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FATHER GORIOT  
M. GOBSECK

1870-1871  
1872-1873

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THERE WAS A SPLENDID CARRIAGE WAITING— AND SHE  
GOT INTO IT



H. DE BALZAC

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FATHER GORIOT  
URSULE MIROUËT

AND OTHER STORIES

TRANSLATED BY

ELLEN MARRIAGE and CLARA BELL

WITH PREFACES BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



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## P R E F A C E .

“ FATHER GORIOU ” perhaps deserves to be ranked as that one of Balzac’s novels which has united the greatest number of suffrages, and which exhibits his peculiar merits, not indeed without any of his faults, but with the merits in eminent, and the faults not in glaring, degree. It was written (the preface is dated 1834) at the time when his genius was at its very height, when it had completely burst the strange shell which had so long enveloped and cramped it, when the scheme of the “ Comédie Humaine ” was not quite finally settled (it never was that), but elaborated to a very considerable extent, when the author had already acquired most of the knowledge of the actual world which he possessed, and when his physical powers were as yet unimpaired by his enormous labor and his reckless disregard of “ burning the candle at both ends.” Although it exhibits, like nearly all his work, the complication of interest and scheme which was almost a necessity to him, that complication is kept within reasonable bounds, and managed with wonderful address. The history of Goriot and his daughters, the fortunes of Eugène de Rastignac, and the mysterious personality and operations of Vautrin, not only all receive due and unperplexed development, but work upon each other with that correspondence and interdependence which form the rarest gift of the novelist, and which, when present, too commonly have attached to them the curse of over-minuteness and complexity. No piece of Balzac’s Dutch painting is worked out with such marvelous minuteness as the Maison Vauquer, and hardly any book of his has more lifelike studies of character.

It would, however, not be difficult to find books with an almost, if not quite, equal accumulation of attractions, which have somehow failed to make the mark that has been made by "Father Goriot." And the practiced critic of novels knows perfectly well why this is. It is almost invariably, and perhaps quite invariably, because there is no sufficiently central interest, or because that interest is not of the broadly human kind. Had Goriot had no daughters, he would undoubtedly have been a happier man (or a less happy, for it is possible to take it both ways); but the history of his decadence and death never could have been such a good novel. It is because this history of the daughters—not exactly unnatural, not wholly without excuse, but as surely murderesses of their father as Goneril and Regan—at once unites and overshadows the whole, because of its intensity, its simple and suasive appeal, that "Father Goriot" holds the place it does hold. That it owes something in point of suggestion to "Lear" does not in the least impair its claims. The circumstances and treatment have that entire difference which, when genius is indebted to genius, pays all the score there is at once. And, besides, "Lear" has offered its motive for three hundred years to thousands and millions of people who have been writing plays and novels, and yet there is only one "Father Goriot."

It is, however, a fair subject of debate for those who like critical argument of the nicer kind, whether Balzac has or has not made a mistake in representing the ex-dealer in floury compounds as a sort of idiot outside his trade abilities and his love for his daughters. That in doing so he was guided by a sense of poetical justice and consistency—the same sense which made Shakespeare dwell on the ungovernable temper and the undignified haste to get rid of the cares of sovereignty that bring on and justify the woes of Lear—is undeniable. But it would perhaps not have been unnatural, and it would have been even more tragic, if the *ci-devant* manufacturer had been represented as more intellectually capable, and as ruining him-

self in spite of his better judgment. On this point, however, both sides may be held with equal ease and cogency, and I do not decide either way. Of the force and pathos of the actual representation, no two opinions are possible. There is hardly a touch of the one fault which can be urged against Balzac very often with some, and sometimes with very great, justice—the fault of exaggeration and phantasmagoric excess. Here at least the possibilities of actual life, as translatable into literature, are not one whit exceeded; and the artist has his full reward for being true to art.

Almost equally free from the abnormal and the gigantic is the portraiture of Rastignac. Even those who demur to the description of Balzac as an impeccable chronicler of society must admit the extraordinary felicity of the pictures of the young man's introduction to the drawing-rooms of Mesdames de Restaud and de Beauséant. Neither Fielding nor Thackeray—that is to say, no one else in the world of letters—could have drawn with more absolute vividness and more absolute veracity a young man, not a *parvenu* in point of birth, not devoid of native cleverness and “star,” but hampered by the consciousness of poverty and by utter ignorance of the actual ways and current social fashions of the great world when he is first thrown, to sink or swim, into this great world itself. We may pass from the certain to the dubious, or at least the debatable, when we pass from Rastignac's first appearance to his later experiences. Here comes in what has been said in the general introduction as to the somewhat fantastic and imaginary, the conventional and artificial character of Balzac's world. But it must be remembered that for centuries the whole structure of Parisian society has been to a very great extent fantastic and imaginary, conventional and artificial. Men and women have always played parts there as they have played them nowhere else. And it must be confessed that some of the parts here, if planned to the stage, are played to the life—that of Madame de Beauséant especially.

It is Vautrin on whom Balzac's decriers, if they are so hardy as to attack this most unattackable book of his at all, must chiefly fasten. It was long ago noticed—indeed, sober eyes both in France and elsewhere noticed it at the time—that the criminal, more or less virtuous, more or less terrible, more or less superhuman, exercised a kind of sorcery over minds in France from the greatest to the least at this particular time, and even later. Not merely Balzac, but Victor Hugo and George Sand, succumbed to his fascinations; and after these three names it is quite unnecessary to mention any others. And Balzac's proneness to the enormous and gigantesque made the fascination peculiarly dangerous in his case. Undoubtedly the Vautrin who talks to Rastignac in the arbor is neither quite a real man nor quite the same man who is somewhat ignominiously caught by the treachery of his boarding-house fellows; undoubtedly we feel that with him we have left Shakespeare a long way behind, and are getting rather into the society of Bouchardy or Eugène Sue. But the genius is here likewise, and, as usual, it saves everything.

How it extends to the minutest and even the least savory details of Madame Vauquer's establishment, how it irradiates the meannesses and the sordidnesses of the inhabitants thereof, those who have read know, and those who are about to read this new presentation in English will find. Let it only be repeated, that if the rarest and strangest charms which Balzac can produce are elsewhere, nowhere else is his charm presented in a more pervading and satisfactory manner.

