, turning away from her mother that she might not see her weep.

When she found that her voice did not tremble, she said:

"I think that I ought to return to Paris."

"Do not do so without telling him," cried Mme. Orliet, with a sort of instinctive prudence. "Perhaps he has some bother with which he does not wish to trouble you."

"What could he have that he cannot tell me?" demanded Annie quickly.

"How can I know? A debt, perhaps. Supposing he has become responsible for some friend——"

Mme. Orliet sought for reasons, good or bad, to explain her son-in-law's conduct. She found nothing better than this, and this was not sufficient.

Then, as fate would have it, Mme. Romanet, the mother, who regretted not having seen her son since New Year, went to see Annie to inquire about him. The worthy woman loved her son very much, but with the usual perversity of mothers-in-law, and, above all, those of the country, it appeared to her that Annie never did the right thing.

"I do not wish to vex you, my dear child," said she to the young wife, "and I know that it is very pleasant for you here, but it seems to me that it is about time for you to go home, or else have Lucien come here; believe me, it is not good for young married people to be separated so long from each other."

Poor Annie listened to all this with a resigned air and replied yes to all that was expected of her. Happily, Mme. Romanet was not a very persistent woman; she did not exact any promise, nor fix any date for the return, and she went away enchanted with her task as a mother-in-law.

"Ought I to write to Lucien that I am going back?" asked Annie of her mother when they were alone.

"No, wait till he asks you," was the reply.

But Lucien did not ask anything of the kind. Every day he telegraphed something like this:

"Received letter. Health excellent. Everything all right. Take care of yourself. Embrace Louisette and her grandmother."

This was not compromising and it told nothing to any one. The twelfth day after her daughter's arrival Madame Orliet went to Paris and marched into her son-in-law's house at breakfast hour. She always did this when she visited them, so that there was now nothing extraordinary in this early visit.

As soon as she had rung the bell she understood how things had been going on. She was kept waiting before the door was opened, because Lucien now always let himself in with his key, and the bell meant a visitor, and the servants did not hurry themselves to open the door to visitors when their master was absent.

It was not the valet who opened the door but the cook, who came up slowly from below, wiping her hands on her apron. She was very cross, but when she saw Mme. Orliet, the expression of her face changed to a smile of satisfaction.

Like most cooks, she did not like the husband. Mme. Orliet's visit could portend no good to him, and she was delighted. Besides, her vanity suffered, for since her mistress went away her master had not taken a meal in the house.

She took Mme. Orliet into the studio, where the latter saw at once that her son-in-law had not been at work. The dry palette,

and the state of the paint on the unfinished picture, abundantly proved that.

"Has monsieur gone out? He will return to breakfast, will he not?" said Annie's mother.

"Monsieur has gone out," replied the cook, in a tone that could not be misunderstood. "I do not think that he will return to breakfast; since madame left monsieur has not eaten at home."

"Then try to get me some breakfast," said Mme. Orliet, coldly.

The cook went off hurriedly. After a few minutes, a noise was heard in the dining-room, which indicated that the table was being laid. Mme. Orliet went to her daughter's room to get some things that Annie had asked her to bring.

The room was cold and deserted; the place had an uninhabited air that could not be mistaken, and a detail which nearly stupefied Mme. Orliet; the bed was prepared for the night, the spread taken off, awaiting its occupant.

It is amazing to think that such a small, material item, absurd in itself, could crush the respect that had grown year after year in this sincere soul, Who ever would have had the hardihood to say to Mme. Orliet that her son-in-law had abandoned her daughter, would have been treated as a calumniator; this bed prepared for him who had not come, and left thus by the negligent servants, was a silent and pitiless accuser. Annie's mother seated herself in a low arm-chair, and remained overwhelmed.

Then Lucien had not come home! Here was the explanation to his silence; poor Annie, who had thought of a duel, she had never thought of a desertion! She could imagine her husband struck by a ball, or by a sword,—she had never imagined that he would deceive her.

"For what wretched woman?" asked Mme. Orliet of herself. She preserved a calm exterior in her maternal anguish; she was a courageous woman, who would be crushed without a change of countenance.

She found the courage to reflect; she never for a moment imagined the vulgarity of his fault; on the contrary, she sought among all the women in their own circle, those who had made themselves the subject of remarks by their coquetry; she suspected two or three elegant and well-bred ladies, whose beauty differed from Annie's, who, by their intelligence, their wit and their charm, had been able to gain an ascendency over her son-in-law. But she would exhonerate them; many circumstances prevented its being this one or that one.

"Then it must be some one whom I do not know!" said Mme. Orliet to herself. This irritated her extremely; the effort that she had made to keep calm, her vain search for the accomplice, tired and worried her.

Suddenly she heard a noise in the next room; she arose, not wishing to be surprised by a servant in the delinquent's chamber, and on the threshold she found herself face to face with Lucien.

Pale, thin, with feverish eyes, he trembled when he saw her.

Entering with his key, as usual, he had not been warned of his mother-in-law's arrival, and no one thought that he was in the house.

He had predicted horrible things, but he had not expected this encounter and in this place.

"Who is the wretched woman?" demanded Mme. Orliet, speaking with difficulty because of a terrible dryness in her throat.

"Who?" said Lucien, in a ringing voice. "Everybody, confound it!"

He returned to his studio, in a temper, and she followed him, closing the door which led into the sleeping-room. Without shame to herself she could not have accused him to his face of his fault, but had he not confessed it?

Of all days this was the worst for an explanation. That same morning the woman with whom he had amused himself—or to speak more correctly, who had amused herself with him—for the last fortnight, had had a scene with him, and had given him his dismissal. He simply bored her.

To lead the beautiful Romanet astray, had been an interesting episode; besides he was amiable enough to make the task agreeable. But to retain him, that was another affair. Everybody knew that he had no fortune, only an income from the two families. It was hardly probable that the two families were going to supply him with money to spend outside of the conjugal roof; then Romanet was amusing to catch, but was not worth keeping; so she had shown him the door.

Lucien was furious, but tried to take it haughtily; she had treated him as—as all women of that class treat men who belong to them. He had amused himself with these eccentricities as long as they were in jest, but after awhile his pride revolted.

What did she care for his pride? As angry as he was he was obliged to go away in order not to strike a woman; a brutality which he had not yet brought himself to commit.

He went away full of all the evil sentiment that could agitate the heart of a man who so shortly before was imbued with all the principles of honor.

During his walk he thought of his wife; poor Annie! If he should write to her to return! He had not the least wish to go to Mantes; the thought that he would be questioned as to how he had spent his time, was absolutely odious to him, especially now. But to see Annie bring back to his deserted home, so cold and so inhospitable to-day, the grace and the charm which she had taken away with her——

For a moment he thought of entering a telegraph office and sending her the single word "Come!" But an afterthought entered his mind and prevented him.

He would be ridiculed! Romanet discarded by such a one, after a trial of ten or twelve days, had been compelled to return to the bosom of his family! That would make everybody laugh from the Madeleine to the Rue Drouot. They would say: "Poor Romanet has had enough of it! Singed in his first adventure, he will never risk another!"

No, certainly, he would never submit to such humiliation. That same day he arranged to revenge himself upon that idiot of a woman who had just held him up to ridicule. In Paris it would not be difficult to find something better than he had left.

He returned full of thoughts of vengeance, ready to quarrel with any one who would laugh at him, and before having had time to plunge his burning head into fresh water, he had met his mother-in-law upon the threshold of his room, the threshold that he had not crossed since Annie went away.

Ah, well, if they were going to reprove him, to restrict him, to impose any laws upon him, they would find out to whom they were talking! Laws! He knew only one; that of his desires.

After a silence of some seconds it was he who commenced a violent attack.

What did they wish? What did this surveilance over his actions mean? Everybody else came and went, and nobody was uneasy about it. But he, when it happened that he was only a quarter of an hour late for dinner, there were questions without end, and he was obliged to give explanations. There never was a married man so abominally henpecked! His life was a burden to him. Yes, it was true! had he not endured this long enough? And to-day the privacy of his own house had been treacherously invaded——

Here Mme. Orliet stopped him.

"I have not come here to treacherously impose upon you," said she, in a beautifully clear and frank voice. "My daughter, finding that her stay at my house would be prolonged, wanted some things. She could have sent her maid for them; I thought it preferable that I should come myself. When servants talk among themselves, one can never tell just how far they may go——"

Lucien blushed. He understood too well how his servants would judge his conduct.

"I could give you that reason, and it should satisfy you," continued Madame Orliet; "but I never resort to subterfuges. I came here to find out your motive in sending away your wife and your child. I have no need of a prolonged investigation. I had scarcely entered when my first glance told me enough—— You have confessed more than I should have asked of you."

"I have confessed nothing," said Lucien coldly.

Mme. Orliet silently thought a moment. The blow which struck her was so unexpected; the abyss in which Annie's happiness was engulfed was so deep that she did not know what to do.

"Has my daughter given you any reason to be discontented?" said she, seeking at least to continue this truly hopeless conversation.

"None," replied Lucien, loyally.

"Then, why? how? Is it an attack of folly? Explain yourself, at least!" cried the unhappy mother, losing her self-control before the enormity of his crime.

"Why? Because I am tired of being ridiculed; because I do

not know why I should be different from others; because men of my age are not generally imprisoned between their work and their family; because I am young and I wish to amuse myself, instead of always being a great baby who knows nothing of life."

"You should have thought of that before you were married," said Mme. Orliet, controlling herself before the vehemence of her son-in-law.

"It is possible; but if I had, you would have refused me your daughter."

"Selfish man!" said Annie's mother calmly. "You did not wish to put yourself in the position to be refused by the young girl whom you loved, and to-day you are ready to break your wife's heart."

"I have not acted with any such premeditation," exclaimed the young man. "It is a crying injustice to accuse me of having concealed my intentions at the moment when I was preoccupied only with the thought of Annie!"

When a misunderstanding arises between people who do not agree upon facts, there is no end to it. After a half an hour of this sort of conversation Lucien and his mother-in-law found themselves just where they had started. The cook knocked at the door—she had been listening—to announce that breakfast was ready.

"We will go to breakfast together, however disagreeable it may be to both of us," said Mme. Orliet, simply. "It is necessary that your servants believe that we are on good terms. I only wish to give you this advice, try to preserve outwardly the show of a regular life. What I say to you is as much for your interest as for ours."

They scarcely touched the hastily prepared dishes, and, after as short a repast as possible, they arose at the same time.

"I am going to return to Mantes," said Mme. Orliet.

They were silent, their hearts filled with inexpressibly sad thoughts.

"If you wish it," said she. "Annie loves you so much—one word of regret on your part and she will forgive you."

Lucien's pride was aroused at this remark.

"I do not wish forgiveness," said he. "I do not feel guilty of anything. I expect to live as I please, without being treated as if I were guilty. If Annie wishes, she has only to return here; but let it be understood that I shall have the right to act absolutely according to my fancy. Everybody lives thus, and all wives accept it."

"They are wrong," said Mme. Orliet, gravely. "Then you forget that in most cases the women who accept what you say can pretend to ignore it; in this case, it is different. My daughter can only enter your house again when you return to your old life—my Annie, the child that I have brought up with so much care, shall not be exposed to insulting remarks and contemptuous looks—hers is a sorrow that one conceals—have you not thought of that?"

"Do as you please," said Lucien. "I wash my hands of it."

"Adieu, monsieur," said Mme. Orliet, putting on her cloak,

"I am your servant, madame," replied he.

With perfect deference he conducted her to the door, and then returned to his studio.

An hour before, he had returned home undecided, asking himself if, notwithstanding his wounded vanity, it would not be better to return to his former honest and peaceful life. But, then, he would have returned to it without any quarrel, any publicity. He could have joined his wife and brought her back to Paris. His remorse—for he felt it, indeed, he felt it very much—would have been his own secret: no one could have reproached him.

His mother-in-law's visit had changed the situation. He was blamed, treated like a criminal, he would not submit to it! Besides, he was not yet weary of the life which he had only just tasted; his recent escapade only made him more desirous for new adventures.

"It is my mother-in-law who has done it," he said to himself, deceiving his conscience with a new sophism. "If it had not been for her, everything would have been arranged—and, upon my word, it would have been a pity. I think I see myself returning to the fold under this spiritual guidance!"

He changed his clothes, slept three hours on the divan in his studio, where he now had the habit of taking a daily nap, and, at the usual hour, went to rejoin his new friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Mme. Orliet arrived home, Annie, who was very restless, was waiting for her in the drawing-room.

"Well, mamma!" said she, in a low tone.

"My daughter, you must be patient," said her mother in an encouraging manner.

This reply in itself justified all her fears. If she had brought good news she would not have answered thus.

In the last three years the young wife had acquired much patience and resignation. The happiest marriages are little less than an apprenticeship to the domestic virtues, and in the last six months Annie had learned lesson upon lesson.

After the servants had received their orders and gone away, she seated herself upon the little sofa, where, when she was a young girl, she had shared her confidences with her only friend.

"Tell me what is the matter, mamma?" said she in a stifled voice. "Do not try to conceal anything from me, for I have guessed it. He no longer loves me."

"I am convinced that he has not ceased to love you," said her mother cautiously. "But a spasm of folly has seized him: false friends, bad counsel—in fact, he amuses himself! What can you do? Men are like that; they fancy themselves inferior if they do not some times behave like brutes!"

She regretted having shown so much bitterness.

"You see, Annie," she continued gently, "I believe that men are like liquid metal in a tank; their youth must bubble up so that the scum may be skimmed off. They must get rid of their bad passions; none of them are superior to this, not even the

best of them. Good men go through the furnace and come out purified; ordinary men remain there."

Annie buried her head on her mother's bosom and wept. The cup of sadness seemed full to overflowing.

"Oh, mamma!" said she, trying to restrain her tears, "it is all over, I shall never see my poor happiness again!"

"Child," said Mme. Orliet, "does one bid good-bye to happiness at your age? It will take more than this to destroy the peace of your life! It is only a passing cloud; the sun will shine again!"

But nothing could console the young wife. Her mother spoke to her in vain of the future of her child, who would sooner or later bring the father back; of all Lucien's good qualities, which would return in all their pristine glory after this cloud had passed. Annie listened to it all resignedly, but she did not cease to weep.

She sobbed in her sleep that night, like a sorrowful child, and her mother, who went on tiptoe to listen whether she slept, shed more than one tear over the happy days when Annie had no sorrow that she did not forget in sleep.

The next morning, at a reasonable hour, Mme. Romanet came to hear news of her son. Mme. Orliet did not wish to tell her the truth, which she concealed behind a barrier of pretexts: naturally he was idle at this season of the year; there was a good deal going on in Paris just now, which interrupted Lucien's work; and that his wife might not see how lazy he was, he begged her to stay awhile longer at Mantes. Mme. Romanet understood nothing of all this, but she was not aware of it, and was quite satisfied until she arrived home; she had not seen the condition of her daughter-in-law's eyes because she had kept them in the shade.

But when her husband tried to make her repeat what Mme. Orliet had said, the excellent woman discovered that she had been deluged with a fine dose of holy water, or rather she discovered nothing herself; it was her husband who enlightened her.

"Madame Orliet has been laughing at you, my good wife," he said to her. "Something is the matter, and I am going to find it out."

He took his hat and his cane, and, with his usual dignity, he crossed the town, bowing right and left like a condescending sovereign.

Mme. Orliet expected him, but not so soon. She received him with her usual grace; if, therefore, the conference should lead to a collision, he could not claim that she was disposed to be at all unpleasant.

"What has happened now?" said he, seating himself. "My wife has told me a lot of nonsense that I do not understand, so I have come to see for myself."

His manner of saying "myself" showed all the importance that he placed upon this measure. Mme. Orliet smiled at him pleasantly.

"You did well, she said. "In fact, something has happened,

which I regret extremely; and as it is neither your fault nor mine, we must try to make the best of a disagreeable situation."

"I see what it is," said Master Romanet, putting his index finger on his nose. "The rascal is in debt."

"He will be, without doubt," replied his friend, promptly, seizing this unhoped-for occasion to plead the cause of her son-in-law. "He will do it all the more, because he has considerable pride, and he will borrow from his friends before he will go to you for money——"

"What!" cried Master Romanet, losing his coolness, "he will do that? You speak of it calmly, as if it were the slightest possible misfortune that could happen."

The expression on his friend's face was not reassuring, and the notary stopped short. His own calm face changed, became suddenly pale, and in a suppressed voice, very different from his ordinary tone, he said, almost hesitatingly:

"Nothing dishonorable, I hope?"

"No," said Mme. Orliet, quickly; "nothing against her honor, thank God!"

They remained opposite each other, silent, not daring to look up. Master Romanet was another man since he came in. Suddenly he had become old, wrinkled, bowed down; he tried to brace himself up to bear the blow which he had just received.

"What has happened, then?" he said, after a moment's pause. "You can tell me now; I am prepared."

"It is what the world considers a very slight thing, but what you and I think very serious. Lucien has made some bad acquaintances."

"Women!" cried the notary, in a voice of thunder. "Ah, the wretch! Women! You are right, my dear friend; everything will go, money and everything! Women!"

He let his hands, which he had raised to heaven, fall upon his knees, and remained as if thunder-struck.

"What can you do?" replied Mme. Orliet, in a gentle voice; "it is a sad thing."

"Do you believe that it will pass over?" interrupted Master Romanet, in a sorrowful voice.

"I hope so," said his friend, in a firm tone, though her eyes were filled with tears.

Lucien's father suddenly became very angry. The first shock had stunned him, but the discussion had restored him to himself.

During half an hour he walked up and down the room, scolding, crying, filling the room with his loud, vibrating voice.

Annie, on the next floor, curled up on a sofa with her child asleep upon her lap, listened to these bursts of paternal fury, and trembled like a bird which hears the firing of guns in the fields.

Certainly Lucien was very guilty, but Master Romanet's anger was terrible. What could the unhappy boy have done to provoke such a tempest of wrath?

To wound the heart of the woman who loved him, whom he had chosen himself, married almost against the wishes of hi

parents, that was very cruel. Why should that excite such wrath in his father, or such contempt in her mother?

While this loud voice was heard under her feet, Annie shivered, thinking how her mother must have looked at Lucien, and she said to herself that between the notary and the cold disdain of her own mother, she would have preferred to submit to the anger which speaks out and then passes off.

Mme. Orliet wisely refrained from stopping the torrent of reproaches which Master Romanet addressed to his son. In her heart she felt a great satisfaction in hearing another say what she thought herself, though the father placed the worst possible construction upon Lucien's faults.

"Ah, well," said Master Romanet, suddenly stopping himself short, "one might almost say that you do not care about it! Yet it seems to me that it concerns you as much as me. And Annie, what does she say?"

"Annie is very much grieved, but she is good and courageous," replied Mme. Orliet. "She knows that neither you nor I will leave anything undone where her happiness is concerned; and there, where her pride will forbid her to act, we shall fight for her."

"You have said it," cried the notary, seizing his friend's hands. "What did you say to him—that big booby?"

"Not much. I think just now it is useless to say anything."

"How useless? Must we allow him to compromise himself with one knows not whom; to squander our fortunes and make his wife unhappy?"

"Listen to me, my friend," said Mme. Orliet, with great calmness. "Lucien must return to his duty, and see the extent of his fault, but I believe it is also necessary to allow him a little liberty until he wearies of the foolish life that he is leading. That will not take long."

"Ta, ta, ta!" said the notary. "Songs! You cannot allow horses the bit, and you cannot let young men commit follies. See how I brought him up. He was well raised."

"Much too well," interrupted Mme. Orliet. "Yes, very much too well! You need not look at me in that indignant manner. I have reflected much since yesterday."

"And what have you thought?" said the notary, in a tone of raillery.

"I am only confirmed in what I have thought for some time. There is a proverb, 'Youth must have its day.' This proverb is not so foolish, my friend. Now that this misfortune has come, it is too late to look back and to regret what was, or what was not, but if Lucien had frequented the same society that he frequents to-day, perhaps what afflicts us now would never have occurred."

"But you would not have given him your daughter?" cried Master Romanet.

"I should have been wrong," replied his beautiful friend, firmly. "The English call this sort of life *sowing wild oats.* Whatever name you may give to that phase of life, it nevertheless seems necessary that a young man should pass through it."

"And leave there the best part of himself, his health, his fortune, his heart and his honor?" said Master Romanet, in a trembling voice.

"If all that comprises man's worth should be tarnished in the trial," replied she, "it would still be better that the unhappy man should ruin only his own future, than to ruin that of the wife who loves him!"

Mme. Orliet turned her head; she could not speak. Master Romanet pressed her hands in silence, and they both wept over Annie's fate, without a single, selfish thought.

"Now what are you going to do?" asked the father, after he had regained his composure.

"Wait! Weeks if necessary, some days, at least, in any case; we shall see by and by. If you knew how much faith I have in the unforeseen—that which we do not expect, and which happens unexpectedly."

Master Romanet did not share this faith. If his friend would have allowed him, he would have immediately cut off the means of support of the prodigal son. The notary averred that vicious horses should be conquered by hunger, and that this means should be adopted with Lucien. Mme. Orliet insisted that the question of money should not be mixed up in what she wisely considered an infinitely higher morality.

After Master Romanet went away, Annie came down into the drawing-room.

Her eyes were red from weeping, and she was feverish.

"His father is very angry, is he not?" she asked.

"Naturally," said her mother.

If Annie had been going to plead Lucien's cause, it would have been less difficult to blame him, after she had tried to defend him against the notary.

"You, too—I think, mamma, that perhaps if we should send him the little one, it might do some good, for though he no longer loves me he cannot help loving his child!"

Tears broke her words, and her mother took her in her arms.

"The child is too young," said she, covering her with caresses, "and Lucien would not understand that delicate thought. But he loves you still, I assure you, and you will see him return to you—he loves only you, and that keeps him away, who has nothing whatever to do with love."

Annie sadly shook her head.

"Can a man love his wife, love her truly, and go away with another?" asked she with sad irony.

"Yes," said Mme. Orliet sincerely, from her own experience in life.

"Then," replied the young wife, "there must be several kinds of love, for——"

She could not finish her thought, but her face, covered with a sudden blush, spoke for her.

Without any plans having been formed, Annie made her home at Mantes, as when she was a young girl.

This caused some gossip in the village; but, thanks to the advice of her mother, young Mme. Romanet, showed so calm a

face, so much dignity when she spoke of her husband, that the most persistent curiosity could not discover anything. "Something has happened," said the gossips. But what? They were baffled for at least three weeks.

CHAPTER XIV.

LUCIEN was free.

He was in the situation of a man who, after expecting for several days, that the heavens would fall and crush him, acknowledges with as much surprise as pleasure, that though the heavens did fall upon him, there was no great harm done after all.

Liberty! No more letters to receive, no more telegrams to send in reply; and above all, nothing to fear! He made as much as possible of this advantage, in order not to hear the plaintive voice, which cried to him pitilessly, and which repeated Annie's name to him incessantly.

Lucien was so happy to be free, that he went off to join a party of friends, that he was sure to meet at this hour, in order to dine in jolly company.

Jolly company is not difficult to find in Paris; really gay people are much more rare; but it was not true gayety that Lucien sought; he wished for noise and life, and he found what he sought.

For three or four days he went about to places of amusement, never alone, wishing openly to show the life that he was now leading. But he could not long endure the same society; as soon as he was accustomed to some face his unpleasant thoughts returned to him. His companions, themselves, were surprised at this versatility, and jested with him about it.

"Romanet does not do things by halves," they said. "When he was a prey to the most patriarchal virtues, he only lived for them, and now he only exists for the other kind."

The truth was that he was tired, irritated, disgusted; that he had a horror of himself, and that he dared not remain alone for fear that he should weep.

After a few days, he would have committed a crime, rather than not seek some change in his life.

Should he return to his family? Certainly not! They would surely ridicule him for that! His unhealthy state made him more susceptible than ever to this fear of ridicule, which had driven him to commit so many follies.

Yet he had conceived such a horror for the places where he had spent the most of his time in this new period of his existence, that, knowing no other refuge, he returned home.

He arose one morning, cross and unhappy; his bedroom, with its blue hangings, seemed icy and inhospitable to him. The studio was dark and melancholy. For a long time no light hand had removed the dust from the bronzes and knick-knacks. Even the window panes were dusty inside and out for want of care. The brilliancy of the canvases was lost in the shadows,

and everything was gray and tarnished, as if these objects, too, were ill at ease, and only begged to be left alone.