In "M. Gobseck" we find the hero quite interesting, the story of Derville and Fanny escapes mawkishness, and all the scenes in which the Restauds and Maxime de Trailles figure are admirably done and well worth reading. It is not necessary to take into consideration the important part which the Dutch Jew's grand-daughter or grandniece, Esther, afterwards plays in the "Comédie." He is good in himself, and a

famous addition to Balzac's gallery of misers, the most interesting, if not the most authentic, ever arranged on that curious subject.

"M. Gobseck" was a "Scène de la vie Privée" from the first use of that title in 1830. Its own title, however, "Les Dangers de l'Inconduit," and "Papa Gobseck" varied a little, and it once made an excursion to the "Scènes de la vie Parisienne," but returned.

"Father Goriot" originally appeared as a book in 1835, published by Werdet and Spahmann, in two volumes. It had, however, appeared serially in the *Revue de Paris* during the previous winter. The first and some subsequent editions had seven chapter-divisions, six of them headed. These, according to Balzac's usual practice, were swept away when the book became, in 1843, part of the "Scènes de la vie Parisienne" and the "Comédie" itself. The transference to the "Vie Privée," which is accomplished in the "Edition Définitive," was only executed in accordance with notes found after Balzac's death, and is far from happy, the book being essentially Parisian.

G. S.

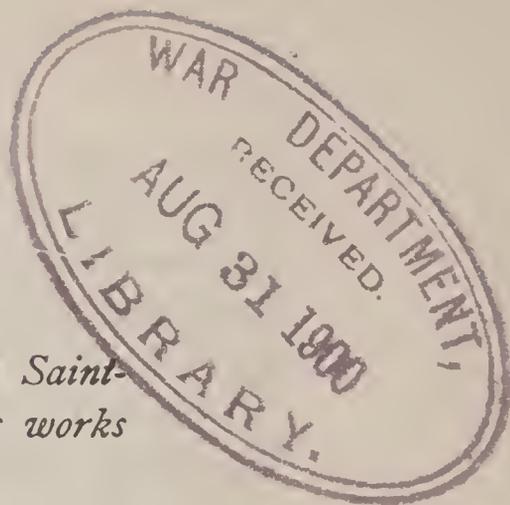




## FATHER GORIOT

*To the great and illustrious Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, a token of admiration for his works and genius.*

DE BALZAC.



MME. VAUQUER (*née* de Conflans) is an elderly person, who for the past forty years has kept a lodging-house in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, in the district that lies between the Latin Quarter and the Faubourg-Saint-Marcel. Her house (known in the neighborhood as the *Maison Vauquer*) receives men and women, old and young, and no word has ever been breathed against her respectable establishment; but, at the same time, it must be said that as a matter of fact no young woman has been under her roof for thirty years, and that if a young man stays there for any length of time it is a sure sign that his allowance must be of the slenderest. In 1819, however, the time when this drama opens, there was an almost penniless young girl among Mme. Vauquer's boarders.

That word drama has been somewhat discredited of late; it has been overworked and twisted to strange uses in these days of dolorous literature; but it must do service again here, not because this story is dramatic in the restricted sense of the word, but because some tears may perhaps be shed *intra et extra muros* before it is over.

Will any one without the walls of Paris understand it? It is open to doubt. The only audience who could appreciate the results of close observation, the careful reproduction of minute detail and local color, are dwellers between the heights of Montrouge and Montmartre, in a vale of crumbling stucco watered by streams of black mud, a vale of sorrows which are real and of joys too often hollow; but this audience is so

\*(1)

accustomed to terrible sensations, that only some unimaginable and well-nigh impossible woe could produce any lasting impression there. Now and again there are tragedies so awful and so grand by reason of the complication of virtues and vices that bring them about, that egoism and selfishness are forced to pause and are moved to pity; but the impression that they receive is like a luscious fruit, soon consumed. Civilization, like the car of Juggernaut, is scarcely stayed perceptibly in its progress by a heart less easy to break than the others that lie in its course; this also is broken, and civilization continues on her course triumphant. And you, too, will do the like; you who with this book in your white hand will sink back among the cushions of your armchair, and say to yourself, "Perhaps this may amuse me." You will read the story of Father Goriot's secret woes, and, dining thereafter with an unspoiled appetite, will lay the blame of your insensibility upon the writer, and accuse him of exaggeration, of writing romances. Ah! once for all, this drama is neither a fiction nor a romance! *All is true*—so true, that every one can discern the elements of the tragedy in his own house, perhaps in his own heart.

The lodging-house is Mme. Vauquer's own property. It is still standing at the lower end of the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, just where the road slopes so sharply down to the Rue de l'Arbalète, that wheeled traffic seldom passes that way, because it is so stony and steep. This position is sufficient to account for the silence prevalent in the streets shut in between the dome of the Panthéon and the dome of the Val-de-Grâce, two conspicuous public buildings which give a yellowish tone to the landscape and darken the whole district that lies beneath the shadow of their leaden-hued cupolas.

In that district the pavements are clean and dry, there is neither mud nor water in the gutters, grass grows in the chinks of the walls. The most heedless passer-by feels the depressing influences of a place where the sound of wheels creates a sen-

sation ; there is a grim look about the houses, a suggestion of a jail about those high garden walls. A Parisian straying into a suburb apparently composed of lodging-houses and public institutions would see poverty and dulness, old age lying down to die, and joyous youth condemned to drudgery. It is the ugliest quarter of Paris, and, it may be added, the least known. But, before all things, the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève is like a bronze frame for a picture for which the mind cannot be too well prepared by the contemplation of sad hues and sober images. Even so, step by step the daylight decreases, and the cicerone's droning voice grows hollower as the traveler descends into the catacombs. The comparison holds good ! Who shall say which is more ghastly, the sight of the bleached skulls or of dried-up human hearts ?