A number of newspapers, still in their wrappers, of opened letters, perused and thrown aside, awaited him. He took up one of them: it was an invitation to a wedding. A glazed card fell out into his hands—a ball given by one of his friends. Large sheets of paper, surrounded by black borders, spoke of recent mourning. Life had gone on for everybody, while for him it seemed to have stopped, he knew not why, he knew not when!

Now and then, when they first came, he had opened and read these papers, messengers from social life, and he had thrown them down carelessly; what did not concern him had no further interest for him. Yet all these evidences of friendship and politeness could not remain unanswered. Formerly Annie had done this; she had taken upon herself all these little duties, which were more or less irksome, in order that her husband should be complete master of his time.

"These must be answered," said he.

He seated himself at his desk, before his heap of letters and notes, and took up one at random. It was an invitation to a wedding, accompanied by a second card, bearing these words: "M. and Mme. X. will receive at their house after the ceremony."

It was now only two or three days before the date mentioned in the invitation.

Lucien opened a drawer in his desk to take out some cards.

He hesitated a moment: he did not know where to put his hand among the little packages enveloped in their tissue papers. He seized one and drew out two cards; putting them in an envelope without looking at them, he wrote the address, sealed the envelope, and then remained undecided.

"I ought to go there myself," he said; "the invitation requires a card with the corner turned. And if they should receive me they will ask for my wife!"

The package remained on the table, and he read on the first card between the two little elastics: *Monsieur et Madame Lucien Romanet.*

These five words seemed to stare at him with a sorrowful and wicked air; the impression was so painful that he threw a folded paper over them to prevent his seeing them any more, but he saw them all the same, and they entered more and more deeply into his weary brain.

M. and Mme. Lucien Romanet. He was going to send these lying cards to that address: he was going to make lying visits, and to leave at the houses of those who do not receive, this little bristol card which said that he had come with his wife.

Lucien did not like to lie; that was one of his good traits, and he had already been drawn in that direction as far as his good sense allowed him. He would grow accustomed to it perhaps, as he would become accustomed to other things.

With a restless hand he began to get rid of his heap of correspondence. In an hour a little pile of envelopes, of all sizes,

was lying before him; then he arose and rung for breakfast. His letters were answered and he was relieved.

The breakfast was bad. During her holiday the cook's hand had lost its skill; but even if she had served Romanet the finest repast, it would have been tasteless to him in that large dusty room, where the chairs, as they stood stiffly against the walls, seemed to him like ugly phantoms. All the furniture seemed to have eyes and to glare at him reproachfully.

He finished quickly, threw down his napkin, returned to his studies, and determined to work all the afternoon. The day was unfavorable, the yellow light which shone through the clouds gave neither shadows nor reflections. Yet he was so determined not to lose the day, that he took a new canvas and commenced to fill in a background rather than be idle.

While painting he thought of society, and the new place that he had made for himself there. Annie could not remain eternally at her mother's; the time would come when they would be obliged to show themselves together in society.

It would be extremely disagreeable, but it could not be avoided.

How would poor Annie appear?

But to think of Annie was above Lucien's strength. He tried two or three times and then gave it up. The physical suffering that it caused him was agonizing.

Anything, no matter how disagreeable, was preferable to that.

These unpleasant thoughts would not leave him. For the last few days the question of money had troubled him. That morning, even, he had given the cook his last *louis* to purchase the breakfast.

Lucien had never come to his last *louis* before, the last that one searches his pocket for and is so happy to find there. For a long time he had forgotten the particular physiognomy of this little piece of gold that he had looked at once with special attention.

When he was young, his father had provided as generously for his wants as for his pleasures, and Lucien had never known what it was to be short of money. Now he knew what it was to be embarrassed.

The word "embarrassed" was strange under the high ceiling and between the tapestried walls of that elegant little house, and yet he was embarrassed; money would come from Mantes, as it had always come. For two days Lucien had sometimes asked himself what he should do, if they did not send him money.

This was the thought that drove him to work that day; if they cut off his means of living he could paint; he would sell his pictures. He would hasten to finish two small canvases that had been ordered, and he would live from the products of his brush. That would be honorable.

This thought aroused him, and he hunted in a corner for a canvas that he wished to finish.

It was a copy of the "Romanet Orchard." He looked at it a long time, trying to see it only with an artist's eye, trying to for-

get the day when he had made his first study. Under the apple trees he had sketched a clear and elegant face, that of Annie, just as he had seen it down there. Suddenly overcome by some strange feeling, he knew not what, he dipped a brush in the green on his palette and painted out the sweet image; after which it seemed to him that he had just committed a murder, and he fell into a chair, overcome, frightened, before the canvas, where the new fresh color made a shining spot under which he saw the profile of the face.

The bell rung. The valet went to open the door. A voice resounded in the vestibule and the studio door opened, while the servant announced:

"Monsieur Romanet."

Lucien arose quickly and remained standing before his father.

The latter closed the door carefully, drew the Oriental portieres, then he walked toward Lucien and folded his arms.

"Let me see the life that you lead!" said he.

During the last minutes Lucien had ten times wished to throw himself upon his father's neck and say to him: "Take me back, down there!" This being ill suited to the circumstances, threw him into that state of obstinacy in which he did not know whether he wanted to do so or not, but where he would die before he would yield.

"Your wife is ill," continued Master Romanet, in the pompous and dictatorial tone which he thought was dignified. "She is ill with grief, the poor child; but she will recover. I can tell you, we will look out for that. It would be fine, indeed, that an angel like her should suffer for a scapegrace such as you!"

Then he began a homily in which he reproached his son for every fault that he had ever committed, from his cradle to the present time, putting in the same category even the prizes that he had failed to obtain at the lyceum, then with his present sin; in a word, with the best intentions in the world, in a discourse which he had been preparing for a week, he commenced, but his real emotion which he tried to conceal under a manner even more pedagogic than usual, made him forget the end, the middle and the beginning.

His son listened to him, apparently impassible, but really very much affected. He did not hear what Master Romanet said; the sound of his voice fell on his ears, but did not reach his heart.

It was the voice which had scolded him when he was young, and of which he was so afraid that he did not know where to go to avoid hearing it. It brought back to him many past scoldings, not always deserved, and a regime of severity that had made him the model young man who had been buried three weeks ago under the artificial flowers of fast life.

"If I had been brought up differently," said Lucien to himself, while Master Romanet was speaking, "I should not have been where I am to-day. My father has no right to talk to me like this. It is about time for me to talk of morality!"

Yet his conscience, with which he had struggled for a long

time, would perhaps have agreed with the orator, if an unfortunate word of the latter had not broken that influence.

"Do you imagine," said Master Romanet, suddenly, that we are going to supply you with money for such purposes as this?"

"Oh, father," said Lucien, wounded to the quick, "do not speak of money! Keep your money! I will live from my work!"

"Your work!" cried the notary; "the work of M. Lucien Romanet, artist, painter! If you had only been like anybody else, and had a profession! But no, you wished to be a painter; what does it bring you in, year in and year out, this painting?"

"It will bring me enough to live upon!" said Lucien, haughtily. "From to-day you are released from all obligations to me, father."

"'Obligations!' I do not think that I owe anything to a gentleman who leads an unworthy life; and I assure you, that the income given you when you married was in the intention that you should live decently with your family, and not that you should squander my parents' money and mine to pay for dishonest pleasures."

Lucien possessed a quality very rare among those who have not had to earn their living: he was very sensitive upon the subject of money. He thought it was natural for his parents to supply his wants; but, in a moment of embarrassment, he would never have gone to them for a loan. This delicacy, good or bad, had made him careful and wise in his younger days.

The manner in which his father had just expressed himself wounded him deeply, and his words relating to his art had stung him. From that moment, all chances of a reconciliation, possible a minute before, were lost.

Some words still passed between Master Romanet, who was more and more irritated, and his son, who intrenched himself more and more behind his haughty disdain, which served to conceal his terrible agitation; then, seeing the uselessness of his efforts, the notary went away, conducted to the door by Lucien, who had not ceased to show him the most irreproachable deference.

When he was alone in the street, Master Romanet wished to return, to embrace his son, and say to him: "All this is nothing at all; come with me; let us go to Annie!"

If he had done so, Lucien would have found himself defenseless, and his assumed coldness would have melted like snow before the sun. But to return—it would be necessary to ring the bell, to wait for a servant to come to open the door. Master Romanet was the proudest being upon earth, and possessed a good share of vanity as well. He went to the Exchange, where he had to see some clients, and Annie's fate was no longer in his mind.

The sight of the studio now became still more painful to Lucien; his interview with his mother-in-law, and that that he had just had with his father, had not left a single object about him that he could look at without sad or unpleasant feelings.

"I can never work here any more," said the young man; "whatever I may do, these walls will always speak to me of what has passed! Besides, since they have taken away my income, I must find a less sumptuous home, and I must also try to sell some pictures. Until now, I have lived too much like an amateur. But how am I going to live while I wait?"

Annie's husband had very little experience in worldly friendships, yet in a month, he had learned many sides of that singular life where people easily become intimate without caring for each other, who would help others to spend their money, and ridicule them if they are at all economical, and would not give them a farthing to save them from ruin.

None of those whom he called his friends would loan him more than five louis, and only that on the expressed or understood condition that the money would be returned in a few days: and Lucien could make no such promise. The man upon whom he could depend was Jalbrun, and he decided to go and see him.

This decision cost him a good deal. Since the ball he had met his friend every day, and every day he tacitly understood that his friend disapproved of his conduct. The suspicion was only felt by Lucien; it was a finely disguised irony, but no one could doubt it, and the bitter point of the sarcasm wounded the young man.

Nevertheless, he saw no other remedy for the state of things that he had created for himself, and he went to find his friend, who was more easily found anywhere than in his own home.

He had not gone a hundred steps in the direction of the Madeleine when he saw a young woman approach whose figure struck him; he could not remember where he had seen this irregular face, which possessed a certain charm. This person looked at him attentively; she knew him, he could not doubt that, and instinctively he slackened his steps.

"Do you not remember me, Monsieur Romanet!" said she, stopping; "and yet we have talked together, we have even danced together."

Like a flash of lighting Lucien saw again the masked ball, with the electric light, the mingling of colors and the odd figures.

"You danced the first waltz with me" said she with a slightly malicious smile.

He recalled it then! In fact, he had found her very amusing, and felt a certain charm which she disseminated around her.

"And then, no one has seen you since," said she with a smile that perhaps was a little facetious. "I did not know what had become of you, but I have heard since."

Indeed, Lucien had not met her anywhere in the whirl of that variegated society, where he had ranged since the memorable ball.

"Then you have thought of me?" said he, flattered, and also somewhat curiously.

"Oh, I go out very little; it was only by chance that I was at

Courtois' studio; a friend of mine took me there. I like a quiet life."

She looked down the long avenue, where the fresh young leaves on the trees formed a sort of green curtain that was very pleasing to the eye.

Lucien felt a strong emotion. This woman who had just recalled the past memories of his troubled life and who spoke to him of a quiet life, under these trees, seemed to him so different from those whom he had met in the interval! Looking at her he thought her almost pretty. She looked at him and smiled pleasanty.

"It gives me a great deal of plsasure to meet you again," she said, with the gesture of a woman who is going away; "you seem a little sad, a little tired, I am sorry for that—because you gave me the impression of a man who was very gay, very jolly—perhaps I am wrong. I beg pardon. Adieu, monsieur."

Lucien made a gesture. She stopped. "I should like to go to see you," said he. "Will you give me your address?"

"Pauline Morin," said she; "I live very near—you can see the house; the one with a studio on top."

They were before her door. She made him a little bow and disappeared in the vestibule.

"It is very curious," thought Lucien, "that I should have met her here for the first time in a month, when she lives so near!"

Then, as if he had awakened from a dream, he hurried to the place where he hoped to meet Jalbrun.

Everybody has personally proved the truth of this saying: "When you are in a hurry you never find what you seek." Lucien verified this once more in his own case. For two hours, Jalbrun slipped through his fingers like an eel. Whenever the young man thought he was going to put his hand upon him, he learned that his friend had just gone. At last, about seven o'clock, weary in body and mind, giving up the meeting for that day and getting ready to go home to take whatever his cross cook, who did not expect him, would give him for a late dinner, Romanet found himself under his friend's nose.

"Well, this is fortunate," said he, taking his arm. "Have you any money about you?"

"Always!" responded Jalbrun. "Society will doubt that! Chut! It is a mystery. I have the appearance of organized disorder, and I am order personified. I am that! I like to deceive the world, thus I revenge myself for these fools' mistakes. If I should tell you that I have some savings?"

"You have saved something? This is delightful," said Lucien, drawing a deep sigh, "take me to dinner somewhere, and we will talk afterward. Take me to a quiet place, if there is such a one."

"I can meet your views exactly," replied Jalbrun gravely.

A few minutes later, they were seated in an obscure restaurant, in a nearly deserted street, where they could talk without being deafened by the noise of carriages or the buzzing of neighboring conversation.

They did not take advantage of this quiet, for during the din-

ner they talked about ordinary things. Lucien felt calmer under the influence of his friend's serenity; without a shadow of confidence ever having been exchanged between them, he knew that Jalbrun understood the state of his mind, and that he was disposed to aid him.

"Come, let us take a walk on the quays, will you?" said the musician, when they arose from the table. "I do not know any place in Paris that is so peaceful and quiet as the quay which runs along the Tuileries garden. You might compose a poem of twenty-four verses there, without anybody even asking you what time it is."

They went there slowly, and before ten minutes Lucien had opened his heart to his only friend.

He concealed nothing from him—neither the sickness of heart that his new sort of life caused him, nor his mother-in-law's visit, nor that of his father, nor the material consequences which his rupture with him had caused, nor the extreme embarrassment in which he had found himself, and which might last for years perhaps. In general, Lucien did not like confidences, but he still more disliked half confidences which would not truly relieve a troubled soul, and which would not allow one to ask or to receive really useful advice.

Jalbrun listened to him seriously, sometimes encouraging him with a word, putting a direct question in difficult places, to smooth things and make them easy.

"Well," said Romanet, when he had finished, "do you think that I am very badly off? You will tell me that I have had what I wished. I will reply that I know that very well. If I had it to do over again, I would do the same thing—nothing else. But what do you think of my situation?"

"Evidently it is not brilliant," replied Jalbrun, throwing away his cigar.

They leaned their elbows on the parapet, and looked into the Seine which flowed beneath them.

Nothing is more charming than this corner of Paris at that hour of the evening, when a vague blue-green light is seen above the Trocadero. The mysterious shadows thrown against the sky, and the trees of the Champs Elysees, form a confused mass, now and then broken by the lights around the *cafes-chantants*. The building of the corps legislatif is half concealed by the tall poplars on the left bank. Looking up the river, the continuation of the lights is seen, united by the bridges, like a rivulet of diamonds.

Solitary lamps shine from the houses; light is everywhere, but the greatest brilliancy is in the darkening heavens; the river flows with a murmuring noise, reflecting all the lights and all the rosy shadows' dance.

"To think that there are hundreds of people in Paris who have never seen this place, or, if they have seen it, have never appreciated it."

Lucien did not reply.

The tall black poplars opposite him recalled the Isle of Mantes. Suddenly he thought this water would flow on past An-

nie's window, and he was overcome with grief which enveloped him like a cloak.

"No," said he after a moment. "I regret nothing. I wished to see life, I lived in a kind of dream, I have come back to the land of the living. The experience cost me dear, it was severe—but now I feel myself a man, I am no longer the great child that I was."

"The thing now is," said Jalbrun calmly, "to know what you are going to do."

"To work for my living," said Lucien, as he had said it before his father.

"I understand, a beautiful theory, perfect; but it is not so at all in practice. Your rupture with your family has been noised abroad. I will not conceal from you that people think that you are not in the right, and your friends will be cool toward you. You will have no great chance, even if you work hard, of selling your pictures to them. There are the picture dealers,—but when they know that you have to work for your living, they will not pay you very much. However, that will take care of itself, but you must give up your fast life."

"Do you fancy that that amuses me?" asked Lucien abruptly.

He stopped short, for fear of saying too much. Jalbrun put his hand on his arm.

"Do you want me to go for your wife to-morrow morning?" said he. "I am sure that she will return to you without saying a word."

"It was possible this morning," said Lucien in a low tone, "it is impossible now. Since my father has stopped my income. I can no longer be reconciled to my family; people would accuse me of doing so from self-interest."

Lucien's pride was not to be overcome, and besides, Jalbrun did not insist; had he been in the young man's place he would have done the same.

"Then," said he, conclusively, "there is only one thing to do; live very humbly and work very hard. That is not lively, but it is honorable. I have a little money at your disposal; be economical, and we will do the best we can."

Lucien silently pressed his friend's hand, and they returned toward brilliant Paris, chatting about art, as if serious personal questions had never been discussed between them.

The next day, the young man arose saying to himself that he must at once leave the home that events had made so odious to him. After having selected some furniture, and other things that belonged exclusively to him, he went out to look for a studio.

As he walked along, looking at the notices on different doors, he saw one which bore in large letters the word, "Studio." The vestibule looked respectable, and he entered.

The studio answered his purposes. The walls were bare, the ceiling very low; everything was shabby compared with his beautiful studio which Mme. Orliet had arranged with so much care and taste. But Lucien had decided to bear his misfortunes courageously; and nothing gives one so much courage

as the resolution to have it. A small, cold, and badly arranged room at the end of the studio was called a sleeping-room. "Never mind," thought he, "a bed could be placed there, with a toilet table, and that will be enough." Romanet paid security to the *concierge*, said that he would send around his furniture during the day, promised to pay six months' rent in advance, and went away with a degree of satisfaction; but he was very sad.

When the time came to take away his belongings from what had been his former happy home, the young man's heart failed him. Standing in the middle of the studio, he looked around upon the objects which the night before had brought him only painful memories, but which now recalled a thousand tender and charming recollections of his recent past.

Was it really possible? Had he broken every tie that attached him to his family? Though his exile was voluntary, was he condemned to live alone forever, haunted by the thought that others suffered on account of him?

But he did not wish to think of that. He suffered intensely. It was better to try not to think. And yet the affection of those happy days had been so sweet to him!

When Annie's light step came and went in the house, when she appeared, from time to time, from under the folds of the curtains, when the little child, lying on the divan, prattled to herself, played with her little fingers, laughing at their motions, all this family joy, that exchange of tender looks, that constant sharing of little cares and little pleasures, all these lost joys had an unspeakable charm, like a very light and subtile perfume, which clings to the hair, to the clothes, which one feels, but cannot and does not wish to destroy.

He had wished it! He had broken the charm, he had thrown away the perfume, and now that he was free and alone he felt a great bitterness ingulf him, as the ocean ingulfs a ship by a slow but sure movement.

Take away these things! Impossible, he would send Jalbrun. He went away without saying anything to the servants, who knew that their master was going to leave the house. "To go," said the cook, disdainfully, "into a mean little studio, very high up, at number forty, and in a house that appears to be very badly kept."

It was dark when Jalbrun arrived, with two porters laden with packages and canvases. An iron bedstead, bought near by, had already been placed in the ugly little sleeping-room. One could hear the easels striking against the banisters of the staircase; and the slow and heavy steps of the porters as they mounted, descended and mounted again, without haste, like the movements of a machine.

At last the noise and bustle ceased. Jalbrun went away to keep an appointment that he had with a friend the next hour, and Lucien was left alone, poor and heart-broken in his new home.

As he went down-stairs a few moments later to go to dinner, and while passing through the vestibule, he met the woman who had spoken to him the night before.

"Did you come to my house?" said she, surprised on seeing him.

"No; do you live here?"

"I told you so yesterday."

"I forgot it," said Lucien, with a slight effort. "I have rented the studio above."

"Ah!" said Pauline, looking at him attentively. "Then you have left your hotel?"

"Yes."

There was silence. Lucien was thinking of the home that he had just left, and was comparing it to the one he had just come to.

"Well, good-bye," said Pauline. "You are going out and I am going to dinner. We shall see each other then, since we are such near neighbors."

"Do you dine at home?" said Lucien, absently.

"As much as possible. I have a horror of restaurants. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," repeated the young man, mechanically.

He joined Jalbrun, who took him to the Opera Comique, and passed the evening like a man who has no cares. But when he found himself alone before the door of his new house, when he mounted the dark, unfamiliar staircase, where he stumbled against the steps, when he reached his cold and inhospitable room, he had great need of all the courage with which he had promised to provide himself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE following day, at eleven o'clock in the morning, Lucien was painting alone in his room when there came a knock at the door. He opened it and found there Pauline Morin.

"You do not come to me, neighbor, so I come to you," she said, artlessly, and coming in as if she were at home.

Lucien answered two or three words out of politeness, and continued his work. He liked to work so much that anything which took his attention from it was disagreeable to him. But Pauline knew these moods and she was not offended.

"What you are doing is very good," said she.

"Do you like it?" said Lucien.

One is always flattered at being praised, no matter whence the praise comes.

"It is very good. Will you have a good place at the Salon?"

"I hope that it will be good; I do not know anything about it," said the young man, painting rapidly.

Pauline looked around her.

"You cannot say that it is very elegant here at your house," said she, smiling, "but it is funny, it is not at all like other people's houses.

Lucien smiled; this woman had taste, that was evident.

"Tell me, now, neighbor," said she, with a shade of timidity, "if I can do anything for you. You need not hesitate; it will be a pleasure to me. As I live in the same house, you know, it will be very easy."

"Thank you!" said Lucien, graciously.

This frank woman, who had not a wicked air, pleased him very much. She was very different from the others.

"Well, then, it is agreed; you only have to ring at my door. I am going to breakfast now."

"It is true, it is half-past eleven," said Lucien.

"Try to be regular in your meals, neighbor; nothing is more injurious to the stomach than to eat at irregular hours. At noon and at half-past seven should be the hours, at least these are mine, and I am always well."

"Thank you," said the young man, conducting her to the door.

He went out to breakfast, and thought no more of her.

Two or three days later, Pauline came again at the same hour. Lucien was there in such a fever of work that he saw no one except Jallbrun; besides, no one else came to his rooms.

"It is I again," said she. "Am I in the way?"

"Not at all, come in."

She placed herself before the canvas. It was the copy of the Romanet orchard, from which the young artist had effaced Annie's profile.

"There should be a face in this corner," said Pauline.

"There was one," said Lucien, with a sadness in his tone that he could not suppress.

Pauline looked at him covertly, seeking to divine the expression that she should give her face. She saw that it would not do to treat him lightly, so she remained silent.

"You ought to paint a little face," said she, after a moment; "it would double the charm of the picture. Would you like me to pose for it?"

Without waiting for a reply, she placed herself at three-quarters in a pensive attitude, full of grace and careless ease.

"Remain like that," said Lucien, seizing his brushes.

He rapidly sketched the outline of the young woman on a panel which happened to be under his hand, and without saying a word worked for nearly an hour. She did not move; without giving a sign of weariness or impatience, she posed with the ease of a model.

When he had arrived at a certain point he stopped, and looked at her smiling. He quietly said, "Thanks."

She went to see what he had done.

"That is very pretty," said she. They are right to say that you have talent. I am glad that I am able to be of use to you. And now I am going to breakfast."

She looked at her watch.

"How late it is!" cried she. "You must be hungry."

"Rather," replied Lucien.

"I am, and my breakfast is waiting for me down-stairs. Do you know what? Come and breakfast with me; it will be much nicer than what you can get in a restaurant, and you can finish your little sketch this afternoon. I will come back with you.

Lucien hesitated. The proposition, he knew not why, did not please him. Pauline saw this.

"You do not wish to accept my breakfast?" said she. "Oh,

goodness! if it is because your delicacy forbids, you can easily arrange that by sending me a bouquet or a box of marrons glaces —it seems to me that——"

She did not finish, and Lucien, vexed that she had guessed his thoughts, and actuated by the instinctive politeness that had been the basis of his education, no longer dared to refuse, for fear of wounding her.

Pauline was not very intelligent, but she was endowed with much sense; she understood that in order to please this well-bred and delicate young man, she must show herself tender and considerate. He found himself defenseless against the attractions of a home, and of a woman who appeared good, and was so perhaps at heart. The meals taken together, the comforts and sort of affection that he found here, combined with the artistic satisfaction of having a woman who posed well at hand, wove a net of elastic meshes about him, so much so that before a fortnight he was almost attached to Pauline.

That cost him dear. The sense of chivalry in the young man would not allow him to accept a favor, unless it was immediately repaid.

Jalbrun's money was quickly spent; Lucien was happy to sell a picture that he had been offered double the price for six months before, and he began to work with zeal, for he foresaw the coming of a visitor whom he had heard spoken of, but whom he had never seen—poverty.

He tried to devise pretexts to break with Pauline, but without success. The girl had conceived a kind of affection for him in which vanity, interest, and love mingled in very variable proportions, according to days. She knew that he was very much embarrassed financially at the time, but she hoped that later on he would appreciate her conduct toward him; this was for interest. Her vanity was satisfied, for she took care that all those women who would be annoyed by it should know that she commanded over Lucien Romanet; and, beside she loved that amiable fellow as much as any one can love, where love is but a caprice on either side and not that exchange of joys which completely fills the human heart, and for which man should have found another name than that of love. That word has been profaned too much.

Jalbrun knew of this connection from the first, and even though his life was rather loose, he was very much vexed on account of it. He almost reproached himself for having given Lucien the means of living honestly, saying to himself that if he had not aided him, Pauline would never have dreamed of attaching herself to a poor man. In any case, Pauline would probably have done as she did, but Lucien would have avoided her, as he now avoided all pleasures for which he could not pay.

With his Bohemian instinct, Jalbrun saw dangers in the future of which his friend never dreamed; he knew the tenacity of these artistic connections, which nothing can justify, or even explain, and which resist everything that would break all the serious ties of matrimony.

Consequently, he was both pleased and anxious one morning to receive a letter from Annie.

In a few words, she begged him to come to see her, to talk about a very serious matter.

Jalbrun did not have to be asked the second time. Two hours later he was at Mantes.

The Orliet house surprised him, as much as he could be surprised, and made him comprehend certain sides of the young wife's character which before had been incomprehensible to him; the dignity, the seriousness beyond her years, a reserve which an enemy might almost call pedantry. All this proved habits formed in childhood, in the midst of this almost severe luxury, and these surroundings, which spoke more of olden times than of the present day.

Mme. Orliet was with Annie in the drawing-room when Jalbrun presented himself: he had met her at her daughter's house, but here she appeared another being. Great respect was combined with the pity that he felt for these two women, who were so worthy of happiness and so cruelly deprived of it. After a few moments of ordinary conversation, Annie looked at her mother, and, having received a sign of approbation, she addressed herself to her husband's friend in a voice which trembled slightly, but which soon became firm.

"We wish your advice, monsieur," said she; "there are many things that my mother and I do not understand; and we beg you to guide us in this case, promising in advance to follow your advice."

Jalbrun frowned.

"I have scarcely merited your confidence, madame," he said. "Every day I reproach myself for having introduced Lucien into a kind of society in which he has since made such rapid progress——"

"I have not forgotten that dinner, monsieur," said Annie, "where my husband made you give him the invitation to that ball—do not reproach yourself; the evil was done long before then. But this is not what I wished to speak to you about. Besides the ordinary quarterly allowances, my mother has sent to my husband the allowance that she usually gave us, and he has refused to accept it. This did not surprise us, for we expected it. My mother has divided the amount into two equal parts, and has sent one half to Lucien; he has also refused that, as he did the first. Still, he must live, sir; we cannot allow my husband to suffer——"

Annie's voice, till now so clear, trembled, and her eyes filled with burning tears. Mme. Orliet took up the thread of her discourse:

"It is necessary that my son-in-law should live honorably; his delicacy in this case does him great honor, whatever his faults may be. But his excessive scruples on this point may lead to disastrous consequences, even for this delicacy of which he is so jealous. He must live by honorable means; and as his work cannot yet furnish him sufficient means for existence, his family wish to attend to that. Master Romanet is very angry with

his son, and has sworn that he will never send him anything more. Can you not find the means to make him accept what he needs?"

Jalbrun did not reply at once. His eyes wandered from one woman to the other with an astonishment full of respect. He had never known anything like this in his life; he had often heard mothers-in-law declare that they would never give their sons-in-law a sou, but he had never met a mother-in-law who was searching for means to make a recalcitrant son-in-law accept what was legally due him.

"What an imbecile that Lucien is!" thought he; "to have a family like this and to commit the follies that he has."

"Well, monsieur," said Annie's crystal voice; as she leaned toward him to read his face she tried to divine his reply.

"I am so surprised by what I have heard, ladies," said he, "that I scarcely know what to say to you. We must find some means. You are right."

"Pardon, monsieur," said Madame Orliet, "could you tell us what my son-in-law has been living upon? Borrowed money, doubtlessly. This money must be returned. Do you know to whom?"

Jalbrun hesitated a moment and then decided to tell the truth.

"It is I, madame, who has had the happiness to render this slight service to my friend, but you will oblige me very much by not speaking of it. I only confess it to you to put your mind at rest, thinking that you would prefer to know that it is I, because you wish to tell me everything, and you honor me with your confidence."

"I thank you, monsieur," said Mme. Orliet. "What you tell me eases my mind, and if you wish it, we will no longer speak of it. Can you not tell my son-in-law that you will continue to be his banker."

"He would not believe me, madame," said Jalbrun smiling. "He knows two well that my resources are limited. I was imprudent enough to tell him the amount of my savings, and suspicious as he is, if he should suspect the truth he would lose the confidence that he has in me, and which is of such service to us all."

All three were very much embarrassed.

"Mamma," said Annie, suddenly, "Madame Romanet must be our accomplice."

"Do you know that she cannot do anything without her husband's consent?"

"Yes, but she can say that she has borrowed it; Lucien would accept from his mother what he would refuse from everybody else."

Jalbrun was more and more astonished.

There were female hearts without malice. These women who had suffered grief and outrage, thought only of the happiness of the ungrateful one, and they who had never lied, descended to a falsehood to perfect their devotion.

"Very well," said Mme. Orliet to her daughter. "Let us send for Madame Romanet."

It was not easy to make the latter understand what they wished of her. In the midst of a deluge of tears, she incessantly repeated that her poor son was not so wicked as they tried to believe. That if Annie had listened to her advice, and returned to Paris, all would have been arranged, she was sure of it. But young wives have so much vanity, and they could not endure the slightest contradiction, even when it was for everybody's good.

Annie listened patiently; she was accustomed to these little recriminations, and Jalbrun noticed a slight smile on her lips, when her mother-in-law spoke of the vanity of young wives. This smile was neither cynical nor bitter, it was a feeling of injustice that had become comical because it was so absurd. Then Mme. Romanet stopped, Annie embraced her affectionately and spoke to her as to a child.

"You are right, madame," said she, "but since the evil exists the important thing now is to repair it. You know that your son has refused to accept the money that my mother has sent him. There is Monsieur Jalbrun, who has a great friendship for Lucien, who consents to act as messenger between us and him. Will you allow him to say to Lucien that you will send him an income while his affairs are being arranged?"

The discussion was long; Mme. Romanet was afraid that her husband would discover the stratagem, and that the anger of the terrible notary would fall upon herself. Maternal love carried the day, however, and she begged Jalbrun to watch over her child as if he were at that age when timid mothers confide their school-boy sons to the care of an older student, begging him to prevent the little one from getting into mischief.

Jalbrun departed for Paris under the impression that he had just passed two hours in a dream-land, where nothing is done as it is in real life. All astray in his mind, comprehending nothing, he asked himself how so much severity could prevail; if Annie's weary eyes, and Mme. Orliet's hair, now streaked with gray, had not revealed to him their secret sorrows, which were the price of their outward calm.

Would Lucien believe these devoted women's pious lie? With anybody but Jalbrun the negotiation would have run great risk; but he knew so well how to mingle pleasantry and truth, he could present things in such a particularly favorable light, that he would accept from him what he would reject from anybody else, thanks to that mixture of folly and seriousness which, many times, had left the questioner hesitating before an undeniable truth which he presented in some unexpected manner.

The young man was deeply touched by the thought that his mother, breaking all the habits of her life, had found means to obtain money to send to him; he reflected that such a sacrifice required great devotion from a woman who was naturally timid and without energy, and he was surprised at this evidence of the sublimity of maternal love.

What would he have thought of Annie's love if he had known

by what subterfuges she had succeeded in arousing such reflections in him? But Lucien's state of mind did not yet allow him to admit the idea that such nobility of soul could exist in the woman whom he had so deeply wronged. The knowledge of that truth would have burned him like a red hot iron. He had put far from him the memory of her whom he had so much misunderstood, and would have done, no matter what, to try to forget the generosity which made his wrong greater and more difficult to bear.

When Lucien was alone, he felt a great relief and yet a feeling of sadness. Nothing made him feel his isolation so much as the fact that his mother had to send him money surreptitiously. Brought up in ease, married luxuriously, the young painter learned for the first time, what it is to struggle with life and to quarrel with his family. His melancholy soul tried in vain to quiet itself with some less painful thought. Pauline offered him the resources of art and of forgetfulness, and he yielded to her blindly.

He was soon entirely in her power; due to the influence which she exercised on his daily life, especially those smaller details which form an invisible net around those men who are absorbed in their daily avocations. Occasionally Lucien said to himself that this woman was making herself too necessary to his life, that a rupture must come sooner or later; his good sense would not allow the meshes of this net to be drawn too tightly around him—but good sense had long since deserted him; it had departed with Annie and her child.

Many things must happen in order to break with Pauline; first, to endure tender and angry scenes; and Lucien, brought up in a home where the father commanded and the mother obeyed passively, had an instinctive terror of family disputes. The ruptures that had preceded his connection with Pauline had disgusted him with every sort of noisy discussion; Pauline, when she was discontented, did not give vent to her ill-humor in any way that offended the young man. She was foolish; and in reality she was not even pretty, save a sort of charm which came from her person, and which upon an intimate acquaintance seemed commonplace, artificial, or assumed. She was full of little faults that were difficult to bear—but she was there. To leave her he would have to find another studio, move out, and begin a new existence again. Lucien did not feel equal to the effort.

Therefore he worked, and worked well. Under the blow of the whip of suffering his talent had taken a new lease, and almost a new form. His sufferings were not those which ennoble a man, and purify him by passing through the fiery furnace; his sufferings were mingled with remorse, and he felt that he must work or they would kill him—and Lucien had no wish to die.

At the opening of the Salon he did not have that enormous success which "The Romanet Orchard" had brought him, nor even that which he had acquired at the last Salon. His canvases, finished under the influence of unwholesome preoccupations,

did not prevent that harmony of qualities which is necessary to excite admiration.

His friends made excuses for him and defended him as well as they could; his good comrades annihilated him with perfect unanimity. Lucien had exhausted himself, that was plain! The life that he led caused it! It was clear that no one could work well and lead such a life of pleasure! Family life was a surer guarantee of serious qualities, etc.

Those who spoke thus had only the night before tried to promulgate an entirely opposite opinion, and affirmed that a true artist should be absolutely free from all ties, if he wished to preserve the integrity of his genius; but most men do not get angry at infallible logic, and good comrades do so less than others.

Lucien was classed by his friends, among those who had achieved their highest success. The public, not caring about that, bought his pictures. Of a less noble ideal, and of less value as works of art, they were more pleasing to the general public, and they were well paid for.

For the first time since the ball at the Courtois Studio Lucien felt contented. He had so far effaced Annie's image from his heart that he no longer thought of her. Filled with triumphant joy he took Pauline to one of the villages on the borders of the forest of Fontainebleau frequented by painters and their companions. He passed six weeks there making studies, buried in the delights of labor to that extent that he thought of nothing else.

CHAPTER XVI.

PAULINE was often alone; the sun made her head ache, she did not like the open air, and to speak the truth, like many models, she could now and then give some good hints about a picture, but she was incapable of finding any pleasure in the contemplation of nature. For her, as for many others, a landscape was a pretty *motive* for a study; her comprehension of the beautiful did not extend beyond that.

Therefore she was bored. She took with her wherever she went an interminable piece of crochet-work, which did not amuse her much, but which was a pretense of doing something. Seated in the garden attached to the small house which they had rented for the season, she watched people pass by on the warm afternoons; then, toward night-fall she walked along slowly to meet Lucien, stopping here and there to chat with country women, and stopping at the inn-door to see some tourist from Paris, some old acquaintance come there by chance.

During the second week in July, a painter, one of those whom Lucien called his friends, one of those who had so charitably judged him, came to spend a few days in the village. He was accompanied by an elegant young man, who was rather haughty, a cynic and a skeptic, and who, in twenty-four hours, became the reigning favorite in the village.

The handsome fellow, with his glass in his eye, took this admiration haughtily, as his right, like a man who is accustomed

to such success. Pauline alone found favor in his eyes. Did she owe this flattering exception to the superior distinction which surrounded her, or did the charming Ralboise condescend to look upon her because she appeared more like a proper married woman, than the others? It did not signify.

He commenced to correct her discreetly, like a man who wishes to be agreeable, for the time, but who would not be held to anything serious.

The young woman had began to weary of the life she led here. At Paris, while Lucien was at work, she came and went, her time was her own, she was faithful from habit and from indolence; here, things were different and Ralboise knew it well.

Naturally, as one might predict, Lucien took a fancy to him, and often invited him to dinner with the friend who had brought him there. Pauline played the *role* of lady of the house marvelously well; she truly believed herself at home, and the thought of deceiving Romanet, which had certainly taken hold of this small brain, had not done so without causing her a slight shiver, almost as much as if she had been his wife.

But the occasion was too tempting, her loneliness too irksome, and the summer afternoons too long. One fine day, while the entire village was taking its siesta with shades lowered and shutters closed, while the hens rolled themselves in the dust, and the weary dogs stretched themselves under the shadows of the roofs and slept as if they were dead, Ralboise entered the house, the door of which was not closed.

Pauline was reading, lying on a sofa in the dining-room. In her white muslin, in the shade of the half-light, she was very attractive. On seeing the young man enter, she made a show of being surprised. He advanced on tiptoe and went and sat down beside her.

Some flirting, for Pauline took things almost seriously, and some eloquence on the part of Ralboise, of which he had not believed himself capable, prolonged the conversation without advancing it much, which seemed to afford infinite pleasure to them both; they felt as serious and convinced of the importance of that interview as children who play at housekeeping and are extravagantly and excessively polite to each other.

Suddenly a man's step was heard in the little vestibule. Pauline arose quickly and listened, with the pallor of a woman who has been detected in an indiscretion. Ralboise moved away from her frowning; this did not amuse him in the least. Lucien entered, followed by Jalbrun. The latter cast a look of ironical respect upon the woman, and then glanced at Ralboise with a slight smile of congratulation.

There was nothing to say. Everything was irreproachable, and yet the two friends blushed in common accord. Ralboise, who was acquainted with Jalbrun, extended his hand, saying to him:

"You here? I thought I had left you on the asphalt of the boulevard!"

"That is like me!" responded the musician, in his unmistakably bantering tone, which made him so formidable. "I was on

the asphalt, and I said to myself, 'The woods want my presence, the gravel of the forest is sweet to weary feet. I will go and see my friends; they are surrounded by nature, they are! The sight of city life does not corrupt the purity of their souls! And I am here!'"

There was great embarrassment between these four people. Lucien, his features contracted, paced up and down the little room, without knowing what he was doing.

"How did you find Lucien without coming here to inquire for him?" asked Pauline, who could not yet understand Romanet's return or the presence of his friend.

"It is the true canine instinct with which kind nature has endowed me," replied Jalbrun. "On arriving here, I breathed the country air, and as I was just in front of the inn, I said to the inn-keeper: 'Have you seen Monsieur Romanet pass by?' An urchin assured me that he was familiar with all the habits of that distinguished artist. I followed him and he did not deceive me, since we are here."

There was silence. Ralboise took his hat to go away.

"Are you going to remain here some time?" said Pauline, who felt an increasing uneasiness.

"Oh, no; only a few days."

Lucien had disappeared. She heard him walking about in the room overhead.

"But how did you come?" insisted Pauline.

"In a carriage, a caleche, if you please!"

"How delightful the air of the woods is!" said Jalbrun with an air of great candor.

They were standing, and no one knew what to do. At last Ralboise went toward the door.

"Are you going?" said Jalbrun. Stay awhile; I have scarcely seen you!"

Lucien's step was heard on the creaking staircase and he immediately appeared at the door, with a traveling bag in his hand. Pauline was frightened. "I am obliged to go away," said the young artist, in a serious tone. "My mother is ill, and has sent for me. I will let you hear from me."

Pauline drew out her handkerchief; she no longer knew where she was, and it would have taken but little to throw her into hysterics. What upset her most was, that she did not know whether it was the presence of Ralboise which caused this hurried departure or not.

"Good-bye, Pauline," said Lucien drawing her to him. "You will find what will be useful to you on the mantel in the chamber, and I will write to you very soon."

He kissed the young woman's forehead, shook the hand of the dazed Ralboise, and went out followed by Jalbrun, who displayed most marked serenity.

After they had gone, Pauline remained silent a moment, listening.

The rumbling of a carriage was heard, she ran to the hall-door and saw the caleche turn the corner bearing the two men.

She returned hurriedly to the dining-room, where Ralboise, extremely annoyed, was standing in the same place, feeling that he had acted like a imbecile, and not knowing what to do.

"He has abandoned me," she said "and I have no one but you!"

This was not exactly what Ralboise wished, but in the meantime he had no other resource than to dry Pauline's tears—real tears of anger and vexation—and he did it with a very good grace.

CHAPTER XVII.

MME. ROMANET was really very ill; for some time the little strength she had was exhausted, and her illness made rapid progress. She went to bed, upon her physician's advice, and asked for her son.

Master Romanet was in a tearing passion, declaring that this reprobate should never cross the threshold of that house, but on a word from the physician he suddenly grew calm, became very gentle and quiet, full of attentions to his wife, and upon the advice of Mme. Orliet sent for Jalbrun.

The latter talked for half an hour with Annie's mother, listened to the heavy eloquence of the notary for a time longer, and went into the invalid's room. Mme. Romanet pressed his hand affectionately, and he promised her that her son should be with her the next evening and hurried off to the country without loss of time.

Lucien was very much affected upon learning that his mother had sent for him thus. If his father had consented to let him come, her illness must be very serious. Jalbrun, whose sagacity never deceived him, would not say all that he thought; Mme. Romanet was ill, undoubtedly, but the joy of seeing her son again might perhaps cure her.

"It is not sorrow that is the cause of her illness, is it?" Lucien kept asking incessantly, with the anxious persistency of one who reproached himself, and whom nothing can reassure while his conscience accuses him.

"No," said his friend in all sincerity. "Your mother's health has never been good, and it should not surprise you that an old illness should manifest itself anew, under the influence of this hot weather. Has not this happened twenty times before?"

This was true, but Lucien could not be convinced.

They arrived at Mantes very late in the evening. Jalbrun, considering his mission ended, wished to return to Paris, but Lucien clung to him as the only intercessor who could facilitate his entrance into the paternal mansion. The musician, who was as amiable and obliging as ever, accompanied his friend.

The notary's dining-room was lighted by a single candle when they entered. The whole house had that air of desertion and confusion which always prevails when the mistress of the house is ill. Things were not in their usual places, closets remained opened, which showed that the keys had fallen into the servants' hands; in the half darkness, in the midst of this unusual dis-

order, the tick-tick of the great clock went on imperturbably announcing the flight of these sad hours as it had announced the most joyful moments.

Lucien, during this time, standing in the large room, his hand leaning absently upon the heavy table where he had taken so many meals, waited while his mother was being prepared for his coming. The memory of a happy day suddenly came back to him.

It was the Christmas-eve when he had just discovered Annie's first trembling emotion, when his eyes had seen on that delicate and charming face the first embarrassment which spoke so plainly of love.

All that seemed so far away! The happy years seemed to him only the memory of a dream; the five or six months which had just passed were alone present in his memory, and they illumined it with the fitful light of a conflagration.

Suddenly a troubled and painful question presented itself to him; until now he had thought only of his mother; he supposed that Mme. Orliet would take her daughter to the sea-shore as she had done in former years, but, if she were here? If he should find Annie in the shadow of Mme. Romanet's bed-curtains!

He was going to question Jalbrun when the door opened and his father entered.

He was no longer the old notary, vain and jealous of his authority; he was a broken-down, aged, white-haired man, whose look had lost its former imperious vivacity. Lucien raised his eyes to him, and without knowing how it happened, they found themselves in each other's arms.

"Come," said Master Romanet to his son, "she is waiting for you."

His voice was weak and as changed as his feeble body. Still holding Lucian's hand, he conducted him to his wife's bedside.

Here it was brilliantly lighted up. Mme. Romanet wished to see her son as if it were daylight. Sitting up in bed, her eyes sparkling with joy, her color heightened by pleasure and expectation, she did not appear to suffer the least in the world; and yet the old family doctor, who had attended at Lucien's birth, stood at the other side of the bed with his finger upon the old lady's pulse.

"My beautiful boy! my Lucien!" said she. "You are here at last, my poor little one!"

She withdrew her hand from that of the physician to hold her son in her arms. He covered her with kisses, and she smiled on him. Falling back upon her pillows, she looked at him lovingly; the physician again took her pulse between his fingers.

"Talk to her," said he to the young man."

Lucien began to talk at random; he had had a pleasant journey; he was very happy to see her again: the sun was very beautiful and the forest at Fontainebleau was so green! He was getting along very well with his painting; he had sold two pictures at a very good price——

Here she made a scarcely perceptible movement and looked

at her husband with a slight fear. Lucien well understood that the thought of the borrowed money weighed heavily upon the conscience of this timorous woman.

"I am very rich, mamma," said he; "I did have some few debts, but I have paid them all. I am doing well now."

Mme. Romanet had exhausted all her strength in her first embrace: now, her son saw her as she really was; her face was furrowed, her eyes were too bright, with an expression of deep anguish which arises from heart disease.

"Have you seen your wife and your child?" asked she, in a voice as feeble as a sigh.

Lucien became pale. Then they were here! He had not anticipated that. Jalbrun entered noiselessly and answered for him.

"He has thought only of you, dear madame," he said, "you will not reproach him for that?"

Mme. Romanet smiled and gently pressed Lucien's fingers, which she still held. Suddenly the physician, who held her other hand, made a gesture of alarm; his mother's fingers loosened their hold, her eyes closed and Lucien saw her fall back helplessly.

"A syncope," said the doctor. "I expected it."

They opened the window and with great difficulty resuscitated the poor woman. Lucien was seized with an unconquerable fear. Had he come to see her die? Was it he who had killed her, first by his absence and then by his presence? When she reopened her eyes, and her look, wandering at first, was fixed upon him with evident joy, he felt that he could breathe again.

"And now," said the physician, "let everybody go away. You must try to sleep, must you not, madame?"

She nodded her head regretfully. Lucien obtained permission to remain in the next room, and Jalbrun went to the station to take the midnight train to Paris.

Mme. Romanet slept and the nurse who watched with her dozed. The notary, overcome with fatigue, had thrown himself somewhere on a bed. Unable to remain quiet, Lucien entered his mother's room and looked at her a long while by the flickering light of the night-lamp.

She was very much changed, oh, yes, very much indeed! Then it is true, this terrible heart disease is incurable. For some years you believe yourself rid of it, then it returns with redoubled intensity, and you are a prey to the most frightful sufferings—everything that was assured the night before, becomes doubtful on the morrow.

The young man remembered that eight or nine years ago he had seen her as she was now. They had sent for him as they did yesterday; but then they found him at the lyceum. He was about to present himself for the baccalaureate, and they had taken him away very late at night.

It was Mme. Orliet who had undertaken that sad mission. He remembered with what considerate gentleness, with what

tender precautions she had told him that his mother was dangerously ill, that perhaps he might not find her alive.

He had not forgotten how, in the train in which they traveled at night, he had wept in the arms of that good-hearted woman, who wept with him in his grief.

Everywhere in the young man's memory Mme. Orliet was next to his parents: sometimes acting as peacemaker in his difficulties, she was truly his second mother. Now, how she must detest him, despise him, perhaps—despise him? no! for he had refused her money; she might hate him, but she had no right to despise him.

Mme. Romanet moved in her sleep, and Lucien left the room to avoid all emotion.

Day was dawning outside; he opened his window and looked at the still gray sky.

Another memory of the past suddenly came up before him, borne on the first breath of the morning air. It was his wedding-day, when, incapable of containing his joy, he had gone down to the banks of the river to breathe more freely on the velvety grass, under the quiet trees. He was happy then. Cruel life, what had it done with his happiness?

He remained at the window a long time. The swallows commenced to fly about in the blue sky around the towers of the old church, which appeared white, and then gilded by the rays of the sun which was now rising. His heart melted, all his happy youth came back to him, like little children coming to embrace their parents, their faces lighted up, their hands extended, resembling animated flowers,

He threw himself into an arm-chair and slept, with a sort of new hope in his soul, which had long been saddened.