The front of the lodging-house is at right-angles to the road, and looks out upon a little garden, so that you see the side of the house in section, as it were, from the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève. Beneath the wall of the house-front there lies a channel, a fathom wide, paved with cobble-stones, and beside it runs a graveled walk bordered by geraniums and oleanders and pomegranates set in great blue and white glazed earthenware pots. Access into the graveled walk is afforded by a door, above which the words MAISON VAUQUER may be read, and beneath, in rather smaller letters, "*Lodgings for both sexes, etc.*"

During the day a glimpse into the garden is easily obtained through a wicket to which a bell is attached. On the opposite wall, at the farther end of the graveled walk, a green marble arch was painted once upon a time by a local artist, and in this semblance of a shrine a statue representing Cupid is installed ; a Parisian Cupid, so blistered and disfigured that he looks like a candidate for one of the adjacent hospitals, and might suggest an allegory to lovers of symbolism. The half-obliterated inscription on the pedestal beneath determines the

date of this work of art, for it bears witness to the widespread enthusiasm felt for Voltaire on his return to Paris in 1777—

“ Whoe'er thou art, thy master see ;  
He is, or was, or ought to be.”

At night the wicket gate is replaced by a solid door. The little garden is no wider than the front of the house ; it is shut in between the wall of the street and the partition wall of the neighboring house. A mantle of ivy conceals the bricks and attracts the eyes of passers-by to an effect which is picturesque in Paris, for each of the walls is covered with trellised vines that yield a scanty, dusty crop of fruit, and furnish besides a subject of conversation for Mme. Vauquer and her lodgers ; every year the widow trembles for her vintage.

A straight path beneath the walls on either side of the garden leads to a clump of lime trees at the farther end of it ; *lime* trees, as Mme. Vauquer persists in calling them, in spite of the fact that she was a de Conflans, and regardless of repeated corrections from her lodgers.

The central space between the walks is filled with artichokes and rows of pyramid fruit-trees, and surrounded by a border of lettuce, potherbs, and parsley. Under the lime trees there are a few green-painted garden seats and a wooden table, and hither, during the dog-days, such of the lodgers as are rich enough to indulge in a cup of coffee come to take their pleasure, though it is hot enough to roast eggs even in the shade.

The house itself is three stories high, without counting the attics under the roof. It is built of rough stone, and covered with the yellowish stucco that gives a mean appearance to almost every house in Paris. There are five windows in each story in the front of the house ; all the blinds visible through the small square panes are drawn up awry, so that the lines are all at cross-purposes. At the side of the house there are but two windows on each floor, and the lowest of all are adorned with a heavy iron grating.

Behind the house a yard extends for some twenty feet, a space inhabited by a happy family of pigs, poultry, and rabbits ; the wood-shed is situated on the farther side, and on the wall between the wood-shed and the kitchen window hangs the meat-safe, just above the place where the sink discharges its greasy streams. The cook sweeps all the refuse out through a little door into the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and frequently cleanses the yard with copious supplies of water, under pain of pestilence.

The house might have been built on purpose for its present uses. Access is given by a French window to the first room on the ground floor, a sitting-room which looks out upon the street through the two barred windows already mentioned. Another door opens out of it into the dining-room, which is separated from the kitchen by the wall of the staircase, the steps being constructed partly of wood, partly of tiles, which are colored and beeswaxed. Nothing can be more depressing than the sight of that sitting-room. The furniture is covered with horsehair woven in alternate dull and glossy stripes. There is a round table in the middle, with a purplish-red marble top, on which there stands, by way of ornament, the inevitable white china tea-service, covered with a half-effaced gilt network. The floor is sufficiently uneven, the wainscot rises to elbow height, and the rest of the wall space is decorated with a varnished paper, on which the principal scenes from *Télémaque* are depicted, the various classical personages being colored. The subject between the two windows is the banquet given by Calypso to the son of Ulysses, displayed thereon for the admiration of the boarders, and has furnished jokes these forty years to the young men who show themselves superior to their position by making fun of the dinners to which poverty condemns them. The hearth is always so clean and neat that it is evident that a fire is only kindled there on great occasions ; the stone chimney-piece is adorned by a couple of vases filled with faded artificial flowers imprisoned

under glass shades, on either side of a bluish-marble clock in the very worst taste.

The first room exhales an odor for which there is no name in the language, and which should be called the boarding-house stench. The damp air sends a chill through you as you breathe it ; it has a stuffy, musty, and rancid quality ; it permeates your clothing ; after-dinner scents seem to be mingled in it with smells from the kitchen and scullery and the reek of a hospital. It might be possible to describe it if some one should discover a process by which to distil from the atmosphere all the nauseating elements with which it is charged by the catarrhal exhalations of every individual lodger, young or old. Yet, in spite of these stale horrors, the sitting-room is as charming and as delicately perfumed as a boudoir, when compared with the adjoining dining-room.

The paneled walls of that apartment were once painted some color, now a matter of conjecture, for the surface is incrustated with accumulated layers of grimy deposit, which cover it with fantastic outlines. A collection of dim-ribbed glass decanters, metal discs with a satin sheen on them, and piles of blue-edged earthenware plates of Touraine ware cover the sticky surfaces of the sideboards that line the room. In a corner stands a box containing a set of numbered pigeon-holes, in which the lodgers' table napkins, more or less soiled and stained with wine, are kept. Here you see that indestructible furniture never met with elsewhere, which finds its way into lodging-houses much as the wrecks of our civilization drift into hospitals for incurables. You expect in such places as these to find the weather-house whence a Capuchin issues on wet days ; you look to find the execrable engravings which spoil your appetite, framed every one in a black varnished frame, with a gilt beading round it ; you know the sort of tortoise-shell clock-case, inlaid with brass ; the green stove, the Argand lamps, covered with oil and dust, have met your eyes before. The oilcloth which covers the long table is so greasy

that a waggish outsider will write his name on the surface, using his thumb-nail as a style. The chairs are broken-down invalids; the wretched little hempen mats slip away from under your feet without slipping away for good; and, finally, the foot-warmers are miserable wrecks, hingeless, charred, broken away about the holes. It would be impossible to give an idea of the old, rotten, shaky, cranky, worm-eaten, halt, maimed, one-eyed, rickety, and ramshackle condition of the furniture without an exhaustive description, which would delay the progress of the story to an extent that impatient people would not pardon. The red tiles of the floor are full of depressions brought about by scouring and periodical renewings of color. In short, there is no illusory grace left to the poverty that reigns here; it is dire, parsimonious, concentrated, threadbare poverty; as yet it has not sunk into the mire, it is only splashed by it, and, though not in rags as yet, its clothing is ready to drop to pieces.