A slight noise, like the rattling of tissue paper, aroused him with a start. Daylight came in through the window, and his wife stood before him looking at him. He arose at once: she, surprised at this act, remained motionless, ashamed, her head turned away, her eyes lowered. Some one spoke in Mme. Romanet's room, the door of which was open.

"I beg pardon," murmured the young wife. "I did not know that——"

He could not avoid looking at her.

Since their separation, she had grown more womanly, more beautiful; less pretty, perhaps. Her features were thinner and refined by suffering. She possessed a mysterious charm, such as Lucien had never yet met anywhere, not even in her.

"Good-day, Annie," he said simply.

She raised her eyes, full of reproach, of grief, of shame upon him. Ah! what a world of meaning in that look, and how she must have suffered to have acquired such a depth of meaning in those eyes!

He approached her and took her hand; she allowed him to do so. He approached still nearer and kissed her forehead. He felt that she drew back with a shiver under his kiss.

He let fall the hand which he held, and went toward his mother's room.

Mme. Orliet was there; they shook hands without speaking, even without emotion. The sick-room was no place to manifest any personal feelings. The poor woman's strength failed visibly, and the physican would no longer express an opinion. A moment later Mme. Romanet asked for her granddaughter. She was brought to her. She wished to see her in Lucien's arms. He obediently took the child, embraced her, spoke to her. She was amiable and pretty, delicate and refined like her mother; she allowed him to caress and pet her, but she did not recognize him. Lucien himself did not experience the slightest emotion. His heart had become like stone, it was heavy and cold in his breast. From the manner in which Annie had drawn back, he understood that she would not forgive him, and in that funereal house, where his return had brought the last joy, he, the prodigal son, the former cause of so much happiness, felt as a stranger, notwithstanding the contradictory appearances.

"You will not go away again?" said Mme. Romanet to her son, as he leaned over her to embrace her.

He made a negative sign with his head and pressed her hand; but he could not take upon himself, even in that supreme hour to take an oath which he might not perhaps be able to keep.

His mother lived two days longer, sometimes appearing so much better that all were hopeful and sometimes suffering so that those who watched over her dared not breathe, their hearts were so full of tears. She died at last peacefully, while asleep, and passed from this life as quietly as she had lived.

The two succeeding days seemed like the continuation of a bad dream to Lucien. For forty-eight hours he had to talk, to act, to write, to reply, in fact, to take upon himself the double responsibility which fell to his father and to himself.

Master Romanet was crushed under his load of sorrow. The gentle and resigned companion of thirty years of work and of confidence had taken away more from his life than he could have believed. He had never fully appreciated the place that this woman, who was often silent and accustomed to submit to him without appeal, had held in his life. It was when he saw her carried forth from the house that she had made so comfortable, where she had ofttimes endured his terrible and unreasonable bursts of anger, where she had never commenced a discussion, nor refused to submit, that the notary did justice to her who had borne his name. His sorrow was deep and sincere, it made him reflect upon himself, and he saw that his violent nature had more than once made her weep silently; if his too tardy regrets did not become remorse, it was because he knew in his heart that, in spite of all this, his wife loved him enough to have been happy to live near him whom she looked upon as her joy and her happiness.

After the return from the cemetery, Master Romanet went into his study and made his son go in before him.

"You must return to your wife," said he, without preamble.

Lucien did not reply. For two days, in the midst of his grief,

this thought had come to him from time to time like the sting of a needle.

"You cannot stay here," said his father; "your conduct has already been the cause of too much gossip. Your return will end that; profit by this to give up a painful state of things, let your mother s death at least serve some purpose."

The notary stopped short, looked at the portrait of Mme. Romanet behind his arm-chair, and which he had never before looked at once a year, and said:

"Do you see, Lucien, I do not think that we husbands do our wives justice; we require them to sacrifice their tastes, their preferences, their friendships. We find it very easy to impose ours upon them, and we do not even ask if what we exact does not inspire them with some repugnance. You have wronged your wife greatly Lucien; but let us not speak of that. She is an excellent creature. She will forgive you, I am sure of it, for she loves you. Madame Orliet also loves you, more than you deserve. In fact, let the past be forgotten. The future is in your hands; it depends upon you to make it happy or unhappy; choose the right way, my son."

His emotion overcame him. Lucien approached to take his hand. Master Romanet opened his arms to him.

"To-morrow morning you must go to your mother in-law's," said he; "everything will be arranged, you may be sure."

The next day Lucien went to Mme. Orliet's.

His heart beat strangely when he rang the bell, like a stranger, at the gate of that house—his house, from which he had voluntarily exiled himself. He entered the drawing-room like an ordinary visitor, and remained standing, disconcerted, embarrassed, suffering fearful shocks to his vanity.

The door opened, and his mother-in-law entered, dressed in mourning, looking extremely tired and worn, less by the weary watches at the bedside of the patient than by other griefs.

Lucien bowed to her respectfully; she took his hand, and made him sit beside her on the narrow little sofa, where they had chatted so often in former days.

"My child," said she, thus saving the young man the embarrassment of speaking first, "in the last few months painful events have happened to us. Misfortune brings us together to-day; it seems to me that the only thing we can do now is to turn over that page of the book and commence another."

Lucien confessed that he was conquered. This generosity, this delicacy left him defenseless; if he had met the reproaches that he had expected, he would have asserted himself and imposed conditions. But what could he do in the presence of such a magnanimity of forgiveness, which did not even ask explanations?

Bending toward his mother-in-law's hands, he covered them with kisses, while he felt her hot tears slowly fall on his hair.

"And Annie?" said he, after a moment.

"Annie thinks as I do. You were married too young, my dear child. What has happened was the natural consequence of your education and your too early marriage. She has had sense enough to understand that—not of herself, for her experience in

life has not taught her anything about such things, but she has accepted in good faith what I have explained to her. She has great love for you, Lucien; do not abuse it; that is all I can ask of you now——"

She arose, and went out quickly; a second after Annie entered.

Blushing and embarrassed, timid—a hundred times more timid than during the first days of her marriage, for then she had perfect confidence in the man whom she loved—she advanced to the middle of the room.

Lucian only needed a look from her and he would have embraced her with all the ardor of the happy days of their so recent past.

"Annie," said he.

The young wife trembled at that voice, which vibrated with its former tenderness. She turned her head and looked at him. What reproach in those eyes which used only to smile at him.

"Annie," repeated Lucien.

She approached him slowly, he bent to her and took her hands.

"I have made you suffer very much," said he in a low voice. "I was crazy. Can you forgive me?"

She burst into tears, bitter, irrepressible. inconsolable tears, and wept like a child. He drew her toward him and made her sit down with his arm around her. She resisted a little, he insisted, she yielded and continued to weep, with her head on her husband's shoulder.

He spoke to her gently and soothingly; she listened to him, sometimes saying "Yes," but oftener was silent, and she still wept quietly, like a stream that has been long dammed up and which slowly overflows.

She wept now for her desecrated, lost love which could never return to her.

Her mother had tried to make her understand certain things during the sad period through which they had just passed. Mme. Orliet's wisdom had taught her daughter the necessity for forgiveness. No wisdom could re-establish a love that was wounded unto death.

Until the very moment when Lucian had asked her: "Can you forgive me?" Annie had believed that she could forgive him; she had accepted the reasons that had been given her to excuse her husband's conduct; in her heart there was neither anger nor ill will against him, she had given him her hand in good faith and without reserve, he was powerless now to revive confidence and adoration which are the essence of love. The word forgiveness meant in itself, that something was irreparably lost. Annie forgave, but her young love was dead.

Triumphant love, the conquerer, which does not allow an evil thought, which justifies all impossibilities because of love, which brings joys and admiration to the feet of the loved being, which has no preferences, but says, smilingly, "Everything shall be as you wish!" This winged, strange, divine divinity elevates us above all human misery. It is marvelous, but it is

fragile. It is like the butterfly wings of Psyche. When cruel fingers ruthlessly brush the down from its wings it falls to earth, and slowly dies in unspeakable agony.

From this love—like the phenix, it arises from its ashes, but under a new form—it springs forth as a resigned and compassionate tenderness bathed in tears, which forgives and which suffers. It is still love, for love alone can forgive to this degree, but it is no longer joy. This love fears when it is approached and when it is touched; for its wounded wings are still painful: it smiles and looks at its executioner with unspeakable sweetness, and begs of him, as a favor, never to touch it with his hand, however gently.

For a long time Annie loved Lucien as a brother. Friendship, which in noble souls survives love and sometimes substitutes itself for it, had existed in Annie's heart before her love for him; whatever had been her husband's wrongs toward her, she could never help loving him, excusing him, defending him even. As she leaned on his shoulder she felt that she was near a being who was very dear to her—but it was not her *husband*, whom she felt near her, it was her friend; the companion of her youth.

Lucien knew nothing of this. He loved her, and had never ceased to love her: he saw her gentle and resigned, he felt that no hard feelings could find place in that pure, transparent soul; he said to himself that this bad dream would end, that daylight would drive away those phantoms, that they would be happy.

Pressing his wife closely to his heart, he tried to kiss her eyes, which were filled with tears. She gently disengaged herself, and with the same slight shudder that he had noticed before, when he attempted to kiss her, said to him:

"I am going to bring Louisette."

Lucien was somewhat surprised, feeling that something, he did not know what, had just escaped him, something that it would be difficult to recover.

The young wife returned with the child in her arms and her husband saw on her face the smiles which he loved so well. Mme. Orliet, who had just rejoined them, made no allusion to the past, and when they were seated at the breakfast-table, one would have thought that all misunderstandings were over and that they had never been separated.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER dinner Annie pretended that she had a severe headache and shut herself up in her room. Lucien had promised to spend the evening with his father and he did so.

The young man was his mother's heir and this necessitated a journey to Vosges, where Mme. Romanet had owned some property. The notary advised his son to make this journey at once, while his family affairs were in their present state, and this would prevent unpleasant remarks and useless comments. But he wished Annie to accompany her husband.

Lucien gladly welcomed this proposition, for he wished to be alone with his wife. To be alone with her would be most fa-

vorable for the return of their old love. On returning to Mme. Orliet's, he announced his intended journey, and was rejoiced to find that Mme. Orliet agreed with him.

Annie's consent was still required, and the young man did not doubt that he would obtain it. Mme. Orliet was not so sure of it; but she said nothing, thinking that she might be mistaken.

Annie was asleep. Lucien had to wait until the next day to know her decision.

Lucien was assigned a room that was not his own, and passed a very bad night, troubled by painful dreams and new apprehensions. He knew not why, but he felt that everything was going against him, and this idea haunted him pitilessly.

Morning came at last; he dared not knock at Annie's door, and he felt himself extraordinarily ill at ease in this house—where he felt like a total stranger.

Disconcerted, not knowing what to do, he wandered from the drawing-rooms to the dining-room, where he waited until he saw his wife appear.

"I have to go to Vosges," said he rather abruptly, for waiting so long had made him nervous. "Will you go with me?"

Annie was silent and became pale. In her conscience she wished to do all that he asked of her: her pure soul revolted from a subterfuge as much as from a falsehood; yet she dared not make a promise which she knew would be beyond her power to keep, nor to refuse the first thing that he asked her.

"Well?" said Lucien, impatiently.

"No," said she in a low tone, hanging her head.

She raised it again immediately, and looked at him supplicatingly.

"Not yet, my friend," she said. "I cannot, I assure you."

"As you like," replied Lucien, turning away from her. "I know that I have no right to insist."

She had remained standing, pale and troubled, with an expression of doubt and sorrow on her face; he came toward her and tried to apologize for his abruptness.

"I understand," said he with more gentleness, "that you want a little time to accustom yourself to my presence, after so long a separation. Only let me hope that you will welcome me more favorably upon my return."

"Oh, Lucien!" said Annie, clasping her hands "If you only knew how much I love you and how much I wish to see you happy!"

He leaned toward her and embraced her; she did not draw back this time, but he felt that she nerved herself to prevent the shudder, and that notwithstanding her effort she could scarcely prevent it.

He looked into her eyes; she smiled at him——

The young wife's will was not stronger than his; it was her instinct which governed her. Lucien felt that their difficulties had not yet ended; but what could he do?

Hoping everything from time and rest, the young man went away that evening.

It was understood between them, without any useless discus-

sion, that they should return to Paris as soon as their affairs could be arranged. Annie would spend a few days there putting the house in order, and changing things so that nothing should recall the painful past to their eyes or to their minds.

Lucien wrote a farewell letter to Pauline, which he gave Jalbrun to deliver.

As he sincerely desired to return to his family life, he at once sent his studies and the pictures that he had commenced to his home in Paris. Thence he intended to go with his wife and child to the sea-shore, and soon commence his work for the following season.

The young man's journey ended sooner than he expected. Less than a week later, at about ten o'clock one evening, he found himself at the *station de l'Est*, with his traveling-bag in his hand.

He asked himself whether he should take the train for Mantes that night or remain and sleep in Paris. Because of the hour, and fearing lest he should annoy the family by coming so late, he decided to remain and jumped into a carriage.

Mechanically, he gave the coachman his old address. When the carriage stopped before the door Lucien saw his mistake, which made a disagreeable impression upon him.

While he continued his route, after having repaired his error, he looked up at his studio, the weather-stained skylight of which made a great shadow on the facade.

"I must leave it," said he; "but I can have it for four months yet, having paid the rent six months in advance."

His studio key hung on his bunch with others; he felt it in his pocket, with a mixture of indecision and discontent which had governed all his actions for some time.

"How uncomfortable I was up there!" thought he.

Raising his eyes again, he saw that Pauline's windows were lighted.

"She tired of the country," thought he; "I left her abruptly. Poor girl! She was devoted to me! She deserved better treatment than that."

He had forgotten not only Ralboise's presence near Pauline, but even the existence of that beautiful fellow.

The carriage stopped before the door, he dismissed the coachman and entered with his key, which he had always kept.

As the door opened noisily the old cook presented herself, but she showed no surprise.

"Madame is here," said she, opening the dining-room door.

Lucien was surprised. He had not expected to see Annie that evening; yet his second thought was pleasant. Alone in that house where they had been so happy they would be more free, more at their ease than even under the eyes of Mme. Orliet.

The cook went away, Lucien knocked at his wife's door.

"Come in," said she.

Seated in a low easy-chair, she was arranging some books in a rose-wood case, that she liked. The light of a lamp, standing on a tall piece of furniture, shone on her charming face, and the pretty disorder of her costume.

The evening was warm. She had changed her dress for a wrapper—a delicate muslin trimmed with ribbons and lace; and thinking that she would be alone, had left it unbuttoned; it had slid from her shoulder and left one of her shoulders bare.

"Is it you?" said she with a start, as she saw Lucien enter.

Then, suddenly, with trembling fingers she tried to button her dress.

"Annie," said he, approaching her quickly.

He was near her, and scarcely knowing what he did, he fell upon his knees before the little low chair upon which she was seated: he put his arms around her and rested his head upon his young wife's shoulder.

She remained motionless, and he felt her heart beat violently.

"Dear Annie, we have had a bad dream," said he, in a low voice, "but there will be a happy awakening. Are you still angry with me?"

She had not moved: her lowered eyes told no more than her closed lips. She felt that this was the decisive moment of her life, and she feared to influence the sincerity of her feelings by the least show of any will whatever.

"Tell me that you are no longer angry with me," pleaded Lucien.

"I am not angry with you," said she, slowly.

"And you love me still?"

"Oh! Yes, I love you!" murmured the young wife in a broken voice.

She sobbed. He held her in his arms and covered her charming face with the kisses which she endeavored to avoid.

"Lucien," said she, "we were so happy that it made it very hard for me to suffer what I did."

"But that is past; you will suffer no more."

She put her hand on her heart and gently withdrew from her husband's arms.

"Yes," said she, sadly; "I shall suffer still more. I feel it—I feel it more when you are here than when you are absent."

"Poor dear!" said Lucien, affected by thoughts of the suffering which he had caused.

After kissing her hands, he kissed her face; she looked at him with her eyes full of tears, with an indescribable expression of reproach and grief, when he sought her lips.

"Oh, no!" said she, with a shudder and a cry of anguish.

Lucien was amazed.

"But you love me still?" said he, in a wounded tone.

"I love you and I forgive you, I am not angry with you; but I beg of you, do not embrace me like that."

"Why?"

"It hurts me; it makes me ashamed, I cannot endure it. No, Lucien, I assure you, I cannot, it is too much for me."

He arose and stood before her, frowning, and with a discontented air.

Annie pitied him. She arose also and approached him with outstretched arms, with an expression of childlike tenderness.

"Do not be angry," said she, putting her two loving hands on

her husband's shoulders. "Do not look at me like that, I beg of you. You know that I have loved you all my life; you know that since my birth I have had no other friend than you. Do you not remember when we were young, and could not live without each other? You know that such things cannot be forgotten, cannot be effaced. You see now that I shall love you always, always, until death!"

Lucien's eyes flashed as he looked at his wife. He suddenly leaned toward her and pressed his lips upon the trembling mouth which implored him:

"Oh! it is wrong!" said Annie, as she recoiled, and then threw herself into an arm-chair at the other end of the room.

She was very pale and she regarded him almost defiantly.

Lucien was furious.

"What does this trifling mean?" said he in a voice that was suppressed with anger. "You pretend to love me, and yet you play this ridiculous farce. If you love me, you cannot be so greatly afraid of me; if you do *not* love me, why these protestations of tenderness? You are no longer a child, you know what life is, you have no excuse——"

She interrupted him.

"I am not playing any *role*," said she, in a despairing voice. "I love you with all my heart, and I cherish neither resentment nor rancor against you. What I have suffered has made me sad, it is true, but I cannot help that; you know it. I wish to be a most devoted companion to you. I shall never think of anything but your happiness. Your tastes and your pleasures shall be consulted before mine in every case; but——"

She stopped; an unconquerable modesty prevented her from continuing.

"But what?" brutally demanded Lucien, who felt that the whole happiness of his life lay in that reticence.

She made a heroic effort and looked at him.

"But when I think that you would speak to other women as you have spoken to me, when I think that you have kissed other lips, that your arms have held others, I cannot—I swear to you, Lucien, I cannot have you near me. It is not my fault. I have done all in my power to conquer this feeling. Since your return I have tried to reason with myself, to encourage myself. Just now, when you entered, I said to myself: 'If he should come, I would love him still!' And you have come, and I love you with all my soul, and my heart is breaking while I speak to you, and yet I cannot! No, no, no, I cannot! It seems to me that if I should give you a kiss, I should be forever degraded and wretched. That kiss would be a lie, and I have never lied!"

She stood before him with her head lowered, like a guilty person awaiting forgiveness.

Lucien thought her a hundred times more beautiful and more attractive than she had ever been. This woman, who was his, who loved him and who repulsed him, drove him to madness.

"Listen," said he to her. "You are only a child, to speak the truth. Do not judge the future that you know nothing about

You have had sorrows, I know that; and there still remains some bitterness, that is natural."

"No bitterness," said Annie, gently; "only grief."

"Be it so. You have made for yourself I know not what false idea of honor, and that is what makes you utter such senseless words. But all that is a chimera, Annie. You love me and I love you, that is the truth. What does anything else signify?"

He took her gently in his arms as if she were a scolded, weeping child.

"Your true place is here, my beloved wife; we must live and die together. Let us live, loving each other, so as to lose nothing that life can give us of all that is good and pleasant. You know how much we have loved each other. We will love each other still more."

"Do not speak of that," said she, disengaging herself. "That is exactly what I wish to forget, and that pursues me and persecutes me. I tell you truly, Lucien, if I had never been your wife I could love you as you wish, I believe so: but between the past and the present there is a gulf which I cannot bridge over. Just now, this moment, I tried to submit, while your arms were around me. But I cannot!"

Lucien felt himself overcome by a mysterious force. He could do nothing against the enemy which arose before him. He could undoubtedly assert himself the master; but it would be at the price of his wife's contempt. She had spoken of hating him; but he knew, that she would despise him, and that would be more horrible than all else. Resentment and anger blinded him. At that moment, when he had just separated from everything for his family; at that hour, when he returned to his home repentant, full of good intentions, his wife's attitude placed him in a very unpleasant position, and upon the poor child he vented all the spite which his disagreeable situation had engendered.

"Then," said he, feigning to be calm, while he felt his blood boiling in his veins, "it is you who close the door of the conjugal house? Take care! I shall never knock at it again. I swear it to you!"

"Dear Lucien! Can we not live together peacefully, like friends, with all the joys of a family, with our child? If you but knew how much I love you!" said the young wife, stretching her clasped hands toward him, with a gesture of touching supplication.

"All or nothing!" declared the young man, in a harsh voice. "I will not be restrained in my own house. I will not accept a state of things where I cannot do as I please. You declare war against me. I leave the responsibility upon you, and I shall do nothing to avoid the consequences. As a wife separated from her husband, you will follow your own inclinations, until the day when something in your conduct displeases me. Upon that day I shall remember that I am your husband and that you bear my name!"

"Oh, Lucien," cried the young wife, crushed under this undeserved threat,

"You do not wish it, say?" said Lucien, seizing her by the

wrist. "You wish to be my wife only in name? You wish to live in your foolish pride, which I truly cannot understand, and which seems such folly? Do you wish that? Are you resolved? Very good. Farewell then."

"Lucien!" her voice was full of entreaty, as she said the word.

He went to the door without looking back. She took a step toward him, but a shudder of horror which she well understood, passed over her and stopped her.

He opened the door and closed it without looking at her; she slid gently on the carpet, noiselessly, and wept there until morning. Sleep came not to restrain her sobs.

CHAPTER XIX.

As the fresh air touched his face, Lucien felt like a man who has just come out of a mine.

His temples pained as if they were bound with a band of steel, and his lungs were oppressed.

Mechanically he put his hand in his pocket and found there the little bunch of keys which he carried.

"It is curious," said he, bitterly. "I still have a home and I shall not be obliged to go to a hotel."

He went toward his studio; it was not late, and the janitor sat in a chair, before his door, taking the air.

"Good-evening, monsieur," said he, recognizing his tenant. "Have you just returned from the country? Madame came back this morning; I thought you would not be very far behind her."

"Madame?" asked Lucien, in a bewildered tone.

"Hey! Yes—the lady on the third floor," said the good man, winking. "She has come back. She is at home."

"All alone?" asked the young man as all his bad passions were aroused.

"Faith! With whom would she be?" replied the janitor, surprised at the question.

"Thank you," said Lucien.

He went slowly up-stairs, like a man who hardly knows what to decide; then, coming to the landing in front of Pauline's door, he made up his mind and rang the bell.

Pauline opened the door herself.

By the light from a gas jet which was burning in the hall she recognized Romanet.

"What! Is it you?" said she. "You look perfectly used up."

She let him in; he closed the door and looked at the young woman with more of an expression of curiosity than one of anxiety. She appeared surprised but not displeased.

"What are you doing here, at this hour?" she asked him, feeling that a display of dignity would be in place.

"I came to see you," said Lucien, seating himself in an armchair. "An old friend—you ought not to be surprised at that."

"After the way in which you treated me," cried Pauline, bursting into tears.

The explanation was satisfactory. The rage that Lucien felt against his family made him eloquent. He poured into Pauline's willing ears all his anger against the stupid ties which bound him, and the social conventionalities which surrounded him; he mentioned neither his wife nor his father, yet he railed with pitiless irony against all that makes a man a booby, and deprives him of all independence and dignity. In his fury he forgot that he had willingly assumed those ties that he found so difficult to break. Pauline looked at him with as much malice as pity.

"Your family have been reproaching you," thought she, "and you have sent the family flying. Not knowing what to do with yourself, you came to me; many thanks! Yet, after all, you are worth more than the other one, and since you are your mother's heir, you are not to be despised; all the more since that great fool of a Ralboise has left me in the lurch in a most unpleasant fashion."

In fact, that charming young man, who asked nothing better than to betray the man who called him his friend, and at whose house he dined three or four times a week, had no fancy for Pauline free and left upon his hands. Ralboise was one of those who would not for the world have a hunting-ground of their own, but who were enchanted when they could poach upon the reserves of others. Also, after the first show of a feeling too openly expressed not to have the appearance of sincerity, the amiable fellow was in a tremendous hurry to return to Paris, called there by a thousand imperative duties. So that the young woman, after having had two lovers, found herself without any at all, which brought her back to Paris in a more sad than gay state.

Pauline was not wicked, but, like all women without nobility of character, or who had never learnt in childhood to suppress their natural instincts, she violently resented all wounds given to her vanity, and then she could commit very bad deeds without any scruples. She was angry with Ralboise for having treated her so unceremoniously, and she hoped that an opportunity would present itself when she could punish him.

Lucien had returned to her. In a fit of dignity she might have sent him back to teach him that he could not play thus with the feelings of so sensitive a woman as she; but she ran a great risk of never seeing him again, while if she gave him a warm welcome, she would regain her supremacy, and could annihilate the impertinent Ralboise, who had so abruptly discarded her, with her contempt.

With marvelous promptitude she studied all the aspects of the question, and when Lucien had poured out his bad humor, she made him a little scene of reproach which was half real and half affected. She mentioned how quiet she had been under the farewell letter that he had written her; she showed him the bank-notes that he had sent her, they still were in their envelope. She swore that she loved only him, and that she had intended to send back the money the next day. In brief, she overwhelmed the poor boy with so many beautiful sentiments, and above all by

such tender compassion for his sadness, which his wife's obduracy had brought about, that Lucien felt himself appreciated.

He, whom spite alone had driven from his home, where his wife was at this moment weeping over his ruined life, his lost happiness, he persuaded himself that Pauline loved him truly, that he had wronged her, and that he owed her much more esteem and affection than he had supposed. He went to sleep feeling his vanity, consoled and was soothed, like a man who feels that at last justice has been done him, and he resolved never to allow himself again to be treated like a child.

He awoke in the same frame of mind; and the hour which followed his awakening confirmed him in his opinion that he had done right. Without speaking to Pauline of his intentions he said to himself that his present studio was no longer suited to his means, that he would rent another, more suitable one, where he could receive his friends and lovers of art. He made no allusion to his future projects; but the young woman understood that she had never had such a hold upon him before.

With the obstinacy of people who know in their hearts that they are wrong, but who would not acknowledge it for the world, Lucien said to himself that it was his duty to have an understanding about his position, instead of accepting a sort of ostracism, as he had done the first time. Deciding to take the initiative, he went off to Mantes in the morning in order not to let his wife, if the same idea should occur to her, have the benefit of the first impression on the minds of those whom he was going to brave.

He went first to Madame Orliet. He wanted to explain to her frankly, but he resolved not to admit for a moment that it was not Annie who was at fault.

His mother-in-law was not at home; he learned that he could find her at Master Romanet's, where she had undertaken the sad task of arranging all that had belonged to Lucien's mother. He would therefore meet both his judges at the same time.

Upon his entrance, he was welcomed with an effusive affection that was painful to him. If anything could complicate his position and embarrass him it was the evidences of love which those dear beings bestowed upon him; they were his best friends, to whom he knew that he was about to give the most cruel of all blows.

"Have you come from Paris? Have you seen Annie?" asked his father, after they had exchanged their first greetings.

"I have seen Annie," replied he in a tone which made Mme. Orliet, who was leaning over a drawer filled with receipts, raise her head.

"She is not ill?" asked Master Romanet, alarmed at the tone of his voice.

Mme. Orliet had not had the same fear: warned as she was by the sorrow which her daughter had not tried to conceal from her, her mind went directly to the truth, and she saw, by her son-in-law's eyes, that her worst premonitions were not erroneous.

"Annie has lost her head," said Lucien, who, being ill at ease,

exaggerated in his own favor. "I do not know what has come over her, but her exactions make it wholly impossible for us to live together. I have done what I could to make her take a right view of things; she does not wish to understand. Therefore I have come to tell you, that on account of her absolute refusal to accord me the only position that I can accept, I refuse to live under the same roof with her."

"Lucien, you are dreaming!" said master Romanet, in consternation.

Madame Orliet looked at the young man with her penetrating, intelligent eyes; she understood it all. She understood even the anger which had driven him to this resolution, but she felt powerless to conquer her daughter's sad determination. Were she in Annie's place, she would have acted just as her daughter did.

"I am not dreaming," Lucien answered, assuming great dignity. "You understand, father, that I cannot live in the house where my wife calmly proposes to consider me her friend, or where every other tie between us is broken."

"It is absurd," cried Master Romanet, loudly.

"Exactly," said Lucien, delighted with his success. "I told Annie so; I declared to her that I could not accept that intolerable and ridiculous situation. She will not yield; there was nothing left for me but to withdraw; I have done so, never to return."

"When have you had time to quarrel like that?" asked the notary, dismayed.

"Last evening I went home full of good feelings, decided to try to win back Annie's affection. I did not endeavor to extenuate my faults, and she told me that she forgave them. But what she calls forgiveness is only the absence of animosity against me; she alleges that her feeling of affection cannot go beyond a fraternal friendship. I leave you to judge, father, whether I should submit to such conditions."

"Evidently not," said Master Romanet, growing more embarrassed than ever.

Mme. Orliet, who had said nothing, now interrupted him.

"From your point of view, as a man," said she calmly, "evidently not; from the point of view of the young wife who finds herself deserted without having done anything to justify this outrage—this misfortune, you would perhaps, be less positive."

The perplexed notary looked at his old friend without answering. Lucien's eyes flashed with expressive anger; he saw an irrefutable antagonist before him, and in his present state of mind, he was capable of any cruelty.

"I have acknowledged my repentance," said he. "If my wife wished to remain angry with me, it would have been more frank on her part not to have pretended a forgiveness which in reality has no place in her heart."

"You know very well, Lucien, that she has sincerely forgiven you," affirmed Mme. Orliet in so serious a voice that Lucien dared not reply.

"Then," suggested Master Romanet, "this is perhaps only ex-

aggerated pride on the part of the young woman which time will soften."

Annie's mother knew in her heart that this could never be, that such wounds never heal; but she had not the right to take her daughter's future upon herself, and she remained silent.

"It does not suit me," said Lucien, "to wait my wife's good pleasure. I gave her her choice last evening between my return to the conjugal fireside, where I intended to be received as a husband and not to be merely tolerated, or to lead the independent life that she seems to prefer. She did not call me back; so, from this day, I am free, and free by Annie's own will. That is what I wished and what is well understood between us."

Master Romanet did not wish to admit this. The interview was long and painful, for the three individuals were convinced that they were right in the distinct positions they assumed. Lucien had skillfully surrounded himself by an impregnable wall; all the wrongs fell upon fair Annie, whose mother alone defended her.

"You were wrong to leave her," said M. Romanet to his son. "Everything could have been arranged in time; but you wished to return as a master."

"You would have done the same in my place," replied Lucien, who understood his father's domineering spirit.

Finally, finding that they were talking to no purpose, they remained silent.

"I will go to Paris, and live with my daughter," said Mme. Orliet, breaking a painful silence. "She cannot live alone with her child; and, another thing, I cannot have her here with me, for that would look as if she had been repudiated by her husband. She shall live at the house that you have rented, Lucien, and it is there that I hope you will one day return, a better judge of the delicacy of feelings which I regret that you do not understand now."

She turned away her head that her son-in-law should not see the tears which filled her eyes. The latter bowed gravely, but said nothing. At that moment he would have allowed himself to be killed rather than cross the threshold of that abhorred house.

"But," cried Master Romanet, in real despair, "a marriage cannot be broken off like that!"

"This time, father," replied the young man, "it is not my fault."

The discussion was prolonged for a long time without any result, and Mme. Orliet put an end to it all by declaring that she would go to Paris that very day to join her daughter. The notary then agreed with her, trying to convince her that she should attempt to make Annie change her mind.

"No," replied she, "my daughter has acted according to her conscience. I shall not interfere in this controversy, which, it seems to me, is wholly between husband and wife."

She went away, after warmly pressing the old man's hand, and bowing to Lucien with a gesture which mutely expressed her sorrow, perhaps her reproaches.

"What are you going to do?" asked Master Romanet of his son when they were alone.

"Live as I please," responded the latter.

"You are not going to return to that life in which you made so brilliant a debut?" asked the notary sharply.

"Be calm, father," replied the young man, "I know how to gratify my tastes in a manner that will not give rise to any calumny."

"Do you believe that?" growled Master Romanet. "Do you imagine that you can lead an improper life and be forgiven by those whom you know? My son, your last actions will be commented upon, repeated, and carried from one to another; what would appear innocent in another, in you will become criminal and ridiculous. All those who led you into follies will be the first to cruelly blame you, and your wife, your poor innocent wife, will be more badly treated than yourself."

"I cannot help it," said Lucien coldly. "She would have it so."

He was silent as to his projects, only saying that he should return to his studio, and that he should remain there until he found another. His mother's fortune, which he had inherited, provided him with sufficient money to make him independent of any one. His father, then, could no longer threaten him with his anger; the young man had no fears on this score.

Softened by the sorrow which he had just experienced, the notary felt need of affection, which lack made him more indulgent than he had been in the past.

"You will come to see me at least?" asked Master Romanet when his soon took leave of him.

If he had dared he would have begged Lucien to remain to dinner. His solitude seemed insupportable; but he felt that propriety demanded an appearance of coldness. He was furiously angry with his daughter-in-law, whom he thought silly and childish, incapable of understanding the feelings that she experienced, and still more incapable of being influenced by what upset her; he thought that it was all a comedy and that were he in his son's place he would have brought her to reason.

Lucien preferred to withdraw and put himself upon his dignity. How absurd, how wrong was this attitude! As if holding himself aloof on his dignity meant anything in the realities of life. As if it did not always end in yielding to the material requirements which moral situations create!

"At last," said the notary to himself, "some time or other they will understand each other; those squabbles cannot last forever!"

Yet his memory, with a sort of malice, suddenly recalled to him an old professional case upon which he had spent much labor. A young couple had been separated, on account of a *trifle*, like the present case. Both of the married couple were obstinate, and had said: "Never, no—never could their rupture be healed."

The two friends took it up, all means were tried, for they were only children. It was labor lost! Everything was in vain.

Master Romanet said that he would keep his eye on his son. It was an excellent resolution, but to have an eye on a man of his age, and his independent situation was not easy. He discovered it when he attempted it.

CHAPTER XX.

LUCIEN moved to a house nearer the center of the city, and, as might have been predicted, Pauline was installed with him.

That came about by degrees. The young artist had promised himself, when he was getting settled, that his apartments should be respected, so that his friends could go to see him there; that he would put all the appearance of wrong upon his wife, and that everybody would be forced to see that he was right.

These were excellent intentions; but to put them in practice was not so easy.

Accustomed all his life to a well-regulated house, presided over by an intelligent woman, Lucien was not satisfied with the services of his housekeeper. He tried to get along with a maid-servant; the latter, vexed at not having a kitchen, and consequently being deprived of what she considered her due perquisites, left him without warning. The young man became accustomed to take his meals with Pauline; a few rainy days made him feel the inconvenience of that double life. In short, one morning, she arrived with her maid and said to him: "We have come to make your breakfast."

Lucien was very grateful, and very soon after the two women were settled at his house.

Then Jalbrun was angry.

Since the events that had led his friend astray so unhappily he had been very distant toward him. He had not been told the true motives that had separated Annie and her husband when he believed that everything had been satisfactorily arranged; but he instinctively guessed the cause.

Lucien no longer spoke of his wife, except in a tone of concentrated bitterness that betrayed much spite. Annie, whom Jalbrun occasionally saw, for Mme. Orliet took care not to break the tie which attached them to the object of their constant thoughts—Annie never spoke of her husband; but melancholy settled on her charming face, and her erst supple form became languid.

All this indicated a secret sorrow, which appeared light because it was not perceptible to others, but which in reality undermined her life and happiness.

As long as Lucien maintained appearances of propriety Jalbrun did not know how to judge him.

Without believing him above reproach, he might have thought that the young wife was perhaps too severe under the circumstances; but when Pauline was installed as mistress of the house, when Lucien himself announced it to his friends, and endeavored to conceal his embarrassment under an invitation to dinners, the musician gave himself the long-wished-for satisfaction of telling the young painter some disagreeable truths.

During the period of sorrow and poverty through which Lucien had just passed Jalbrun had conscientiously refrained from any severe language; but when the young painter's circumstances were so greatly changed the motives for silence no longer existed, and Lucien was soon made aware of it.

"You can have no home with such a woman," continued Jalbrun, after a long harangue, in which he had vented all his ill-humor; "you cannot voluntarily put yourself beyond the law; you cannot obstruct the routes which you wish to travel; you should not burden yourself with absurd ties, unless you are a fool, and you are not; an honest man does not expose himself to everybody's contempt."

"I will not permit it," cried Lucien, who had listened to the sermon with a weary air, but without daring to rebel.

"What will you do? Will you fight? For a Pauline!"

"Assuredly."

"That will be beautiful!" growled Jalbrun, shrugging his shoulders. "Do as you please, but do not invite me to dinner."

Lucien found less scrupulous companions.

Having a very natural feeling to see himself surrounded by somebody, he invited all his so-called friends, who were situated like himself. He preferred to live with Bohemians rather than live alone; the more he felt that he had fallen from his former social position, the more he felt a feverish desire to be admired or esteemed, even by his inferiors.

When autumn advanced, and Paris began to put on its winter garb, slights were multiplied for Lucien. Society ladies were the first to show him their disdain. They did not forgive that handsome and amiable fellow for deserting respectable society.

Those, perhaps, who would not have scrupled to destroy Annie's happiness by drawing her husband into an unworthy connection, could not find words strong enough to express their disgust for the little trip that the young man had taken into the "*land of gallantry.*"

During the first days of the winter season, when the cold weather brought back to the public promenade a number of newly-married ladies, Lucien suffered the mortification to find his bows and salutations unheeded, and sometimes responded to with a stare of very marked coldness. Soon the superior class of husbands began to allow themselves to be influenced by the advice of their better halves.

A wiser man, one with a better understanding of the ways of the world, would have cared little about these greetings. He would have said to himself, that after some weeks, some days, perhaps, this semblance of disgrace would quickly disappear: that a man was never thrown overboard for such a peccadillo, and that after all, never having forfeited his honor, he must feel himself above these small slights.

But the situation in which Lucien Romanet found himself was new to him. His austere education and his family life had made him more severe than the majority of men, more severe toward others as well as toward himself. He gave himself a

reason for it in all his meditations, at the same time that he bitterly condemned his conduct. He made Annie responsible for everything, voluntarily forgetting that the first unjustifiable wrongs had been committed by himself.

As time went on, the young man's position became better known, and as others became curious about him, he grew excessively sensitive and punctilious. He ceased to bow to a number of old friends, whose salutations did not appear sufficiently cordial to his perverted mode of thinking.

He was surprised not to receive annual invitations, which had never failed to come from a certain number of former friends; they were not sent because they would not impose upon Annie, whom all agreed to proclaim irreproachable, the gratuitous cruelty of the fear of meeting her husband; therefore the hosts had no other resource than to eliminate the husband in order to receive Annie.

"That is the way they treat me!" he said to himself one day; "they put me beyond the bans. It is their way of provoking me, and I shall return it; I will hold up my head to those who blame me, and we will see who will be the first to draw back!"

From this moment, he took a wicked pleasure in going out with Pauline; far from avoiding places where he would meet his acquaintances, he seemed to seek them: they saw him pass with his head erect, a haughty air, ready to resent the slightest mark of contempt. Most of them thought this conduct absurd; and as he assumed a marked swagger, he did not elevate himself in public opinion.

Annie suffered beyond all expression. That proud and sensitive soul felt her grief increase with each of her husband's follies. Notwithstanding their last sad interview, she still loved Lucien, and the more she suffered for that useless, repulsed love, the more she felt how impossible it was for her to alter her decision.

Many times she felt inclined to run to the dear, guilty one, and say to him: "You know that I love only you; while we are separated from each other we shall always suffer; return, resume your place at the fireside where your child is growing up without knowing your face, or the sound of your voice!"

But the thought that her husband's arms would surround her, that her husband's lips would touch hers, always inspired her with the same inevitable horror; it seemed to the unhappy wife more than ever that her modesty, her virtue would veil their faces and forsake her, if she opened her arms to her unfaithful husband.

Mme. Orliet understood that timid soul's secret sorrow. With the wisdom of age, with the experience of a woman who, going through life stainless herself, had seen much and reflected well, she tried to conquer her daughter's irrepressible repugnance.

"Life," she said to her, "as you have believed, is not a chain of work and joys more or less equally divided; it is a series of sacrifices, and often very sad ones. That to which you have succumbed is your legitimate pride; it was a cruel blow. You

had not the courage to endure it. Alas! my daughter, such is life. Many other trials are still in reserve for you."

"However cruel they may be;" interrupted the young wife, "they will not lessen my dignity as a true and chaste wife."

Mme. Orliet would answer nothing to that; in fact, of all the sorrows that a truly pure wife can experience, the most cruel are those inflicted by the man whom she has loved, but whom she has learned to love less ardently. But it is a sorrow that she has to endure in silence, else she robs it of its purity. Annie had recoiled from this last sacrifice. She would gladly have died for her husband's happiness, yet she could not live with him.

Though very much petted by her friends, and protected on all sides by the presence of her mother, Annie made only visits that were unavoidable.

The thought of seeing curious persons staring at her, of having to reply to apparently innocent questions, yet prompted by inquisitiveness, made her timid, and she suffered from the depths of her soul.

Yet she went out every day, generally, accompanied by her mother. She did not receive gentlemen's visits. The mourning that Annie wore for her mother-in-law explained the seclusion behind which she intrenched herself to avoid the curious. Master Romanet came once a week to see his granddaughter, whom he loved to adoration. The conversation was not lively between these three, who were rendered so very unhappy by the faults of another, and without the presence of the child, whose pretty babbling brought joy and the freshness of youth to the sad fireside, they would have spent most of their time in silent tears.

The day after the catastrophe, Annie had said, thinking of the guilty father:

"I will send the child to him."

But this dream of the unhappy mother, this hope to reunite the two families through the innocent hands of her little daughter, had been rudely broken by the installation of Pauline in Lucien's house. Annie shuddered at the very thought of exposing Louisette to the gaze of that woman who had taken her place at her husband's fireside.

Many tears had flowed from the young wife's eyes when Jalbrun had said to her, shaking his head:

"No, dear madame, do not send your daughter; that is impossible now."

That was enough to let her know the change that had closed the door of the father's house to his child. At this new sorrow Annie was overcome; but she concealed her anguish in her broken heart.

Mantes, the island, the Romanet orchard, the wedding morning—all were in the far-distant past; they were no longer in the gilded mist of a happy past; the tender vision now floated on the surface of a dark stream, which carried them into stormy waves, like the pale ghosts of the drowned which sink to the bottom of the waters, dead and lamented forever.

She was a widow—worse than a widow! Widows weep, and everybody condoles with their grief; they have the right to wear mourning; curiosity does not trouble itself with their destiny; it would seem that the sad end of their marriage is understood by society, which leaves them comparatively alone. But Annie always felt that malevolent looks were fixed upon her; she questioned the slightest expression of her face; her persistent sadness would one day be called hypocrisy, and even her resignation, if she should ever appear calm, would be considered as the gayety of a woman who has retorted in kind.

Annie knew all that; but worldly thoughts had no effect upon her, in the face of her ruined happiness; she would have wished for death, but for her daughter. The sense of her duty sustained her; she lived, but her life was as secluded as possible.

One day in December she went out, with her child in its nurse's arms, to a large shop filled with toys, where she had made some purchases. The little one laughed and prattled to a little lamb, made of white wool, which she held in fond embrace to her rosy face.

Annie looked at her, smiling in her joy the sad smile that had become her ordinary expression, when with an instinctive movement she turned her head and looked before her.

In the midst of this crowd of people, whose movements had suddenly stopped the circulation, under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, leaning against a pillar to maintain his position, Lucien saw her and his child.

Annie trembled from head to foot and remained motionless, only moved from her place by the crowd which jostled her.

The look which he gave the child Annie had not seen since—oh, such a long time since—standing before the cradle when the child was first born! She well understood that long look of tenderness! Only formerly he smiled, and now he was filled with unspeakable regrets.

That was her husband; she bore his name; he had her heart; he was her whole life. She wept for him every day, every night, every hour. What would be sweeter or easier than to go to him with her child in her arms and say to him: "Come home."

She had suffered so much. She loved him so much that at this moment everything seemed easy to her at the sight of her husband. The feelings that she had struggled against for months were scattered, annihilated. Nothing was changed in her but her fictitious strength. She knew that she would suffer, that the inevitable shudder would seize her again, that her unconquerable horror could not be overcome; but she was ready to endure all these torments for the joy of seeing him again at his empty, deserted fireside. He was her friend, her husband, her Lucien, her childhood's companion, the betrothed of her youth, the father of her daughter, the being in whom she had concentrated all her joys, her thoughts, her grief and her hopes.

Not knowing that she saw him, Lucien turned his eyes toward her and trembled. How much she read in those eyes that she loved! There was still a little wounded pride, but mingled with it there was so much tenderness that she grasped the nurse by

the arm and made a step to break through the crowd and go to him.

At the same moment Pauline came out of a shop, and rapidly going up to the young man said something to him, then entered the carriage which awaited them. Lucien looked at his wife ready to go to her; at that moment he would have renounced everything for her.

But Annie had just received a new blow to her eternally renewed wound; at the sight of Pauline her eyes fell and she stopped. Lucien turned his head, entered the carriage whereto Pauline impatiently called him, and Annie returned silently to her lonely home.

In the evening a great basket filled with playthings arrived for Louisette. While the child uttered cries of joy at each new surprise, Mme. Orliet and Annie avoided looking at each other. Warm tears fell on their hands as they took the toys from the basket, and as they simultaneously raised their heads they endeavored to conceal those tears from each other.

"Who sent this to Louisette?" said Annie, as a sob trembled in her voice.

"Mamma," said the little girl, delightedly throwing a kiss with her little dimpled hand.

"No, papa sent it," said the young wife. "Send a kiss to papa."

The child looked wonderingly around her, and not knowing to whom to address her thanks she threw a handful of kisses to the basket which had contained so many beautiful things. Annie fled into her room to weep alone.

That same night, Jalbrun, who had been to the first representation of a new opera, returned home humming the airs that he had just heard, and which he found very easy to remember, when he was very much surprised to find the door of his domicile open.

"It is I," said Lucien, lighting his way with a candle which he held in his hand. "I made the janitor give me the key, and I have been waiting for you for an hour. I must speak to you this evening."

Jalbrun, who was always calm, took care to shut the door and to go into his sleeping-room before questioning his friend, who followed him.

"Has anything happened to your family?" he then asked.

"No, nothing."

Romanet seated himself upon a chair and looked his friend straight in the eye, like a man determined to go to the foundation of things. Jalbrun became very serious, and mechanically tapped on the table between them the march in the opera that he had just heard. Then he suddenly stopped and said abruptly:

"You have some bad affair on your hands?"

Lucien nodded affirmatively.

"A quarrel?"

The young painter repeated the same gesture.

"It is necessary to arrange it?"

"No," replied Lucien, curtly, "I will fight."

Jalbrun said nothing, and began again to hum his march.

"Whom?" asked he after a moment.

"Ralboise."

The musician arose so suddenly that the candlestick nearly overturned.

"That imbecile! but, my dear fellow, you must not fight a fool, if you have any courage, and—the deuce—you are no longer a child!"

"I am going to fight," said Lucien, in a calm tone, "Ralboise or somebody; I said to myself that I would fight with the first person who looked disparagingly at me. It happened to be Ralboise, so much the worse for him."

Jalbrun sat down again. The day that he had gone to take Lucien to his mother, leaving Ralboise master of the situation with Pauline, flashed through his mind; he believed that it would be possible to compromise the affair.

"What motive have you for fighting?" asked he, feeling that it would be difficult to arrange a quarrel that he knew nothing about.

"It is very simple," commenced Lucien.

Under the scrutinizing eye of his friend he found that it was not so simple as he had at first believed; certain things were not so easy to tell this great, positive fellow, who could easily distinguish truth from falsehood. He at once launched out with his story.

"I went to the Folies-Begere," said he, "and I had Pauline with me."

"Mistake number one," said Jalbrun. "You should not go out with Pauline. Go on."

"Well," said Lucien, nervously, "right or wrong, I had Pauline there. For an hour everything went well; then Ralboise came within a few steps from us. Pauline says that she bowed to him and that he did not return her salutation."

"There was no great harm in that," observed Jalbrun, philosophically. "If Pauline should bow to all the men whom she knows, she would find that not all of them would return her greeting."

"Then she told me of it, and it annoyed me, you understand; I had a woman on my arm; I wished to have her respected——"

"A profound error in this case," replied Jalbrun; "but that is nothing new; go on again."