This apartment is in all its glory at seven o'clock in the morning, when Mme. Vauquer's cat appears, announcing the near approach of his mistress, and jumps upon the sideboards to sniff at the milk in the bowls, each protected by a plate, while he purrs his morning greeting to the world. A moment later the widow shows her face; she is tricked out in a net cap attached to a false front set on awry, and shuffles into the room in her slipshod fashion. She is an oldish woman, with a bloated countenance, and a nose like a parrot's beak set in the middle of it; her fat little hands (she is as sleek as a church rat) and her shapeless, slouching figure are in keeping with the room that reeks of misfortune, where hope is reduced to speculate for the meanest stakes. Mme. Vauquer alone can breathe that tainted air without being disheartened by it. Her face is as fresh as a frosty morning in autumn; there are wrinkles about the eyes that vary in their expression from the set smile of a ballet-dancer to the dark, suspicious scowl of a discounter of bills; in short, she is at once the embodiment

and interpretation of her lodging-house, as surely as her lodging-house implies the existence of its mistress. You can no more imagine the one without the other, than you can think of a jail without a turnkey. The unwholesome corpulence of the little woman is produced by the life she leads, just as typhus fever is bred in the tainted air of a hospital. The very knitted woolen petticoat that she wears beneath a skirt made of an old gown, with the wadding protruding through the rents in the material, is a sort of epitome of the sitting-room, the dining-room, and the little garden; it discovers the cook; it foreshadows the lodgers—the picture of the house is completed by the portrait of its mistress.

Mme. Vauquer at the age of fifty is like all women who “have seen a deal of trouble.” She has the glassy eyes and innocent air of a trafficker in flesh and blood, who will wax virtuously indignant to obtain a higher price for her services, but who is quite ready to betray a Georges or a Pichegru, if a Georges or a Pichegru were in hiding and still to be betrayed, or for any other expedient that may alleviate her lot. Still, “she is a good woman at bottom,” said the lodgers, who believed that the widow was wholly dependent upon the money that they paid her, and sympathized when they heard her cough and groan like one of themselves.

What had M. Vauquer been? The lady was never very explicit on this head. How had she lost her money? “Through trouble,” was her answer. He had treated her badly, had left her nothing but her eyes to cry over his cruelty, the house she lived in, and the privilege of pitying nobody, because, so she was wont to say, she herself had been through every possible misfortune.

Sylvie, the stout cook, hearing her mistress’ shuffling footsteps, hastened to serve the lodgers’ breakfast. Besides those who lived in the house, Mme. Vauquer took boarders who came for their meals; but these outsiders usually only came to dinner, for which they paid thirty francs a month.

At the time when this story begins, the lodging-house contained seven inmates. The best rooms in the house were on the first story, Mme. Vauquer herself occupying the least important, while the rest were let to a Mme. Couture, the widow of a commissary-general in the service of the Republic. With her lived Victorine Taillefer, a school-girl, to whom she filled the place of mother. These two ladies paid eighteen hundred francs a year.

The two sets of rooms on the third floor were respectively occupied by an old man named Poiret and a man of forty or thereabouts, the wearer of a black wig and dyed whiskers, who gave out that he was a retired merchant, and was addressed as M. Vautrin. Two of the four rooms on the fourth floor were also let—one to an elderly spinster, a Mlle. Michonneau, and the other to a retired manufacturer of vermicelli, Italian paste and starch, who allowed the others to address him as "Father Goriot." The remaining rooms were allotted to various birds of passage, to impecunious students, who, like "Father Goriot" and Mlle. Michonneau, could only muster forty-five francs a month to pay for their board and lodging. Mme. Vauquer had little desire for lodgers of this sort; they ate too much bread, and she only took them in default of better.

At that time one of the rooms was tenanted by a law student, a young man from the neighborhood of Angoulême, one of a large family who pinched and starved themselves to spare twelve hundred francs a year for him. Misfortune had accustomed Eugène de Rastignac, for that was his name, to work. He belonged to the number of young men who know as children that their parents' hopes are centred on them, and deliberately prepare themselves for a great career, subordinating their studies from the first to this end, carefully watching the indications of the course of events, calculating the probable turn that affairs will take, that they may be the first to profit by them. But for his observant curiosity, and the

skill with which he managed to introduce himself into the salons of Paris, this story would not have been colored by the tones of truth which it certainly owes to him, for they are entirely due to his penetrating sagacity and desire to fathom the mysteries of an appalling condition of things which was concealed as carefully by the victim as by those who had brought it to pass.

Above the third story there was a garret where the linen was hung to dry, and a couple of attics. Christophe, the man-of-all-work, slept in one, and Sylvie, the stout cook, in the other. Besides the seven inmates thus enumerated, taking one year with another, some eight law or medical students dined in the house, as well as two or three regular comers who lived in the neighborhood. There were usually eighteen people at dinner, and there was room, if need be, for twenty at Mme. Vauquer's table; at breakfast, however, only the seven lodgers appeared. It was almost like a family party. Every one came down in dressing-gown and slippers, and the conversation usually turned on anything that had happened the evening before; comments on the dress or appearance of the dinner contingent were exchanged in friendly confidence.

These seven lodgers were Mme. Vauquer's spoiled children. Among them she distributed, with astronomical precision, the exact proportion of respect and attention due to the varying amounts they paid for their board. One single consideration influenced all these human beings thrown together by chance. The two third-floor lodgers only paid seventy-two francs a month. Such prices as these are confined to the Faubourg Saint-Marcel and the district between La Bourbe and the Salpêtrière; and, as might be expected, poverty, more or less apparent, weighed upon them all, Mme. Couture being the sole exception to the rule.