"Well, after a few minutes I found that Ralboise was talking about me to some of his friends with him; people whom I did not know; he was ridiculing me, that was evident, and Pauline, too, that was equally evident; at last I felt my blood boil. Pauline, who noticed this, said to me: 'Let us go;' then that imbecile looked me full in the face and laughed. I have had enough of it; of people treating me coolly, of men laughing at me, of men meddling with my affairs in that style," continued Lucien vehemently. "I wish to do as I please without comments from anybody."

"You will find that difficult," thought Jalbrun; but he said

nothing, not wishing to exasperate his friend, who was already over-irritated.

"I went straight to Ralboise, and I asked him why he laughed. He told me that it was none of my business; some words passed between us, and at last I threw my card in his face."

"All this, because Pauline was vexed because he did not bow to her," said Jalbrun. "Your time is well spent, and you have decided what will follow?"

"Absolutely."

"Do you know that it is not worth while?"

"I know it is worth while," replied Romanet, very much irritated. "If you do not wish to aid me, you need only to say so."

Jalbrun vainly tried to reason with his irascible friend; Lucien was aggravated to that degree that remonstrances were useless. He had evidently taken it into his head that he would fight, and he could not be dissuaded.

"After all," thought the musician, "perhaps it would be best; in some way or other his senses will return to him afterward, while now it would be lost time to talk to him; and besides, Lucien is a good swordsman; the other one does not amount to much, and if there is, as they say, really a special Providence for children, He will take my young friend under His particular protection."

"Can you keep me here?" asked Lucien, after they had made arrangements for the next day. "I have not the slightest wish to go back to my own house, and I have no particular wish to go to a hotel."

"Take my bed," said Jalbrun. "I am accustomed to sleeping on my sofa, and let us go to sleep at once, for it is very late, and we shall have enough to do to-morrow morning."

Neither of them slept much; unpleasant thoughts crowded and whirled about their brains and kept them awake. They were up at daybreak ready for the day's disagreeable work.

"If you would follow my advice," said Jalbrun to his friend, "you would go to see your father; that will please the good man, and at the same time you will not be here to be annoyed by my goings and comings. I suppose you have sense enough not to allow Master Romanet to find out that you have a duel upon your hands?"

"Rest assured," said Romanet, "he will never suspect it."

"Ah, well, let us go out at once. I will take you to the Saint Lazare Station, and we will take a cup of chocolate while waiting for the train."

They went out immediately. Jalbrun had hurried his friend out of doors thus for reasons which were justified by events, for less than an hour after, when he entered his apartments, he found Pauline awaiting him in the janitor's room.

"Where is Lucien?" she asked him in a tragic tone.

"In the country," he replied, calmly. "If you wish to talk with me, let us go to your house; this is not the proper place for private conversation"

This coolness acted as a shower-bath might. The young woman followed him quietly. When they arrived at Lucien's

studio, the musician seated himself upon the sofa and signed to Pauline to take an easy-chair.

"You wished to play your little tragedy," said he, "and until now you have succeeded very well; but have you never thought that Lucien would get tired of all that, tell me? It bothers you because that beauty of a Ralboise jilted you. You wish to revenge yourself, and as a women cannot obtain the small pleasure of vengeance unaided, you use my friend to draw your chestnuts out of the fire! Very well planned! but you have not reflected upon the consequences."

Pauline listened to him impatiently.

"Where is Lucien?" she asked, a second time.

"I told you that he is in the country," said Jalbrun, very calmly.

"Will he return here this evening?"

"No."

"When?"

"I know absolutely nothing about it," replied the artist in the same calm tone, "and very probably he knows no more about it than I do. These things are never settled until the last minute."

"Is he going to fight?" cried Pauline, with a grand, tragic gesture.

"Do not pretend to be astonished! Have you not been trying to drive him to it with all your might? It would amuse you very much to have a man like Romanet get a hole in his body for a woman like you. That is what you set out to do! But, be assured, we shall do our best to keep him from fighting. It is all the same to you, that a courageous man may be killed, or crippled for life; after him you would find another; but we, who love him, we are here to repair your work, and we shall do our best to do it. Keep yourself calm, and above all I advise you not to create any further scandal."

"But I love him!" cried Pauline, who began to weep in thorough earnest.

"You love him, and you deceived him with Ralboise."

"But he had abandoned me!'

"You knew nothing about it!"

"At least," said she, in the midst of her tears, "let me know what has become of him, do not leave me without any news of him."

Jalbrun was moved.

"Very well!" said he, "you shall hear of him to-morrow."

Without adding another word, he ran rapidly down-stairs, and went to rejoin one of his friends who was also one of Lucien's, and of whom he knew he could ask the favor of being a second in this affair.

Ralboise was wholly dazed by this adventure. Accustomed to go through his life without annoying others, sure of pleasing the ladies because he was handsome, and treated as a comrade by many men because he was nobody, he never imagined for a moment that anybody could find anything to condemn in his conduct.

The evening before he had ridiculed Pauline much more than

Lucien, though the latter came in for his share. He had turned up his nose at the assault of the young painter, as any one else would have done in his place: but he was greatly surprised to receive his adversary's card, for, to his mind, the quarrel was so slight a one that it could have been easily arranged in words.

When he found himself face to face with a challenge, Ralboise felt a little sheepish at first and then very proud of it. A challenge! That was an advance in life; he believed perfectly that this would be a duel without consequences, the seconds being there on purpose to prevent everything which would not be absolutely indispensable to honor—or, it were better to say, to appearances.

Lucien had decided otherwise. Unnerved by the many petty slights to which he had been subjected since autumn, he did not mean to have his duel cause any ridicule, and he had charged Jalbrun to demand either ample apologies or a serious reparation.

When Ralboise found what they demanded of him, his vanity was touched, and he became more exacting even than Lucien. He was not a very intelligent man, but he was not a coward, and he proved it.

"M. Romanet assaulted me without any real motive," said he, "and I expect that he will give me satisfaction."

The two adversaries being both greatly exasperated, it was necessary to arrange the preliminaries for a meeting. Ralboise chose the sword, because he was not a skillful shot. "The wounds from a sword," thought he, "are seldom mortal, while a pistol-shot will break your head before you will have time to see it come.' He was willing, for the honor of this duel, to run the risk of being wounded and spending six months in bed; but he had not the least desire to be killed on the spot—and really, it cannot be said that he was wrong.

The meeting was fixed for seven o'clock the next morning, in an avenue of the Park Saint Cloud, a deserted spot at this season of the year, especially so early in the morning; and Jalbrun returned home as contented as a man could be who had unwillingly accomplished a task that was as foolish as it was disagreeable.

Lucien had not remained with his father all this time. The latter was delighted to see him, ordered the best breakfast that could be served at such short notice, and they seated themselves opposite each other in the large dining-room, under the old clock, which sang with the same tick-tick to the sad as well as the happy hours that passed there.

During the repast, which the notary tried to make as cheerful as possible, so that his son might be pleased with his welcome and would wish to come again, Lucien recalled the memories of his childhood and his youth.

He seemed to see himself a child again, seated in his high chair near his mother, she at that time young and pretty, and always—oh, yes! always so good! She always spoke to him gently, even when he was in one of his most violent fits of temper.

She concealed his faults from his father, whose frowns made the domestic Olympus tremble. The too indulgent mother, with her inexhaustible treasure of sympathetic goodness, often concealed what she should have revealed—but she was so afraid of the master!

Lucien also recalled himself later on, when he was a youth wearing a large white turned-down collar over a velvet vest. He was tall and slim, idle about learning his lessons, but fond of taking long walks on the island and in the vicinity; this was the period in which he too well remembered his father's thundering voice.

Many times he had been sent away from the family table, and been condemned to long punishments. Often, after every one had left the table, Mme. Romanet had surreptitiously taken some dessert, which the father had forbidden, to her condemned son. Poor, good mother, perhaps it would have been better for the adored child, if he had been strictly submitted to the paternal discipline.

Between maternal indulgence, and the notary's severity, Lucien had made a line of conduct for himself, which leaned more toward indulgence than to severity. The great respect which he had for his father forbade him to show that he thought him in the wrong; but his mother's approval appeared to him the ideal, the end to strive for—paradise.

He saw things differently now, and found those extremes, between which his childhood had been tossed, equally dangerous.

One vision, above all others, arose before him while he listened to his father, who was talking about other things. He had been punished one Christmas-eve, and his obstinacy had prolonged the punishment beyond its usual limits. Annie had come—she was quite small then—with her darling face surrounded by golden hair, upon which the lamp-light threw fantastic shadows, and seeing him in disgrace, he whom she loved most after her mother, she had wept so much that her innocent tears softened the equally obstinate hearts of the father and of the son. At the same moment that Lucien, conquered, hurried toward his father, the notary, much affected, said to him: "I forgive you!"

They wept much around the table that Christmas-eve; but they were easy and happy tears of relief, whose memory left nothing painful in those pure and indulgent souls.

In a few days would come the anniversary of that evening, but they would come to the ruins of that old happiness.

Later, it was still Annie—always Annie!

Lucien was impatient. She was woven in all the acts of his life—could he not forget her a moment? And while his father, deceived by his gesture of impatience, ordered more wood put upon the fire, thinking that he was cold, the young man thought of the next morning, when the chill fog of a December day falling on his naked shoulders, would make him shudder more painfully than he would dare to express, for fear that he would be adjudged a coward.

Until now this duel had appeared to him something desirable and necessary—a sort of formality that must be accomplished in order to settle his accounts with society, which he believed had slighted him. Suddenly he saw it in its true light. A duel for a questionable cause, originating in a place of doubtful respectability, with a worthless adversary, where he risked his life—for what? He no longer knew now that he had persuaded himself that things could not terminate otherwise.

And if he should be killed, what would become of Annie?

No; he would not think of Annie. All at once he thought of his daughter. Poor darling! How pretty she was in her white furs—dainty swansdown floating between heaven and earth in the arms of her nurse. She had attracted his gaze, as an artist, by her extreme elegance, and he had recognized her only after he saw Annie.

Breakfast was over; his father handed him his cigar-box; he dived into the box, and then plunged into a grand discussion upon art. Master Romanet listened with the involuntary admiration that we always feel for any one who talks eloquently upon a subject about which we know absolutely nothing. After an hour, Lucien arose.

"Are you going back to Paris so soon?" asked the father, rather sorrowfully. "You have plenty of time; there is no train for an hour yet."

"I wish to take a walk around the island," said Lucien. "I wish to refresh my memory for a landscape."

He embraced his father! When he crossed the threshold the notary, hesitating, stopped him.

"Is it long since you have seen your wife?" asked he in a low, almost timid voice.

"Yesterday," answered Lucien curtly. "I met her with the little one."

"Did you speak to her?"

"No! I sent them some toys last night."

Master Romanet's face brightened and he warmly pressed his son's hand; the latter felt a sudden and ardent desire to press his father to his heart.

What if he should never seen him again! He dared not; he was strongly affected, and he was afraid that if he should yield, he would be no longer master of himself. He descended the two steps of the veranda, and turned around to see once more the face that he venerated—the door was closed.

Lucien went to the island, which seemed this cold December day a mass of dark fog mingled with the river. The crows flew in flocks above the cathedral, casting heavy and ungraceful shadows on the opaque sky. While he was walking the music of the last words that he said to his father sounded in his ears like a monotonous chant: "I sent them some toys last night."

His imagination presented to him the scene just as it had really taken place; the little one's delight on seeing so many beautiful unexpected things coming out of the basket, her joyful cries, her laughter which showed her rows of pearly white teeth. Doubtlessly she had selected some toy that pleased her and taken

it with her to her little white bed and slept with it against her pretty cheek.

He saw again his daughter sleeping, all rosy and very serious, for when she slept her expression was very grave, and he suddenly recollected that at that very hour he was quarreling with Ralboise.

What a contrast between the two sad women, mother and grandmother, seated near a cradle, and the manner in which he had spent his evening!

All that was good in him made him despise himself. The truth, suppressed for a long time under much sophistry, now arose before him and blinded him.

What! He had not had the patience to wait till his wife could learn to respect him again! He had never had the idea to try to conquer this too delicate and tender heart! Returning home, he wished to enter there as the master, with a flourish of trumpets announcing his grand victory; not once had he thought to say to himself that wounds such as he had inflicted needed time in which to heal.

No! he was willing to confess that he had done wrong; but he did not wish that he should be made to feel it; he, alone, should be the judge as to the limits of his repentance, and he expected that this repentance would be welcomed with open arms, like the repentance of a king, not that of a criminal.

Lucien walked under the tall trees on the island, and the arch of the interlaced branches formed an immense roof above him, like the nave of a church; at the end of the avenue the fog, which bordered the horizon, resembled a wall of cotton batting.

All his past life came up before him full of small and great faults, in which he had indulged himself, and it was with indescribable bitterness that he thought of the next morning, the only future upon which he could build any plan.

"If I should be killed," said he, "it will be only what I well deserve. Annie will soon find a husband more worthy of her than I, and that will not be difficult!"

But even while thinking thus, he felt that Annie would never be consoled, and that she would never take off her mourning for her unworthy husband.

As he approached the end of the avenue, a ray of sunshine suddenly glittered through the fog, to which it gave a golden transparency; the fog lifted, the water appeared green and calm, flowing smoothly, and the icy country wore a peaceful air. Lucien's soul was melted, and his bitterness changed to a feeling that was more tender than sad.

"Whatever may happen," said he, "I am resigned to it. But if I come out alive from this trial which I have so foolishly brought upon myself, Annie must forgive me, and this time I will deserve it."

He returned hastily to the town, ordered a superb bouquet to be placed upon his mother's tomb, which he dared not visit for fear of too much agitation, and then went toward the station.

He arrived there at the same time as the train; he hurried into one of the carriages and returned to Paris.

Early the next morning, Jalbrun, who had not closed his eyes, went to the bed which his friend occupied and was surprised to find him sleeping so soundly. Romanet's handsome face wore a peaceful expression that he had not seen there for a long time.

All trace of care, of anxiety, and of discontent had disappeared from those expressive lines, as well as the premature folds and wrinkles which his bad passions had traced there.

"It is a pity to awaken him," thought Jalbrun; "he sleeps so comfortably!"

But time was passing. He lightly touched the sleeper's hand which was extended over the covers, and the latter immediately opened his eyes.

"I was dreaming that I was at Arcachon," said he, with a smile; then, awakening to reality: "Five o'clock?" said he, "let us hurry."

His second was walking up and down the street before the door, trying to keep himself warm. They entered a carriage which they found by the light of its lanterns through the intense fog, and drove rapidly to the rear of the park of Saint Cloud.

The fog lifted for a moment only to fall again, cold, and, one might say, massive; it was so heavy and so icy.

"You can never fight in such weather," said the second. "You might unintentionally put out each other's eyes!"

Lucien suppressed an impatient gesture. Whatever the danger, he was going to fight that day; he was very resolute.

At last they arrived in an open space, a large lawn, enlivened in summer by handsome toilets and elegant umbrellas, but at this hour it was as deserted as a peak of the Andes. The rumbling of another carriage, while they were alighting, warned them that they had not long to wait.

Day was dawning, as much as it could dawn in such weather. The adversaries tried in vain not to look at each other, but their eyes involuntarily met. Ralboise asked himself what imperious motive had led them to this icy enclosure, and answered himself that the necessity of giving or receiving a sword thrust was by no means so evident to him as it was the preceding evening.

Yet, when, upon Jalbrun's proposition, an offer of reconciliation was tendered, the beautiful fellow answered by a very firm "No!" as also did Lucien. The latter had at least the advantage of having provoked the quarrel and knew why he fought: and yet, if he had the same thing to do over again, he would not have been there at that moment.

No one but Lucien thought that the encounter would lead to serious consequences: Ralboise bargained for a slight scratch, and the seconds had decided upon the indispensable minimum of a play at duelling.

Some minutes passed before they could begin; a heavy fog was settled on the enclosure, and although the actors of this little drama could see each other distinctly, they were not inclined to subject themselves to any more serious damage than could be avoided,

At last the fog cleared away a little, leaving a clear space of fifty yards or more, and the signal was given.

It was evident that Ralboise was awkward. Lucien, who visibly spared him, because of pity for his inexperience, was not under as great self-control as he wished to be before the hazardous movements against which he had to defend himself. They parried blows for some minutes, when a perfidious almost black cloud arose and enveloped them in a second. The seconds approached to separate them; but at the same moment Ralboise said feebly: "Struck!"

He was slightly wounded in his right arm, for a thin stream of blood flowed from his wound into the palm of his hand.

Jalbrun, anxious, he knew not why, ran to Lucien, who had said nothing since he took his arm, in the dense fog. He heard his friend say to him, in a voice which seemed that of a dying man:

"Do not touch me——"

The fog surrounded them, while, full of horrible fears, Jalbrun was dazed; he saw a bloody hole in his friend's chest, who smiled at him with infinite sweetness.

"Seriously?" demanded Jalbrun of the surgeon who accompanied them.

"We will see when we get him home," evasively replied the latter.

"Is it possible that I should have wounded him to that extent?" cried Ralboise, sorrowfully. "I did not do it intentionally, I assure you."

Lucien, who visibly lost strength, could not help laughing at the frank declaration, and a stream of blood poured out of his wound; he lost consciousness and was promptly taken to the carriage, where the surgeon bandaged him temporarily, aided by Jalbrun, whose hands were as skillful as those of a woman.

"Where do you wish to go?" asked the coachman, bending towards the carriage door.

"Boulevard Malesherbes," replied the musician.

The second opened his eyes wide.

"But he does not live with his wife?"

"All the more reason," replied Jalbrun, laconically.

The return was long and painful. Lucien returned to consciousness, but his pallor proved that he had been wounded seriously, though he tried to smile to his friends.

About ten o'clock the carriage stopped before the door of the little mansion in which so many happy days had been spent. Jalbrun alighted and rang the bell. He did not know how the news that he brought would be received, and yet, for a kingdom, he would not have taken his friend elsewhere.

Having sent in his name he was conducted to Mme. Orliet, who could not understand this early visit; but time pressed—he did not stop for warnings; besides, he knew that with Annie's mother he could go straight to the point.

"Your son-in-law has had a hand in an unfortunate affair," said he, "and he has had to submit to the consequences."

"Is he going to fight?" asked Mme. Orliet,

"He has fought," replied the musician.

"Wounded?—dangerously?"

"Wounded, but not mortally."

Annie entered at this word, and stood still, as white as death; she had heard Jalbrun's last word, and had guessed the rest.

"Lucien?" said she. "Where is he?"

"At your door."

The young wife ran toward the vestibule. Jalbrun joined her and stopped her.

"Spare him the agitation of your presence," said he; "you shall see him soon."

Annie stopped.

"Do what is best," said she.

Jalbrun disappeared immediately.

After a few minutes, which seemed an eternity to the two women as they remained motionless and mute, Lucien appeared, standing on the threshold. He had insisted upon walking, and, as he was obstinate, he had succeeded in overcoming his friend's objections.

He endeavored to speak, he tried to smile; but he again became unconscious, and his friends took him in their arms and carried him into Annie's room, where the bed was all ready for him.

When he reopened his eyes his wife was at his side, and he read in her looks such intense tenderness and forgiveness that he could not endure it.

"You know——" said he.

She put her finger on her lips.

"But I will speak," said he, with an effort. "It is necessary that you should know the truth, or I shall go away from here. If I had known that they were bringing me here, I should have refused to come."

"I beg of you," said Annie, as she restrained her tears with great difficulty, "not to talk, and above all not of such things."

"Listen," cried Lucien, still clinging to his idea, for he felt that his weakness was returning, "you know that I have been fighting on account of a woman?"

"Yes," said she. "That is nothing to me."

"Then it is well," said Lucien, as he closed his eyes and said no more. He became unconscious, and for several hours he thought himself a wreck tossed from wave to wave by a tempest which nothing could calm.

The wound was serious, as are those which awkward antagonists usually give. Day after day he remained as Annie now saw him; pale, the shadow of his long lashes increased by the purple tint which remained gathered about the hollow, closed eyes; his cheeks red with fever, his lips dry and burning, his mind wandering in a delirium in which the young wife's name was often spoken, sometimes pronounced with furious anger, but oftener said with a tearful tenderness.

During the long hours that she passed seated near that tragic couch, Annie examined the depths of her conscience. Whatever subtile reasoning she used to conceal the truth, she could not ac-

knowledge to herself that she was wrong. Her open soul could not resort to a subterfuge, and her pride had revolted before the passive obedience of a slave, which her husband had exacted.

To-day, though this loyal conscience had not changed, she accepted another ideal of duty; she did not say to herself: "I should have yielded," but she said—"I ought to have kept him." The confession of her husband, who perhaps was dying, and would not allow himself to be brought to his own house without having told her the cause which led him there in that condition, this cry forced from Lucien, who did not wish to be welcomed compassionately, but who first wished to obtain forgiveness without any conditions, had broken her pride.

"It was really I who led him to do all that!" she said to herself; "and yet I was not wrong."

Alas! if life brought us only the responsibilities of faults committed by ourselves; if it punished us only for our own errors, we should not suffer so much nor so cruelly.

Annie thus reproached herself, and felt that though she was not wrong she deserved reproaches.

What would have become of her if they had brought Lucien home dead; dead without her having given him a tender word? She thought of this with terror, and the idea that he might go away again; away from their home, leaving there a wife without a husband, a child without a father, produced untold anguish in Annie.

"Ah," said she, "let him remain that I may love him, see him live again, and at last make him happy! I do not ask anything more; oh, no, not anything more. How miserably selfish I shall be if I do not throw myself and my happiness at his feet."

While Annie saw these floating shadows of uncertain life on her husband's face Jalbrun had gone to Mantes to break the news to Master Romanet.

The anger of the latter first vented itself upon the good fellow who rendered him this service.

"What?" cried he, "you, a man, a frivolous man, to be sure, but yet a sensible man, you did not prevent that? It was your duty to warn me; I would have spoken to my son, as he deserved, and I would have prevented this misfortune! If the wound is mortal, monsieur, you will be responsible for it!"

"I am willing to be," said Jalbrun; "but, monsieur, you can tell me all this by and by, if you wish, and I will listen to you submissively, I assure you that I will. For the present, you must go to Lucien, and above all do not give him any useless agitation, because then the responsibility will fall upon you."

M. Romanet allowed himself to be led away without another word.

Arriving at his son's bedside, while the latter was asleep, he would have lost his courage if his daughter-in-law's face had not suddenly become as full of energy as it was of sweetness and resignation, which set him a worthy example.

"You will be responsible for him, father," said she: "the surgeon assures us that unless some complications arise we can

save him. It is our duty to avoid those complications and we will avoid them."

About nine o'clock in the evening, Jalbrun, who started off for dinner, for he did not know how the day had flown, remembered that he had promised Pauline some news of the duel.

She already knew the result, for not having seen him, she had sent a friend to inquire of Ralboise, and in that way heard of Lucien.

Jalbrun found her in the latter's studio, weeping, and packing up with her maid.

"He is lost to me," said she, when Jalbrun entered.

"Be very sure of that," replied he. "I see that you are going away—that is prudent and also dignified."

"But he will not die?" asked Pauline, mechanically and in a submissive tone.

"It is not sure. In one way and another, my poor child, you have lost everything by this duel! Of the two gentlemen, one has decamped and the other is seriously wounded. It is not encouraging, Pauline. Next time you will do better to select men who will not fight in earnest, that will cause you less anxiety."

The young woman sighed, wiped her eyes and said, after a moment:

"Fortunately I have not rented my other apartments."

Jalbrun burst out laughing.

"Provident, always provident!" You will make your way in the world, Pauline, I can tell you that."

The maid went out to secure a carriage; they went away with their packages and then Jalbrun was alone in the dark and deserted studio.

"What a child!" said he thinking of Lucien; "he was happy here, in his little mansion; he left it. For what? To end by receiving a sword thrust."

Suddenly Jalbrun remembered that it was less than a year since the ball at Courtois' studio, and he was struck with astonishment, thinking of all the sorrow and misfortune that he had witnessed in so short a time.

"Fast life!" murmured he, in a tone of raillery. "I believe that he is surfeited now with fast life. If he would only live quietly!"

Lucien could not die; he was surrounded by such a strong will to save him, such a sustained desire to struggle with danger for him, if he had not the strength to struggle for himself, that all apprehension left him. In his lucid moments, and even in the midst of his delirium, he felt that he was loved, encouraged, sustained; after a while he became better, and then commenced a convalescence which was necessarily long. It was long, in fact, but it was delicious.