The dreary surroundings were reflected in the costumes of the inmates of the house; all were alike threadbare. The color of the men's coats was problematical; such shoes, in

more fashionable quarters, are only to be seen lying in the gutter; the cuffs and collars were worn and frayed at the edges; every limp article of clothing looked like the ghost of its former self. The women's dresses were faded, old-fashioned, dyed and re-dyed; they wore gloves that were glazed with hard wear, much-mended lace, dingy ruffles, crumpled muslin fichus. So much for their clothing; but, for the most part, their frames were solid enough; their constitutions had weathered the storms of life; their cold, hard faces were worn like coins that have been withdrawn from circulation, but there were greedy teeth behind the withered lips. Dramas brought to a close or still in progress are foreshadowed by the sight of such actors as these, not the dramas that are played before the footlights and against a background of painted canvas, but dumb dramas of life frost-bound dramas that sear hearts like fire, dramas that do not end with the actors' lives.

Mlle. Michonneau, that elderly young lady, screened her weak eyes from the daylight by a soiled, green silk shade with a rim of brass, an object fit to scare away the Angel of Pity himself. Her shawl, with its scanty, draggled fringe, might have covered a skeleton, so meagre and angular was the form beneath it. Yet she must have been pretty and shapely once. What corrosive had destroyed the feminine outlines? Was it trouble, or vice, or greed? Had she loved too well? Had she been a second-hand clothes dealer, a frequenter of the back-stairs of great houses, or had she been merely a courtesan? Was she expiating the flaunting triumphs of a youth overcrowded with pleasures by an old age in which she was shunned by every passer-by? Her vacant gaze sent a chill through you; her shriveled face seemed like a menace. Her voice was like the shrill, thin note of the grasshopper sounding from the thicket when winter is at hand. She said that she had nursed an old gentleman, ill of catarrh of the bladder, and left to die by his children, who thought that he had nothing left. His bequest to her, a life annuity of a thousand

francs, was periodically disputed by his heirs, who mingled slander with their persecutions. In spite of the ravages of conflicting passions, her face retained some traces of its former fairness and fineness of tissue, some vestiges of the physical charms of her youth still survived.

M. Poiret was a sort of automaton. He might be seen any day sailing like a gray shadow along the walks of the Jardin des Plantes, on his head a shabby cap, a cane with an old yellow ivory handle in the tips of his thin fingers; the outspread skirts of his threadbare overcoat failed to conceal his meagre figure; his breeches hung loosely on his shrunken limbs; the thin, blue-stockinged legs trembled like those of a drunken man; there was a notable breach of continuity between the dingy white waistcoat and crumpled shirt frills and the cravat twisted about a throat like a turkey gobbler's; altogether, his appearance set people wondering whether this outlandish ghost belonged to the audacious race of the sons of Japhet who flutter about on the Boulevard Italien. What kind of toil could have so shriveled him? What devouring passions had darkened that bulbous countenance, which would have seemed outrageous as a caricature? What had he been? Well, perhaps he had been part of the machinery of justice, a clerk in the office to which the executioner sends in his accounts—so much for providing black veils for parricides, so much for sawdust, so much for pulleys and cord for the knife. Or he might have been a receiver at the door of a public slaughter-house, or a sub-inspector of nuisances. Indeed, the man appeared to have been one of the beasts of burden in our great social mill; one of those Parisian "rats" whom their Bertrands do not even know by sight; a pivot in the obscure machinery that disposes of misery and things unclean; one of those men, in short, at sight of whom we are prompted to remark that, "After all, we cannot do without them."

Stately Paris ignores the existence of these faces bleached by moral or physical suffering; but, then, Paris is in truth an

ocean that no line can fathom. You may survey its surface and describe it; but no matter what pains you take with your investigations and recognizances, no matter how numerous and painstaking the toilers in this sea, there will always be lonely and unexplored regions in its depths, caverns unknown, flowers and pearls and monsters of the deep overlooked or forgotten by the divers of literature. The Maison Vauquer is one of these curious monstrosities.

Two, however, of Mme. Vauquer's boarders formed a striking contrast to the rest. There was a sickly pallor, such as is often seen in anæmic girls, in Mlle. Victorine Taillefer's face; and her unvarying expression of sadness, like her embarrassed manner and pinched look, was in keeping with the general wretchedness of the establishment in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, which forms a background to this picture; but her face was young, there was youthfulness in her voice and elasticity in her movements. This young unfortunate was not unlike a shrub, newly planted in an uncongenial soil, where its leaves have already begun to wither. The outlines of her figure, revealed by her dress of the simplest and cheapest materials, were also youthful. There was the same kind of charm about her too slender form, her faintly colored face and light-brown hair, that modern poets find in mediæval statuettes; and a sweet expression, a look of Christian resignation in the dark-gray eyes. She was pretty by force of contrast; if she had been happy, she would have been charming. Happiness is the poetry of woman, as the toilet is her tinsel. If the delightful excitement of a ball had made the pale face glow with color; if the delights of a luxurious life had brought the color to the wan cheeks that were slightly hollowed already; if love had put light into the sad eyes, then Victorine might have ranked among the fairest; but she lacked the two things which create woman a second time—pretty dresses and love-letters.

A book might have been made of her story. Her father

was persuaded that he had sufficient reason for declining to acknowledge her, and allowed her a bare six hundred francs a year ; he had further taken measures to disinherit his daughter, and had converted all his real estate into personalty, that he might leave it undivided to his son. Victorine's mother had died broken-hearted in Mme. Couture's house ; and the latter, who was a near relation, had taken charge of the little orphan. Unluckily, the widow of the commissary-general to the armies of the Republic had nothing in the world but her jointure and her widow's pension, and some day she might be obliged to leave the helpless, inexperienced girl to the mercy of the world. The good soul, therefore, took Victorine to mass every Sunday, and to confession once a fortnight, thinking that, in any case, she would bring up her ward to be devout. She was right ; religion offered a solution of the problem of the young girl's future. The poor child loved the father who refused to acknowledge her. Once every year she tried to see him to deliver her mother's message of forgiveness, but every year hitherto she had knocked at that door in vain ; her father was inexorable. Her brother, her only means of communication, had not come to see her for four years, and had sent her no assistance ; yet she prayed to God to unseal her father's eyes and to soften her brother's heart, and no accusations mingled with her prayers. Mme. Couture and Mme. Vauquer exhausted the vocabulary of abuse, and failed to find words that did justice to the banker's iniquitous conduct ; but while they heaped execrations on the millionaire, Victorine's words were as gentle as the moan of the wounded dove, and affection found expression even in the cry drawn from her by pain.

Eugène de Rastignac was a thoroughly southern type ; he had a fair complexion, blue eyes, black hair. In his figure, manner, and his whole bearing it was easy to see that he either came of a noble family, or that, from his earliest childhood, he had been gently bred. If he was careful of his

wardrobe, only taking last year's clothes into daily wear, still upon occasion he could issue forth as a young man of fashion. Ordinarily he wore a shabby coat and waistcoat, the limp black cravat, untidily knotted, that students affect, trousers that matched the rest of his costume, and boots that had been re-soled.

Vautrin (the man of forty with the dyed whiskers) marked a transition stage between these two young people and the others. He was the kind of man that calls forth the remark : "He looks a jovial sort !" He had broad shoulders, a well-developed chest, muscular arms, and strong square-fisted hands ; the joints of his fingers were covered with tufts of fiery red hair. His face was furrowed by premature wrinkles ; there was a certain hardness about it in spite of his bland and insinuating manner. His bass voice was by no means unpleasant, and was in keeping with his boisterous laughter. He was always obliging, always in good spirits ; if anything went wrong with one of the locks, he would soon unscrew it, take it to pieces, file it, oil and clean and set it in order, and put it back in its place again : "I am an old hand at it," he used to say. Not only so, he knew all about ships, the sea, France, foreign countries, men, business, law, great houses and prisons—there was nothing that he did not know. If any one complained rather more than usual, he would offer his services at once. He had several times loaned money to Mme. Vauquer, or to the boarders ; but, somehow, those whom he obliged felt that they would sooner face death than fail to repay him ; a certain resolute look, sometimes seen on his face, inspired fear of him, for all his appearance of easy good-nature. In the way he spat there was an imperturbable coolness which seemed to indicate that this was a man who would not stop at a crime to extricate himself from a false position. His eyes, like those of a pitiless judge, seemed to go to the very bottom of all questions, to read all natures, all feelings, and thoughts. His habit of life was very regular ; he usually

went out after breakfast, returning in time for dinner, and disappeared for the rest of the evening, letting himself in about midnight with a latch-key, a privilege that Mme. Vauquer accorded to no other boarder. But then he was on very good terms with the widow; he used to call her "mamma," and put his arm round her waist, a piece of flattery perhaps not appreciated to the full! The worthy woman might imagine this to be an easy feat; but, as a matter of fact, no arm but Vautrin's was long enough to encircle her.

It was a characteristic trait of his generosity to pay fifteen francs a month for the cup of coffee with a dash of brandy in it, which he took after dinner. Less superficial observers than young men engulfed by the whirlpool of Parisian life, or old men, who took no interest in anything that did not directly concern them, would not have stopped short at the vaguely unsatisfactory impression that Vautrin made upon them. He knew or guessed the concerns of every one about him; but none of them had been able to penetrate his thoughts, or to discover his occupation. He had deliberately made his apparent good-nature, his unfailing readiness to oblige, and his high spirits into a barrier between himself and the rest of them, but not seldom he gave glimpses of appalling depths of character. He seemed to delight in scourging the upper class of society with the lash of his tongue, to take pleasure in convicting it of inconsistency, in mocking at law and order with some grim jest worthy of Juvenal, as if some grudge against the social system rankled in him, as if there were some mystery carefully hidden away in his life.

Mlle. Taillefer felt attracted, perhaps unconsciously by the strength of the one man, and the good looks of the other; her stolen glances and secret thoughts were divided between them; but neither of them seemed to take any notice of her, although some day a chance might alter her position and she would be a wealthy heiress. For that matter, there was not a soul in the house who took any trouble to investigate the vari-

ous chronicles of misfortunes, real or imaginary, related by the rest. Each one regarded the others with indifference, tempered by suspicion; it was the natural result of their relative positions. Practical assistance not one of them could give, this they all knew, and they had long since exhausted their stock of condolence over previous discussions of their grievances. They were in something the same position as an elderly couple who have nothing left to say to each other. The routine of existence kept them in contact, but they were parts of a mechanism which wanted oil. There was not one of them but would have passed a blind man begging in the street, not one that felt moved to pity by a tale of misfortune, not one that did not see in death the solution of the all-absorbing problem of misery which left them cold to the most terrible anguish in others.

The happiest of these hapless beings was certainly Mme. Vauquer, who reigned supreme over this hospital supported by voluntary contributions. For her the little garden, which silence, and cold, and rain and drought combined to make as dreary as an Asian *steppe*, was a pleasant, shaded nook; the gaunt yellow house, the musty odors of a back shop had charms for her, and for her alone. Those cells belonged to her. She fed those convicts condemned to penal servitude for life, and her authority was recognized among them. Where else in Paris would they have found wholesome food in sufficient quantity at the prices she charged them, and rooms which they were at liberty to make, if not exactly elegant or comfortable, at any rate, clean and healthy? If she had committed some flagrant act of injustice, the victim would have borne it in silence.

Such a gathering contained, as might have been expected, the elements out of which a complete society might be constructed. And, as in a school, as in the world itself, there was among the eighteen men and women who met round the dinner table a poor creature, despised by all the others,

condemned to be the butt of all their jokes. At the beginning of Eugène de Rastignac's second twelvemonth, this figure suddenly started out into bold relief against the background of human forms and faces among which the law student was yet to live for another two years to come. This laughing-stock was the retired vermicelli-merchant, Father Goriot, upon whose face a painter, like the historian, would have concentrated all the light in his picture.

How had it come about that the boarders regarded him with a half-malignant contempt? Why did they subject the oldest among their number to a kind of persecution, in which there was mingled some pity, but no respect for his misfortunes? Had he brought it upon himself by some eccentricity or absurdity, which is less easily forgiven or forgotten than more serious defects? The question strikes at the root of many a social injustice. Perhaps it is only human nature to inflict suffering on anything that will endure suffering, whether by reason of its genuine humility, or indifference, or sheer helplessness. Do we not, one and all, like to feel our strength even at the expense of some one or of something? The poorest sample of humanity, the street arab, will pull the bell-handle at every street-door in bitter weather, and scramble up to write his name on the unsullied marble of a monument.