Coming out of the trial through which he had just passed, and the memory of which, strengthened through illness, returned to him, as purified through a furnace, where he had left all evil. The languor of this return to life, which slowly took possession of him, bore the charms of a new existence. Around him every-

body loved him and smiled upon him with so much goodness, that many times his eyes became moist with tears.

Master Romanet treated him somewhat as he treated little Louisette. He addressed them both in a language of paraphrases and of "Do you understand?" which made Annie and her mother smile. One would have said that the grandfather considered the father and the child as two equally frail and delicate beings, just awakening to their intellectual existence; and, really, perhaps he was not far wrong.

At last Lucien could walk alone; a slight hesitation was all that remained of his wound; his strength had nearly returned, and his physician advised him to spend the spring in the South.

Moving the whole family would be a serious affair. When the little circle met to hold council, Mme. Orliet looked at her daughter with some uneasiness.

Since the event which had brought Lucien home, Annie had made no allusion to the future. They had spoken of it vaguely, but the mother did not know what her daughter had decided upon during the long weeks of her husband's convalescence.

"Lucien and I are going away together," said Annie.

Her husband looked at her with such an expression of gratitude and regret, that the young wife turned her head, for she could not endure this look.

"Will you not be afraid all alone?" asked Madame Orliet.

"He is well now," replied Annie. "What could happen to him? We will leave in two days."

For some time Lucien had not had to be watched all night. The door which communicated with his wife's room had been left open, for Annie had allowed no one to care for him but herself, and warned by his lightest movement, she had hastened to the bedside of the wounded man.

This evening, when he was in bed, he called his wife to him.

"You said that you would accompany me," in a voice less firm than it had been for several days. "I do not wish, Annie, after the wonderful devotion that you have just shown me, that my presence should be a burden to you. I see and I feel that you have the deepest and the most sincere friendship for me; but I fear that I have been so unworthy of your love, that you can never bestow it upon me again. If this is true, Annie, let me go away with my father; I do not wish that my presence or my caresses should ever be disagreeable to you."

"My friend," said the young wife, "the day when you returned here, wounded, I said that I would rather die than cause you a moment's sorrow or anger. I love you better than all the world, and better even than myself."

"Then we will go together," said Lucien, taking her hand and putting it to his lips.

She bent over him and kissed his hair, locks of which were lying on the pillow; then she went to her own room with so light a step, that he did not notice her departure until she was gone.

With a contented mind, he slept peacefully, and felt sure of a happy future in the midst of the purest family joys.

Annie wept for a long time that night. She had spoken truly; she loved her husband more than all the world; but she knew that the happiness that he dreamed of was impossible for her. Her love had fled with the illusions of her youth, and she knew that it would never return.

When she had drained this cup of bitterness, she leaned on her pillow, and saw daylight entering through the curtains.

"A new day, a new life," she said to herself. "One cannot always retain the joys of spring time; my spring time has passed; now my life's work will commence. The flowers are faded, I shall reap the fruits. And then, if Lucien will only be happy!"

Tears ended her thought.

The following day they departed for the South, where they remained six weeks, and after their return to Paris Lucien began to paint again.

Several years have passed since. The name of Romanet is more esteemed by true artists than by the public, but full justice will never be given during his life to that great and true talent which despises those conventionalities with which everybody is pleased.

The house is brightened by three beautiful children who are Madame Orliet's joy. Master Romanet spoils them abominably.

Annie is extremely beautiful and sympathetic, but to those who chat with her a little while, it is evident that she is, and ever will be, less of a wife than she is a mother.

[THE END.]

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

It was a brilliant morning, sweet and fresh, and full of early spring, with the sun shining as it seldom shines, and a little child—such a pretty little child she was—was dancing before a gaping crowd in the open air, with the mellow flecks of sunlight gleaming in and out amongst her golden curls. Her dress was tawdry, almost repulsive; her ribbons were faded past description; two of her tiny toes were peeping at the world through the soiled white-satin slippers. She was at best but a dusty, travel-stained creature; but, with her blue eyes, deep and earnest—terribly earnest just then—her rose-tinged, baby lips, and the wistful entreaty of her expression, she was at that moment a lovely, living picture.

The young student standing on the outer edge of the thin crowd thought so, as he contrasted her curiously with her owner—the dullest mortal could not have named him as her father—who, with an ancient drum before him, and pandean pipes nestled cosily amongst the filthy folds of his neck-cloth, was performing with energy worthy of a better cause, "The Rakes of Mallow."

The child danced, the beams of heaven sparkled, the idlers applauded, until at length the poor feet tired, and the large eyes grew larger and more earnest. The little one's strength was evidently flagging. Louder and wilder grew "The Rakes of Mallow" as the man bent forward to frown heavily upon her. With a last faint effort the child bounded from side to side; but the grace, the elasticity, was gone; and with a curse the showman stopped abruptly, motioning her with a wave of the hand to cease and ask for alms.

Wearily and with reluctance she made her rounds. As she reached the student she paused, and he dropped a shilling into the tin plate that she held out to him. Instantly the miserable little face flushed and brightened so wonderfully that the young man, impulsively laying his hand upon her shoulder, asked her why she was pleased. Glancing at him timidly first, she next turned her gaze with much meaning toward the money. It was so much more than she had looked for.

"Perhaps he will not beat me now," she whispered, with a deep-drawn sigh of hope, sadder than any weeping.

The lookers-on broke up and vanished. The showman, sling-

ing his drum across his shoulder, went down the street, the child following. Behind them, at some short distance, came the student, unnoticed by them, and almost without purpose, until, having passed through lanes and alleys and noisome unknown spots, he saw the dancer and her guide disappear within the precincts of a dingy-looking house.

Up and down, outside this house, he paced for many minutes, amazed at his own folly, yet unable to tear himself away. He was haunted by the child's face, by the sadness of her one remark. All the strong artist-soul within him was awakened, and cried aloud for another glimpse at the baby Love, the infant Venus, it had just beheld. As he lingered near the door, a faint cry, checked but bitter, reached him; and in another moment he was half way up the rotten stairs—up higher still—until he found himself within the room that held his lost charm—and her master.

In one corner she lay cowering, piteously rubbing her right shoulder; her eyes had all their exquisite azure drowned in tears. As she saw him, she at once remembered his kindness, and, springing to his side, clung closely to him.

"Save me," she gasped—"save me!"

His hand, at sight of her distress, had been raised to strike the brute before him; but her touch restrained him. Although the young man's blood was aflame, her face subdued him.

"He has beaten me," sobbed the child in anguish, regardless of consequences. "He has hurt me! See!" And with infantine recklessness she tore the ragged covering from her shoulder and disclosed a bruise—now red, but that shortly would be black—disfiguring the fairness of her flesh. The student's anger increased. He was young and tender-hearted; and, as the showman rose, muttering an evil word, and advanced toward the terrified child, he pushed him back.

"Will you sell the child?" he asked in the heat and uncertainty of the moment.

The showman drew back surprised.

"If I get my price," he said, sullenly.

"Ten pounds?"

"Make it fifteen, and she is yours," said the other, brightening.

The student hesitated. To him the sum was large. Only that morning he had received his half-year's allowance from his miser uncle, and, were he now to part with this fifteen pounds, it would leave him only his brain and his ten fingers and thirty-five pounds to live on for the next six months. And then, when he had bought the child what should he do with her? He hesitated. The little one, quick to perceive his indecision, tightened her hold upon him, and with passionate entreaty, whispered:

"If you leave me now, he will kill me! Buy me—oh, do buy me!"

Her tears fell fast; her eyes would not leave his own. He counted out the money silently. Throwing an old shawl about her, she slipped her hand within his, and together they left the room.

As they stood for a moment on the outer landing, a woman

came hurriedly toward them. It was evident she had been listening to all that had passed within.

"So you are going, Jocelyne?" she said. "Well, luck be with you! Here"—holding out to the stranger a dull-gold, inexpensive locket—"take this—it is hers. Some time she may be glad to have it."

"That is to make me a lady one day," said the child, in her high treble, out of which every particle of sadness had vanished; "oh, how I wish the time was come. Good-bye, Goody."

"Good-bye," echoed the woman carelessly, and moved away.

Down the stairs went the student and the dancer hand in hand. At the last step the child broke into glad sweet song. "I am free, free, free!" she sang, like an escaped bird, while a thrill of ecstasy ran through her.

"She is happy—she is full of joy," muttered the student, gazing in perplexity at the tiny, transformed creature beside him; "and why? She has only been transformed from one vagrant to another—poor little beggar!"

"Where are we going now?" asked the child, gayly.

"I wish I knew," said he.

* * * * * * *

Ten years afterward, in a pretty room, more carelessly than poorly furnished, sat a man, his elbows resting on a table, his head between his hands, staring blankly at a letter that lay before him. All about him reigned artistic confusion. Here and there lay brushes and pictures half begun; on an easel near the window stood a large painting, almost completed; exquisite sketches lined the wall; a few portraits—for the most part the same face with a different expression, or the same figure in a different attitude—lay scattered about. The sunbeams, breaking in luxuriously on that June morning, flooded the room with light, and flashing on the man's face, exaggerated the miserable despairing look of it. Unlike most people, when first crushed by a great sorrow, George Blackwood fully realized on the moment all that this letter meant to him. Was it really ten years ago since he rescued little Jocelyne from the showman? Ten long years? It seemed but yesterday. Again he saw before him the pretty bruised shoulder, the pale, uplifted face, the tear-dimmed eyes. He had bought her and taken her to his heart, and now he must lose her. She was his all—his life itself—the "very eyes" of him; yet already must he count her lost. She would go, carrying with her all the light in which he reveled, leaving him behind to endure the gloom alone.

The door opened.

"I am coming in," called out some one gayly; and then a young girl entered—a fairy, a beauty, more exquisite than a dream, although her gown was only of blue cotton trimmed with black velvet bows, her only adornment a plain gold locket. Her hair, a rich wavy yellow, was gathered behind into a soft knot, her luminous eyes were purple, her lips coral.

As she approached his side, the painter did not raise his head, although her steps made his pulses throb. Slowly she advanced, at a loss how to account for the absence of the usual greeting, the half-playful, wholly-loving greeting.

"Why," cried she, at last, "what is the matter? Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance, what aileth thee? Don Quixote, do you know that your face is as long as my arm?"

She slipped her soft white hand under his chin as she spoke, and compelled him to look at her. His gray eyes were almost stern in their sadness.

"Read that," he said, putting the letter he had been mourning over into her hand.

At first, as she read, she made no sign, and then her color rose, higher and richer; and when, at length, she turned her wondering gaze upon him, he saw, with a pang the more, that into her eyes was come a marvelous gleam.

"It is true," she murmured, breathlessly—"quite true—not a dream or a delusion! Oh, Don, it is impossible!"

"It is true," he said, but the last faint spark of hope that he had encouraged unknown to himself died within him as he witnessed the intensity of her delight.

"True that I, the beggar-maid, the waif, am a rich man's granddaughter?" She asked the question with parted lips and lovely, bewildered eyes. "Don, come here and pinch me—I cannot be awake! Why, it is better than Hans Anderson; more wonderful than the *Arabian Nights*!" Then, once more returning to the letter, she recited aloud such scraps of information as most astounded her.

"'Stolen by her nurse when only two years old, through motives of revenge'—revenge for what, I wonder?—'and, later on, was given into the charge of the woman Grainger'—that indeed was Goody's name!—'had on her, at time of disappearing, a plain gold locket with initials, "J. G."' Yes, here they are. What do they stand for, Don?"

"'Jocelyne Gresham,' your mother's maiden name."

"Poor mother! And what am I now? Jocelyne, or Miss Jocelyne, or what?"

She burst into laughter, while he watched her—heart-broken.

"It is too good to be true," she said. "Do you remember how you used to call me your 'Princess in disguise'? And see, your words were a prophecy! Oh, what good times we shall have now, what long, long holidays, what glorious drives, and the opera every night! Of course I shall have plenty of money, and lots of pretty dresses and rings, and a carriage perhaps and——"

"My poor child," he interrupted sadly, "have you been pining so much for all these things?"

"No, no, indeed!" cried she, eagerly, running up to where he had drawn himself apart from her into the window. "Until now, when it dawned upon me that I might have them, I have never cared for them. But how sad you look, Don! Are you not glad that such good fortune has befallen me?"

"How can I be glad, Jocelyne, when its coming will take you from me?"

"Take me from you?"—in a changed, low tone.

"Yes; of course you will go now to live with your grandfather."

"Oh, must I do that?" she said; and her face fell, losing its joyous expression. But she did not repudiate the idea with scorn or anger; and something that was like anger against her coldness rose within him. At the moment he almost hated her.

"Do not break your heart about it," he remarked, with a suppressed sneer. "I dare say in a very little time you will adore this new relative. Think of all that lies before you, and never look back. It is a mistake."

"I suppose I shall like him very well by and by, and—and all that," said Jocelyne, still rueful; "but I shall never love him as I love you, Don—never! After all, it is you who have been a real father to me, is it not? And such a nice, handsome young father too!" she added, with a laugh.

Each sweet, unblushing avowal stabbed him. He felt he could not bear much more of it.

"You had better run away now," he said; "I am expecting Mr. Mayfair every moment. There—was not that a knock? Now go."

"Already? Well"—with an air of decision—"I want to see him too, so I shall remain."

"No; I wish to see him alone first. Go, Jocelyne."

He used a tone of command which she at least had never heard from him before; and she obeyed. Standing half in and half out of the doorway leading into an adjoining apartment, she spoke again hurriedly, her courage failing her at the last moment.

"If he should be cross, Don, or proud, or disagreeable in any way, you will let me stay with you? Promise me that. Quick—I hear him!"

"You shall decide for yourself," said Blackwood coldly.

"Remember what you say. You will not coerce me in any way? If you wish to remain, you will stand by me?"

"You shall do as you will," he said again; and almost as the one door closed on the retreating figure the other opened to admit her grandfather.

He was an old man of middle height, with a gentle, weak, aristocratic face. Seeing the painter before him, he bowed.

"Mr. Blackwood, I presume?" he said: and Blackwood coming forward, handed him a chair, and at once plunged into the dreaded subject.

The gentleman's story was long and tedious, the painter's short and concise. No doubt about her being the long-lost child could possibly remain. At the end the old man said huskily:

"I cannot thank you—no words can tell you how I feel—yet I am here now only to do you an injury—to rob you of the child you love! Mr. Blackwood is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing," said the painter briefly.

"When may I see her?"

"Now, at once. She is waiting your summons. May I ask when—" he stopped to clear his throat—"you intend taking her away with you?"

"To-day," said Mayfair, with a gesture of surprise—"I thought from my letter you would understand. It will be better so. You see, sir,"—speaking very gently—"you are a young man, and she must have outgrown her childhood, and—and——"

"My aunt has lived with me ever since I—found Jocelyne," interrupted the painter, haughtily.

"Of course, of course; I quite comprehend. Still——"

"To-day?" broke out the other, with sudden passion. "Must it indeed be so soon? In one hour to tear asunder the links that years have forged! Is she to be as nothing to me now, when countless memories have united us for so long? To you, this child with all her pretty ways, is unknown; to me—— Why, I bought her—made her mine, as I madly hoped, forever—does that give me no claim upon her?"

"Sir, if I might be allowed to——"

"What!" cried the young man, fiercely, springing to his feet; and, then breaking into a bitter laugh. "Forgive me," he said, "but if you only knew all! I had her so cheap—my poor child!"

There was such infinite yearning love and pity in his tones that Mayfair's heart, which was a tender one, bled for him.

"You shall see her now," said Blackwood, gently, and, opening the door, he called "Jocelyne" twice. Then, as he heard her step approaching, he went out, and let them meet unseen.

* * * * * * *

She was gone. Already she had ceased to be part of his daily life. She had demurred a good deal to such a sudden departure, and had shed many sincere and loving tears; but she had at length consented, and the old house would know her no more. Just at the last Blackwood had said to her, "Well, Jocelyne, you see I have kept my promise; I told you you should decide for yourself." It was the only reproach he had allowed himself to utter, and he had said it smiling. But when she was indeed gone, and the door had closed behind her, he had flung himself face downward upon the table, and for long hours had lain there motionless as one dead.

* * * * * * *

Two years passed away—two years of great success and utter heart-loneliness for Blackwood. During the first miserable months after Jocelyne's departure, out of his wretchedness he had conceived and sent forth in the world a picture that was destined to make him famous. The wonderful thing that for long years had been his dream by day and night had at last come true—his name would live—his praise was in all men's mouths; while fortune, with her fine disregard of economy, had at the same time thrown to him yet another boon; for death had

loosed his uncle's hands from off his money-bags, and they, coming to Blackwood, had made him rich. Yet all was nothing to him for the want of her he loved. Determinately as he had tried to live the feeling down, he still pined for the sight of two blue eyes, for the touch of Jocelyne's cool little fingers, the music of her voice.

With Jocelyne the time had been spent in idle, happy wandering. From city to city, from capital to capital, the old man had taken her, feasting her eyes on all that was fairest and most choice—educating her in the fullest sense of the word. Admiration, love, variety, all that a woman most craves, was hers; she reigned a little queen in her own circle, both by virtue of her great beauty and the fortune that should one day be hers; yet, on this, her first morning in town, after her return home, as she unclosed her violet eyes, and flung her white arms above her head in lazy wakening, her one thought was: "To-day I shall see Don."

"Later on, when luncheon was over, she turned to her grandfather.

"I want to go and see Don," she said.

"Whom, my pet?"

"Don Quixote."

"Oh, Mr. Blackwood! Well, so you shall some day."

"No, not some day—to-day—this very moment."

"But, my darling, you know you promised Nugent to ride with him."

"Oh, never mind! Too much of anything is good for nothing, and I am weary of Nugent. Let me assure myself that he can exist without seeing me for one whole day. Perhaps—if he survives—he may have something to say to-morrow that I have not already heard a thousand times."

"I wish you would be a little more civil to him, Jocelyne," said the old gentleman, coaxingly. "You know how highly I think of him, and—and he is the best match this season."

"Dear grandpapa, you forget—have we not two princes still unwedded? I reserve myself for royalty!" declared the spoiled beauty, making an adorable little *moue* at her own lovely image in an opposite glass. "But about Don—you will come with me, grandpa."

"Of course," said he, perhaps in his heart relieved that his willful charge had not elected to go alone.

* * * * * * *

As they entered the painter's studio, Blackwood—whose thoughts had been with her all the day, but who had not dared to hope so soon for her coming—rose to receive them. He was strangely pale, and looked older than his thirty-one years. By a supreme effort he controlled himself, and succeeded in greeting them calmly, if coldly.

Was this Jocelyne—this radiant being in trailing silks and all the pretty devices of a last fashion? How unlike the child in blue cotton—yet how like, and alas, how much more beautiful! All at once he realized how vain had been that cruel torturing

of himself; his love rose high above all chains—he was hers for good or evil on this side of the grave.

Mr. Mayfair, watching him narrowly, never guessed at all this—the man was so calm, so self-possessed, showed such a curious want of feeling, the terrible struggle within him making him curt and cold beyond his wont. Once, as Jocelyne stood somewhat apart, he asked her:

"Are you happy?"

And she answered him, with a little smiling nod:

"Very happy:" then prettily: "But all the more so now that I have seen you again. I felt a want before."

The sweet words warmed his frozen heart. He could not resist smiling back an answer to them, and then hated himself for having done so. She was no longer anything to him that he should feel pleasure at the kind words that probably meant so little.

"Prince Charming has not arrived yet?" he asked, prompted by the consuming fear within him.

"No, indeed; and he would be wiser not, unless he wishes a cold reception."

"How cruel of you! But some day you will think differently."

"Shall I? Why, you are as bad as grandpa!" said she, with a lovely pout. "All the morning he has been tormenting me to marry, marry, marry. Am I then so bad to look at that I must hurry my misfortune?"

"Then there is some one?" he asked carelessly, but paling a little.

"Yes. I don't mind telling you—you remember how I used to tell you everything that concerned my stupid self? It is Mr. Nugent; and it vexes grandpa that I cannot bring myself to think him perfection. Not but what he is a nice boy rather; only all boy lovers are so—so sugary! Any other kind is preferable."

"There are others?" he could question her only in a dull heavy way.

"Oh, yes," holding up ten little pale lavender fingers—"more than I can count—young, old, and middle-aged! I think I like the old ones best, they are so good-natured, and give one such pretty presents. And the fun of it is"—laughing—"grandpa lets me take anything from them, though I must take only flowers and bonbons, and that from the boys——"

"Jocelyne, I fear we must be going," broke in Mr. Mayfair, coming lingeringly back to her. He was a connoisseur of pictures, and had been engrossed by one all this time.

* * * * * * *

After this Blackwood saw a good deal of Jocelyne. She would run in and out between three and six during the long spring evenings, generally accompanied by her duenna, a pleasant-faced old lady of about sixty, and once or twice, for a few moments, alone; and each day the struggle to conceal his love from her grew fiercer. She would tell him all her merry secrets, and her

few troubles—how she had finally rejected Nugent, and thereby very much angered her grandfather—not that her grandfather was ever really angry with her—so it did not greatly matter; now there was some one else on the *tapis*, but him she liked just as little; and so on.

All this innocent prattle tortured the jealous heart that listened. Blackwood was haunted by the fear of a day that might—nay, must—come when she would come in there, and, with sweet, shy blushes, tell him how at last her choice was made, her young love given, and then—— He would put a stop to it. She should come there no more. Death at once was to be chosen before this daily dying.

One day, as he was in this mood, she ran in alone.

"I have just five minutes," she said, "and then I am due at Mrs. Brand's. I never saw anyone look so ill as you, Don! What are you doing with yourself? Give up that nasty painting for just this one day, and come with us to Brand's; she takes it quite to heart that you never go there now."

"I am particularly busy to-day, so you must excuse me; and, besides, I cannot say I greatly care to associate with the silly set of people she chooses to gather around her."

"Oh! Am I a silly person, Don? No"—holding up a warning finger—"don't say it. I can see by your eyes you have something withering at the very tip of your tongue. Oh, what a glorious day it is—but too warm!"

She tilted her cream-colored hat a little backward, so that it sat on her head sideways, and added the charm of innocent coquetry to her appearance. Her very beauty irritated him.

"Put your hat straight," he said, unkindly.

"Is it becoming!" asked Jocelyne. She went over to a mirror and put her hat back into its proper position; then she came to his side. "What is it? How have I vexed you? Do you not then love me any more?" She asked all these questions in the pretty, soft, beseeching voice she might have used five years before.

The painter gazed up steadily into her face; she was bending slightly over him. A minute that was a lifetime passed so, and he conquered. No—she should never know how madly he loved her.

"What a little coquette you are?" he exclaimed, with a cold smile.

"Now I shall tell you all about last night," she said, settling herself cosily into an arm-chair. "I can assure you you lost by not being there. I was never at so good a ball—and never enjoyed myself so much."

"Which means that you made several new conquests, and sent one or more men home broken-hearted. That is the keenest enjoyment a young lady of the present day knows."

"Don't bite your mustache quite through, Don," said Jocelyne, as yet undismayed; "the only merit a fair mustache can claim is its length. Yes—I certainly did make a conquest last night, but I didn't get the chance of refusing any one—so you are wrong there."

"Another! Why, you are a perfect warrior!" he exclaimed bitterly. "An Indian with his belt full of scalps would be a mere trifle in the battlefield compared with you. May I ask the name of your latest victim?"

"No, you may not. I don't care about conversing with ill-tempered people," said Jocelyne, rising with much dignity. "Because your cook, or your man, or your chosen friend, has annoyed you is no reason why you should vent your suppressed rage upon me. I shall come here no more. Perhaps that will please you."

"Yes, it will," retorted Blackwood, rising too, and growing very pale; "nothing will please me better. You disturb me and waste my time with your frivolous tales of lovers unworthy to bear the name. Go, and do not return—it will be better for us both. Forgive me if I am rude; only—go."

"You need not say it again," said Jocelyne, who was looking almost tall, and very proud, and whose eyes were filled with tears.

She made him a little dignified curtsy and left the room—forever, as he thought; she could scarcely forgive the grossness of his behavior. So he fell into despair, and could neither eat nor sleep.

Nevertheless, at four o'clock the very next day, there came a low knock at his door.

"Come in," said he, wearily.

The door was opened partially, but the visitor—whoever it was—apparently had some doubts about the propriety of entering.

"Come in!" impatiently.

"Oh, but I'm afraid!" murmured a voice that made Don spring from his chair. Only just now he had been thinking he should never see her again!

"Is it you, Jocelyne?" he cried eagerly, going to the door and drawing her in by both hands.