In the year 1813, at the age of sixty-nine or thereabouts, "Father Goriot" had sold his business and retired—to Mme. Vauquer's boarding-house. When he first came there he had taken the rooms now occupied by Mme. Couture; he had paid twelve hundred francs a year like a man to whom five louis more or less was a mere trifle. For him Mme. Vauquer had made various improvements in the three rooms destined for his use, in consideration of a certain sum paid in advance, so it was said, for the miserable furniture, that is to say, for some yellow cotton curtains, a few chairs of stained wood covered with Utrecht velvet, several wretchedly colored prints in frames, and wall papers that a little suburban tavern would

have disdained. Possibly it was the careless generosity with which Father Goriot allowed himself to be overreached at this period of his life (they called him Monsieur Goriot very respectfully then) that gave Mme. Vauquer the meanest opinion of his business abilities; she looked on him as an imbecile where money was concerned.

Goriot had brought with him a considerable wardrobe, the gorgeous outfit of a retired tradesman who denies himself nothing. Mme. Vauquer's astonished eyes beheld no less than eighteen cambric-fronted shirts, the splendor of their fineness being enhanced by a pair of pins each bearing a large diamond, and connected by a short chain, an ornament which adorned the vermicelli-maker's shirt-front. He usually wore a coat of cornflower blue; his rotund and portly person was still further set off by a clean white waistcoat, and a gold chain and seals which dangled over that broad expanse. When his hostess accused him of being "a bit of a beau," he smiled with the vanity of a citizen whose foible is gratified. His cupboards (*ormoires*, as he called them in the popular dialect) were filled with a quantity of plate that he brought with him. The widow's eyes gleamed as she obligingly helped him to unpack the soup ladles, tablespoons, forks, cruet-stands, tureens, dishes, and breakfast services—all of silver—which were duly arranged upon the shelves, beside a few more or less handsome pieces of plate, all weighing no inconsiderable number of ounces; he could not bring himself to part with these gifts that reminded him of past domestic festivals.

"This was my wife's present to me on the first anniversary of our wedding-day," he said to Mme. Vauquer, as he put away a little silver posset dish, with two turtle-doves billing on the cover. "Poor dear! she spent on it all the money she had saved before we married. Do you know, I would sooner scratch the earth with my nails for a living, madame, than part with that. But I shall be able to take my coffee out of it every morning for the rest of my days, thank the Lord!

I am not to be pitied. There's not much fear of my starving for some time to come."

Finally, Mme. Vauquer's magpie's eye had discovered and read certain entries in the list of shareholders in the funds, and, after a rough calculation, was disposed to credit Goriot (worthy man) with something like ten thousand francs a year. From that day forward Mme. Vauquer (*née* de Conflans), who, as a matter of fact, had seen forty-eight summers, though she would only own to thirty-nine of them—Mme. Vauquer had her own ideas. Though Goriot's eyes seemed to have shrunk in their sockets, though they were weak and watery, owing to some glandular affection which compelled him to wipe them continually, she considered him to be a very gentlemanly and pleasant-looking man. Moreover, the widow saw favorable indications of character in the well-developed calves of his legs and in his square-shaped nose, indications still further borne out by the worthy man's full-moon countenance and look of stupid good-nature. This, in all probability, was a strongly-built animal, whose brains mostly consisted in a capacity for affection. His hair, worn "pigeon winged," and duly powdered every morning by the barber from the *École Polytechnique*, described five points on his low forehead, and made an elegant setting to his face. Though his manners were somewhat boorish, he was always as neat as a new pin, and he took his snuff in a lordly way, like a man who knows that his snuff-box is always likely to be filled with maccaboy; so that when Mme. Vauquer lay down to rest on the day of M. Goriot's installation, her heart, like a larded partridge, sweltered before the fire of a burning desire to shake off the shroud of Vauquer and rise again as Goriot. She would marry again, sell her boarding-house, give her hand to this fine flower of citizenship, become a lady of consequence in the Quarter, and ask for subscriptions for charitable purposes; she would make little Sunday excursions to Choisy, Soisy, Gentilly; she would have a box at the

theatre when she liked, instead of waiting for the author's tickets that one of her boarders sometimes gave her, in July ; the whole Eldorado of a little Parisian household rose up before Mme. Vauquer in her dreams. Nobody knew that she herself possessed forty thousand francs, accumulated *sou* by *sou*, that was her secret ; surely as far as money was concerned she was a very tolerable match. "And in other respects, I am quite his equal," she said to herself, turning as if to assure herself of the charms of a form that the portly Sylvie found moulded in down feathers every morning.

For three months from that day Mme. Veuve Vauquer availed herself of the services of M. Goriot's coiffeur, and went to some expense over her toilet, expense justifiable on the ground that she owed it to herself and her establishment to pay some attention to appearances when such highly respectable persons honored her house with their presence. She expended no small amount of ingenuity in a sort of weeding process of her lodgers, announcing her intention of receiving henceforward none but people who were in every way select. If a stranger presented himself, she let him know that M. Goriot, one of the best-known and most highly respected merchants in Paris, had singled out her boarding-house for a residence. She drew up a prospectus headed MAISON VAUQUER, in which it was asserted that hers was "*one of the oldest and most highly recommended boarding-houses in the Latin Quarter*— From the windows of the house," thus ran the prospectus, "there is a charming view of the Vallée des Gobelins (so there is— from the fourth floor), and a *beautiful garden, extending down to an avenue of lindens* at the farther end." Mention was made of the bracing air of the place and its quiet situation.

It was this prospectus that attracted Mme. la Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil, a widow of six and thirty, who was awaiting the final settlement of her husband's affairs, and of another matter regarding a pension due to her as the wife of a general who had died "on the field of battle." On this Mme. Vau-

quer saw to her table, lighted a fire daily in the sitting-room for nearly six months, and kept the promise of her prospectus, even going to some expense to do so. And the Countess, on her side, addressed Mme. Vauquer as "my dear," and promised her two more boarders, the Baronne de Vaumerland and the widow of a colonel, the late Comte de Picquoisie, who were about to leave a boarding-house in the Marais, where the terms were higher than at the Maison Vauquer. Both these ladies, moreover, would be very well to do when the people at the War Office had come to an end of their formalities. "But government departments are always so dilatory," the lady added.