"Yes," demurely; then, with a pretended glance of amazement from under her long lashes—"and, positively, I do believe you are glad to see me!"

"Glad!"

"Well, so you should be after your scandalous conduct of yesterday. You were very near never having that pleasure again. Why, Don, how worn you look! Have you really been repenting in sackcloth and ashes for your sins against me?"

"I have neither eaten nor slept," he said, "I thought you would not forgive—and you have overlooked my fault so soon."

"Yes, I know I am sadly wanting in proper feeling. But"—severely—"to starve yourself—how extremely wrong of you! You shall have something to eat this very moment. I saw the luncheon laid as I came in. No, don't ring; I will attend to you myself, and scold you all the time."

She rustled out of the room in her pretty, vivacious way, without giving him leisure to protest; so that he was constrained to follow her. When in the luncheon-room, she hovered round him, pouring him out some wine—cutting the bread even—while he, looking on, had not the courage to interfere, so ex-

quisite was the pleasure it gave him to see her do it. He tried to eat, but failed. When he had drunk a glass of wine, he rose.

"I cannot eat," he said, with a smile—"you have sufficed me. Now will you tell me all I refused to hear yesterday. There was some one new——"

"No, I was only joking. But I am in fresh trouble. Mr. Blunden—you remember, I met him two months ago—spoke to grandpa yesterday, and told him I was the light of his eyes, and all the rest of it; and grandpa thinks I should listen to him. Do you know the man, Don?"

"Yes; he is a dark, handsome man. I know him very well."

"And don't like him! Well, neither do I; so we won't waste any more time talking about him. What I really came for to-day was to tell you I am going down to Ivors to-morrow, and to make you promise to come to my birthday ball next month."

"But, my dear child, it is so long——"

"I don't care how long it is. I don't care if it is a hundred years since you were last at a ball. I intend you shall come to mine. Now—do you hear?—I insist. You owe me some reparation, so you can't refuse. Good-bye, Don—I must run away; but say 'Yes' before I go."

"Yes," he said, unable to resist.

* * * * * * *

In Jocelyne's pretty boudoir that night high argument was being held. Mr. Mayfair, hot and irritated, was standing opposite his granddaughter, with uplifted finger, making a vain attempt to induce her to listen to reason; while she, in her pale green ball-dress and water-lilies, and with her lips and eyes alike mutinous, was plainly and shamefully rebellious.

"I confess I cannot understand you," said the old man plaintively. "Last week you showed yourself thoroughly gracious to him, and to-night you would not spare him even one dance. It is—it must be—mere caprice. He complained to me bitterly about it."

"I hate tell-tales," returned Jocelyne, frowning. "Is he afraid of me, that he must employ a go-between? Last week I looked upon him merely as a friend, and could afford to be civil. He has put it out of my power to do so any longer."

"Now, what objection can you possibly have to Blunden?" asked her grandfather, in despair. "You refused Nugent because, you said, his nose was not in the middle of his face—an absurd remark, that could be applied to any one. But Blunden is acknowledged by all to be a remarkably handsome fellow—the handsomest in town."

"He isn't half so handsome as Don," replied Jocelyne, provokingly.

Mayfair turned upon her angrily.

"It is always Don," he said. "I am sick of the name. One would think it was Mr. Blackwood you wanted to marry."

There was dead silence. A cold hand seemed to have suddenly clutched at the girl's heart. These few idle words had done for her what two long years had failed to do. She stood for a full

minute as if turned to stone. Did she love him? Slowly her color faded until cheeks, and brow and lips were white as snow. Then she turned and sought her own room. Throwing herself, dressed as she was, upon her bed, she fought a long battle with her heart through all that night season, until, as the morning dawned, she knew.

The next day she left town, and went down to Ivors without seeing Blackwood again, to spend each quiet hour in troubled thought. She was now assured of her own feelings; but could she answer for him? He was always so cold, so indifferent—no little word that she could remember had ever escaped him, and yet—— She alternated between fear and hope, one moment possessed with doubt, the next sustained by some fitful, rapturous gleam of certainty.

As the morning of her birthday broke to let the many gifts from every side pour in, and no mark, no token of affection, came from him, her hopes fell dead. And when at night she stood robed in white satin, beside her grandfather, to receive her guests, there was a sickening dread within her that at the last the one she loved might fail in coming; so that, when he did come, she could greet him only with lips as white as her gown and a smile so faint as to be almost imperceptible.

He noticed it, and wondered at the change, and grew uneasy about it. When she danced with him she was silent—the gay, debonair child was gone, leaving a silent, absent girl in her place. As the night wore on, and watching her, he noticed that with others she was almost her own gay self again—that with him alone she was different—there grew upon him a determination to know the worst.

He found her standing by the open door of the conservatory, alone, gazing into the quiet night.

"How cool it looks up there," she said, as he approached.

"Will you come and see how cool?" he asked; and, as she acquiesced, he put a shawl round her, and together they went down the steps into the gar en beneath.

In silence they walked down gravel paths, past sleeping flowers, under the lonely sighing trees, until, having left behind them all frequented spots, they emerged suddenly upon the borders of the lake, over which the white moon had flung a silver veil.

Jocelyne had never spoken since they left the house; and now, standing beside the water, she had thrown back from her throat and arms the blue shawl, as though unable to endure even so much covering. Her thoughts—where were they? Blackwood hardly dared to speak. Was this strange pain at his heart the presentiment of coming evil? He gazed at the stars studding the mighty dome above him, and at last could bear the silence no longer.

"Jocelyne, what is it?" he said.

She glanced at him with half-frightened, half-inquiring eyes, but made no reply.

"There is something wrong. Nay, child, you cannot deceive me—tell me what it is. Where is all the gayety the brightness,

that should be yours—and this your birthday, too? Tell me, what troubles you?"

Still she made him no answer—only turned her little white throat restlessly from side to side, as though seeking escape.

"Is it about Blunden?" he asked, in a choked voice.

"Yes," she said, catching eagerly at the suggestion, though Blunden was never further from her thoughts. "You know he came down early this morning, and after dinner he was foolish enough—— Of course I refused him—and now they will all be angry, and say I have again done unwisely. It is always the same; and yet what do they want? Am I to marry to please them, or to please myself?"

She finished a little wrathfully, through her agitation.

There was a long pause. Some tiny, foolish songster, mistaking the brilliant moon for a faded sun, broke into a joyous melody, but, discovering his error, quickly subsided into a sleepy thrill, and then once more into silence. The sorrowful lap of the waves alone disturbed the calm.

"Jocelyne," Blackwood said in a low tone, "why is it 'always the same?' Is it—is it because you love another?"

"Yes," answered the girl, faintly.

It was come at last. He almost staggered as the trembling word reached his ear. Then an overmastering desire to know the name of him who had gained his all took possession of him. He caught her arm roughly.

"Who is it? Speak!" he exclaimed, passionately.

Jocelyne burst into tears. She was already overwrought, and the sudden vehemence of his touch unhinged her.

"You—you—you!" she cried, flinging out with a gesture that was almost reckless her bare white arms toward him in the moonlight. For a moment she stood so, then, covering her face with her hands, she shrank away. "Ah, what have I said? What have I done?" she sobbed. She was in his arms.

"If you are lying, I will kill you!" he said. "Say it again!" Then, in a changed tone—"My sweet, my angel, is it indeed the truth? Can it be true?"

"And you, Don?"

But, though she asked the question, she hardly heeded the answer, his look, his touch, the tender passion of his voice being all-convincing. He bent his face to hers—for four long years he had not kissed her—and now their lips met as they had never met before.

Just before they returned to the house, he put his hand beneath her chin, and, raising her face until he could gaze clearly down into the pure violet of her eyes, said almost sadly:

"Beloved, have you thought of everything—all you must renounce—not wealth perhaps, but rank—you, who might have been—— Think of all you will lose."

"Nay," she answered sweetly, her red lips parting in a fond smile, her eyes gleaming darker through tears of joy, "how can I, when it is so immeasurably outweighed by all that I shall gain?"

[THE END.]

DEVOTED.

ONCE upon a time men and women took vows of asceticism upon themselves, devoting themselves to the service of their fellows; one does not nowadays look upon this as the highest form of devotion.

Three people we have seen living devoted lives, but what did they think about the matter?

Just nothing at all.

Giacinta or 'Cinta Idyane, the girl, certainly thought not one word about "devotion" or "sacrifice," or indeed of anything with so grand a name to it.

Look at her! running through the long coarse grass of the fated region. Her brown feet and arms are bare, her head uncovered, although the women of the south do not stand in the mid-day sun uncovered if they are wise. Her face is brown, and with the delicately chiseled, straight features, which perhaps come from her unknown Greek ancestors, who in the dim past had landed on these shores; her raven hair is knotted on the crown of her head—you may see numbers of such girls' heads if you look at an old frieze.

Her garments are poor, but they are not ragged; she has on a gray cotton skirt—very probably the cotton is a Manchester print, all the nations of the world use these things; she wears above this a loose, short-sleeved bodice of rich blue cotton, such as a man's blouse is made of; tied round her throat is a kerchief of orange, and round her waist, with its soft ends trailing below the looseness of her bodice, is a wisp of scarlet stuff. This last is put on for finery, as a maiden of another class bedecks herself with jewels. The orange kerchief would be shading her head if the sun were shining, but, though it is mid-day, the girl's head is bare.

But what a heat bears down upon the land! what a damp, murky, pestiferous fire seems to burn one up, to drag the very spirit of life from one's limbs!

'Cinta, running and springing through the grasses, stops, then moves languidly her lazy feet. Is this some weariful, voluptuous, Eastern clime, where one dreams and sleeps the soft hours away? where it "is always afternoon"—where "all things always seem the same"—where there is not life, but some luscious, vague thing called existence?

Not at all.

It was once a famous land. Greek heroes trod its shores and reared mighty temples upon it. There they stand to-day, gray

and silent, strangely perfect, rearing their carved pediments against the sunless fire of the blue sky. It is a cloudless sky, an airless region; pestilence walks along it unmasked, and miasma is one's yoke-fellow and comrade all the days one passes there.

All about it is a level, marshy plain, whence fetid odors rise, and whose sole masters are herds of buffaloes which men call tame—they may be so. The plain is washed by the shining Neapolitan waters; across the Bay of Salerno stretches the marvelous beauty of the Amalfi coast. One may imagine round the cape the blue glory of the Bay of Naples. At Pæstum the very sun in heaven is darkened and conquered by the living death of the place.

The temples must be guarded; they belong to the nation, and they have set a fence about them, and they exact a toll from sight-seers, and one man at least must be told off to do the work.

A soldier must fight for his country. What matter whether he fight against flesh and blood or against a poisoned air?

A year ago, Ludovico Idyane was chosen, from out the hundreds who filled the monster barracks of Salerno, to take the post.

A brave man thinks naught of danger. Duty was enough, but duty did not tell him to take his wife and 'Cinta to Pæstum with him. There was a house for him, and a soldier is handy. He could, as they say in another country, "fend for himself." He issued his commands. Wife and child should stay on at Salerno, and he bade young Giovanni Peluso take heed to them.

Now, do women obey such commands? Not generally. The loyal sort do not, and Lucia was loyal to her husband, and young 'Cinta—she was fifteen then—was loyal to father and mother.

A year went by, and 'Cinta was tall. She ran lightly, but she as often wandered wearily. Ludovico, the man who admitted the tribes of tourists—he was tall, and straight, and soldier-like, but what a fire was in his dark eyes, how thin was his olive cheek, and what a scarlet patch burnt upon it!

The foe was conquering him.

But your Italian carries a light heart in his breast, and Ludovico, if he coughed huskily, hid it away under a bright word. Perhaps he should fight through. For the sake of wife and child he would be his strongest.

'Cinta was running, as we have said, through the tangle of coarse grass that separates the Temple of Neptune from the further ruins. Ludovico himself had come soberly along from his cottage into the vast weird avenue of columns that now make the roofless temple. A string of English people had just arrived; on the far side were a German bride and bridegroom: coming past 'Cinta were three American tourists, young men with knapsacks, and opera-glasses, and the inevitable scarlet volume of Baedeker.

One English lady was unearthing what she possessed of misty

Greek lore, and romanced about sacrificial rites and priestly functions and vestals.

"Can you fancy it possible?" she waved her hand round. "Was there a roof, do you think? I should say an awning would have been best, if the air then was like the air now. Dear me—the heat!" She was driven to fan herself, and she wiped the dew of faint heat from her upper lip. "There would not be this grass——"

A girl kicked at the uneven stones the grass hid.

"Certainly not, *tanta mia*," cried she; "there is polished marble if you like to look for it, of course."

"And processions of youths and maidens singing, perhaps dancing, and flowers, and incense, and——"

"Don't particularize too much, dearest, or you'll put us all in a fog. We sha'n't know whether we are talking about a Greek festival in honor of Neptune, or a Roman *festa*—shall we, Dick?"

"I don't know." Dick was standing and sketching, or rather had been standing and sketching; just now he stood and pointed. "One of the natives, I suppose—Greek or Italian, aunt?" he lazily asked.

"Very probably of Greek origin." For the nonce the aunt was absorbed by a worship of the Hellenic element.

"Gracious!" scorned the girl, Bessie, "she's an Italian peasant; she's very pretty."

This referred to 'Cinta.

"I'll go and speak to her."

The rest watched. As the English girl advanced, making signs of friendliness, the Italian girl retreated.

"Afraid, poor thing!" ejaculated the kindly aunt.

"Gammon!" responded Dick. "She'd let me paint her if I asked her."

"Signora."

The trim, blue-uniformed figure of Idyane had come close up to the party without being heard. The man touched his forage-cap, and again said:

"Signora——"

"Ah!"

"I have some photographs of the ruins; we are allowed to sell them for ourselves; the signor will buy? Very good ones—by Sommer of Naples— the best, and true. See, signor!" and he held one aloft.

"It is good," one said, and soon all the photographs were being pulled about by one and another.

"You'll make your fortune out of us!" cried a younger edition of Dick.

Idyane shrugged his shoulders and shook his head with the good-humored Italian smile.

"I do not understand, signor."

"No *Ingles*—no, no," Dick translated volubly, and laughed.

"We are wide awake," he added, or rather he gave some Italian words which very fitly copied that expression.

"No, no; I make no fortune here," and as swiftly the face fell to melancholy.

"They pay you well?" jerked the aunt, who had indulged in the Greek rhapsody.

"Enough." A stoical shrug of the shoulders and a spreading forth of lean brown hands answered. "I do not complain."

"They ought to pay a man double—treble, for taking his life in his hand and sitting down here!"

The man laughed.

"The signora thinks much of the danger—what is it? One may have fever anywhere, and they give us quinine—plenty."

"They do?"

"Certainly, signora. We must die without the quinine; we take it and drink the red wine—we should not drink good wine like that if we were not in the midst of the malaria."

"You are a single man—no wife, no child?" The lady meant he ought to be.

"Signora, no," and he laughed. "No, no; if I were alone—I think the fever would be stronger than I am. Now I am stronger than the fever. Yes, yes, I am strong. Signora, that is my girl," he coughed a hollow, dry cough. "That is 'Cinta, signora," he panted. "She is a good girl."

'Cinta was nodding and gesticulating. Perhaps Dick was right, and she had no fear, but just the shyness of a creature who is half untaught.

The fair English girl, trim and dainty, and the picturesque, free grace of the Italian, made a good and pleasing contrast as they strolled along through the long grass.

"She ought not to be here," decided the lady.

Idyane looked frightened.

"She is not ill. What shall I be, what will Lucia be without our child? Ah, she is good, signora! she would not stay in Salerno; she comes with us here. The time will not be long—a year has gone."

"And it has told upon you."

The man had coughed again.

"I fight the enemy, signora," he said cheerily, lifting his gray head, and straightening his tall figure. "And we will conquer, we are strong."

The photographs were bought, and Idyane's pockets filled, and very soon after every one was strolling wearily along toward the gateway. No one dared stay long in that killing atmosphere, the dear life seemed dragged out of limbs which at home were used to the invigorating winds of the north. Bessie, the gay, declared she was quite "done up" when she had climbed the little outer staircase of 'Cinta's home, had talked with the mother Lucia, and had come down again. As for Dick, he must also have collapsed, for he talked not at all.

It was no more than two hours past mid-day, and they must go. Antiquities were very interesting to see, and the wonders of Greek art are alluring, but it was like drinking nectar from a poisoned cup—they must fly before the dews of the fading day should rise from the marshes.

Children, ragged and dirty, and laughing, called for coppers; pests of beggars, pests of curiosity venders, besieged the carriages about the gate. What a wild, weird crew! and what a wild, weird and gloomy scene was all about! Desolation and the perfection of art, squalor and the vision of the greatest voluptuousness the world has ever seen, a past which bore eternal life, and at the same moment a present which was a death in life.

The driver shouted to his horses and cracked his whip, the carriage rolled along. Ah, who was calling? what was forgotten?

'Cinta Idyane was running and calling. Bessie suddenly roused. "I'll speak to her," said she.

"Mystery—eh?"

"Signorina, it is one word—one word!"

But the girl's face was rosy red. and she fell silent.

Bessie leaned down over the side of the carriage. "I know," she said, in easy Italian, "it is a message for—for that friend you told me about. Say it quick, the horses want to fly."

"Signorina, the horses of Palco do not fly," laughed 'Cinta.

"Where shall I find him?" Girls soon appropriate each other's secrets.

"Go to the big gate of the barracks and ask for Peluso—Giovanni Peluso."

"What then?"

"He sent me a letter, and I have not written one to him; say I am sorry and give this to him." She put a bunch of poppies into Bessie's hand, and then took a little silver cross from her bosom, kissed it, and gave that to Bessie. "Say it bears my kiss upon it, say that 'Cinta——"

"*Tchuh—tchuh!* The horses are wild, they are like fire, they tear my arms off!" cried the coachman.

'Cinta sprang down from the step of the carriage, and waving her hands gaily, ran off.

Summer came, and autumn and winter, and all the English people were away in northern homes. The busy town of Salerno went on with its merchandising, ships went and came, and trade kept all alive.

Regiments, too, quartered in the big new barracks were changed. So it is; no soldier is long at one place. Amongst others Giovanni Peluso, 'Cinta's friend, had been drafted up to the north. He was on the heights above Genoa, from which city he had written her a letter! He did not know whether she ever received it, at any rate no friend had come his way to bring him poppies again, or to give him a silver cross. Ah, that silver cross! He wore it always. Perhaps he should never see 'Cinta again; perhaps she had forgotten him? No, he did not believe that. He would pray, holding the little cross in his hand, that he might one day get sent again down Salerno way.

What was happening to 'Cinta?

Peluso thought about her—the English girl, Bessie, thought

and talked about her, wondered whether life brought as good a love to her as it did to some people.

Ah! "Some people!" Prosperity and good days enlarge one's soul, widen one's sympathies, and open one's heart largely. Grim philosophers preach the contrary, and set on high the advantages of adversity; have they themselves tried the dose? No; prosperity is the thing which sweetens life and action—for those souls, we mean, who have any inherent sweetness in them.

Bessie and Dick were cousins once, they were closer than cousins when a new year came in.

It was springtime again, and the honeymoon had lasted for three whole "moons." Dick was an artist, but he had wealth beside, and so he was taking pleasure and studying at the same time. It goes without saying that he and his wife were in Italy, and that lady being a person of some gay whims, carried her husband more than once away from the acknowledged schools of art to regions she fancied she would like to see.

"It is ridiculous going to Salerno," grumbled he, knee-deep in packing.

"Is it?" pouted she. "Where is the picture you were once going to make, and to call 'Ancient and Modern'—did the hymn-book suggest the title, by the bye?" She nodded at him, and then absorbed herself in the folding of a dress upon the bed.

"I have forgotten all about it;" and he punched an obstinate boot into an already stuffed portmanteau. "Jog my memory."

"Pæstum—aunt's antiquities—two lovely girls—eh? Now you remember?" His wife looked up, pursing her lips, and setting up a would-be gravity.

"Ah, yes. I remember a picturesque girl—one girl."

"Only one? Indeed!"

"Perhaps your second made the foil for the first." He became all at once anxious. "Did you put my drab suit in the Gladstone, Bess?"

"I did," said she. "Now, Dick, listen. Picture or no picture, my heart is set upon finding that girl again; she ought to be married by this time."

"To the fellow you unearthed at the barracks?"

"Of course—who else?"

Two days after they were at Salerno, and Dick had gone out "prospecting." Bessie walked out by herself, sauntering along the shore. No, first she loitered in the fine public gardens, and she looked about for 'Cinta amongst the passers-by. After a while she got outside the town, and then she was by the shore. Women with gayly kerchiefed heads were washing at big oblong tubs; other women and girls straggled out beyond these, washing in the sparkling waves of the blue sea, as it broke on the sloping shore. Rubbing and beating with stones, swishing and rinsing in the water, laughing and chattering—all went on together as the girls knelt and sat on their heels at work.

"'Cinta!"

The exclamation was involuntary on Bessie's part.

A girl heard it, turned, sprang up, threw down her half-

washed garment, and ran up, crying: "*Signorina, signorina mia!*" She was laughing, and her face was alight. Alas! in a moment she burst into tears.

What was wrong?

Ah me! much was wrong.

Ludovico Idyane was dead. The fever had killed him when the damp miasma of the autumn came. Lucia, his wife, fell ill from sadness of heart, and when the heart is bowed down, what power has a weak body to fight against poverty and weariness? The day was not far distant when 'Cinta would be alone.

Alone?

What of her lover—of Peluso?

No one knew certainly. 'Cinta knew naught. When people like these get separated, it becomes truly a separation. They do not fly to letter-writing at once. 'Cinta was truly a child of the people, and the learning she had was small. For her lover to go away meant—well, that he had gone, that she must wait, perhaps for all her life.

"That is all nonsense!" This ejaculation Bessie made aloud, but it was in English and unintelligible.

She went home at once, and, being a young person of energy and determination, set to work to solve the difficulty, and to find the missing man. She found, as people do who have the will to set a matter straight, that some friend of hers knew the commandant of the troops in Genoa, and, to make a long story short, she found that Peluso was still in the barracks on the heights.

A week later 'Cinta was motherless as well as fatherless. Lucia the brave wife, just slipped away, fainting out of life which had become to her an empty possession.

The girl 'Cinta must work. To keep life in her she must work, but down in the genial south one needs little, and she was young, and the older women about her nodded their kerchiefed heads over their washing and said: "Wait awhile, she will mend, she will laugh again."

Another week went, and as yet there was no sign of their prophecy being fulfilled.

Bessie, the English lady, came and went, and said cheerful words; then one day she again strolled down to the shore, and her face was expectant and radiant.

Was there ever such a beautiful day? The sea rolled and tossed, playing grandly. In tiny circling bays were gems of sapphire-blue, all around fringing these dashed opal spray and froth; misty islands made vague forms in the distant hazy heat; above all blazed the sun in a golden radiance, while the white town and the masts of the shipping declared the business and fullness of life.

'Cinta Idyane, with a scarlet handkerchief upon her dark head, saw a white lady and a huge white umbrella in the distance; she tossed down her washing, and she ran up the gentle slope of the shore.

"*La signora! La signora!*" she cried.

'Cinta," began Bessie, "I have a letter. Have you had one, too?"

"It is here, signora," and the girl pulled a big letter from her pocket; "shall I ever forgive myself?"

"What is wrong now?" asked her friend.

"No wrong, signora, but only so much good that I am ashamed. Was it not as in in me to say that he was forgetting me? Surely it was for him to say that of me—of me who wept and who cried to *la madre* that Madonna was cruel. *Ahime!* and *la madre* does not know now. Do you think she does, signora?" and 'Cinta clasped her brown hands fervently, and gazed at Bessie with shining eyes, as if her faith in her friend and her faith in Madonna were one and the same.

Bessie evaded the question.

"Do you know what is in my letter?"

"Ah, signora, what do I think of any letter but my own? I will go to Genoa—Giovanni will be glad—when I work some few days more. There will be enough money then. How much, signora, must I pay for the train?" Her head was set on one side, thinking, pondering in simple wonderment.

"Peluso sends me a letter, too!" cried Bessie.

"Ah!"

He does. Yes, and there is money in it, 'Cinta;" and she drew the girl so that she might watch the unfolding of the letter. "He sends money enough to take you to Genoa, and you are to go the first day you can."

"Then I will go to-morrow, signora."

Bessie laughed softly.

"It is not wrong, signora?" puzzled the girl. "He asks me, he wants me, and do I not belong to him?"

[THE END.]

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