After dinner the two widows went together up to Mme. Vauquer's room, and had a snug little chat over some cordial and various delicacies reserved for the mistress of the house. Mme. Vauquer's ideas as to Goriot were cordially approved by Mme. de l'Ambermesnil; it was a capital notion, which for that matter she had guessed from the very first; in her opinion the vermicelli-maker was an excellent man.

"Ah! my dear lady, such a well-preserved man of his age, as sound as my eyesight—a man who might make a woman happy!" said the widow.

The good-natured Countess turned to the subject of Mme. Vauquer's dress, which was not in harmony with her projects. "You must put yourself on a war footing," said she.

After much serious consideration the two widows went shopping together—they purchased a hat adorned with ostrich feathers and a cap at the Palais Royal, and the Countess took her friend to the Magasin de la Petite Jeannette, where they chose a dress and a scarf. Thus equipped for the campaign, the widow looked exactly like the prize animal hung out for a sign above an *à la mode* beef-shop; but she herself was so much pleased with the improvement, as she considered it, in her appearance, that she felt that she lay under some obligation to the Countess; and, though by no means open-handed,

she begged that lady to accept a hat that cost twenty francs. The fact was that she needed the Countess' services on the delicate mission of sounding Goriot; the Countess must sing her praises in his ears. Mme. de Ambermesnil lent herself very good-naturedly to this manœuvre, began her operations, and succeeded in obtaining a private interview; but the overtures that she made, with a view to securing him for herself, were received with embarrassment, not to say a repulse. She left him, revolted by his coarseness.

“My angel,” said she to her dear friend, “you will make nothing of that man yonder. He is absurdly suspicious, and he is a mean curmudgeon, an idiot, a fool; you would never be happy with him.”

After what had passed between M. Goriot and Mme. de l'Ambermesnil, the Countess would no longer live under the same roof. She left the next day, forgot to pay for six months' board, and left behind her her wardrobe, cast-off clothing to the value of five francs. Eagerly and persistently as Mme. Vauquer sought her quondam lodger, the Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil was never heard of again in Paris. The widow often talked of this deplorable business, and regretted her own too confiding disposition. As a matter of fact, she was as suspicious as a cat; but she was like many other people, who cannot trust their own kin and put themselves at the mercy of the next chance comer—an odd but common phenomenon, whose causes may readily be traced to the depths of the human heart.

Perhaps there are people who know that they have nothing more to look for from those with whom they live; they have shown the emptiness of their hearts to their housemates, and in their secret selves they are conscious that they are severely judged, and that they deserve to be judged severely; but still they feel an unconquerable craving for praises that they do not hear, or they are consumed by a desire to appear to possess, in the eyes of a new audience, the qualities which

they have not, hoping to win the admiration or affection of strangers at the risk of forfeiting it again some day. Or, once more, there are other mercenary natures who never do a kindness to a friend or a relation simply because these have a claim upon them, while a service done to a stranger brings its reward to self-love. Such natures feel but little affection for those who are nearest to them; they keep their kindness for remoter circles of acquaintance, and show most to those who dwell on its utmost limits. Mme. Vauquer belonged to both these essentially mean, false, and execrable classes.

“If I had been here at the time,” Vautrin would say at the end of the story, “I would have shown her up, and that misfortune would not have befallen you. I know that kind of phiz!”

Like all narrow natures, Mme. Vauquer was wont to confine her attention to events, and did not go very deeply into the causes that brought them about; she likewise preferred to throw the blame of her own mistakes on other people, so she chose to consider that the honest vermicelli-maker was responsible for her misfortune. It had opened her eyes, so she said, with regard to him. As soon as she saw that her blandishments were in vain, and that her outlay on her toilet was money thrown away, she was not slow to discover the reason of his indifference. It became plain to her at once that there was *some other attraction*, to use her own expression. In short, it was evident that the hope she had so fondly cherished was a baseless delusion, and that she would “never make anything out of that man yonder,” in the Countess’ forcible phrase. The Countess seemed to have been a judge of character. Mme. Vauquer’s aversion was naturally more energetic than her friendship, for her hatred was not in proportion to her love, but to her disappointed expectations. The human heart may find here and there a resting-place short of the highest height of affection, but we seldom stop in the steep, downward slope of hatred. Still, M. Goriot was a lodger,

and the widow's wounded self-love could not vent itself in an explosion of wrath; like a monk harassed by the prior of his convent, she was forced to stifle her sighs of disappointment, and to gulp down her cravings for revenge. Little minds find gratification for their feelings, benevolent or otherwise, by a constant exercise of petty ingenuity. The widow employed her woman's malice to devise a system of covert persecution. She began by a course of retrenchment—various luxuries which had found their way to the table appeared there no more.

“No more gherkins, no more anchovies; they have made a fool of me!” she said to Sylvie one morning, and they returned to the old bill of fare.

The thrifty frugality necessary to those who mean to make their way in the world had become an inveterate habit of life with M. Goriot. Soup, boiled beef, and a dish of vegetables had been, and always would be, the dinner he liked best, so Mme. Vauquer found it very difficult to annoy a boarder whose tastes were so simple. He was proof against her malice, and in desperation she spoke to him and of him slightly before the other lodgers, who began to amuse themselves greatly at his expense, and so deeply gratified her desire for revenge.

Towards the end of the first year the widow's suspicions had reached such a pitch that she began to wonder how it was that a retired merchant with a secure income of seven or eight thousand livres, the owner of such magnificent plate and jewelry handsome enough for a kept mistress, should be living in her house. Why should he devote so small a proportion of his money to his expenses? Until the first year was nearly at an end, Goriot had dined out once or twice every week, but these occasions came less frequently, and at last he was scarcely absent from the dinner table twice a month. It was hardly to be expected that Mme. Vauquer should regard the increased regularity of her boarder's habits

with complacency, when those little excursions of his had been so much to her interest. She attributed the change not so much to a gradual diminution of fortune as to a spiteful wish to annoy his hostess. It is one of the most detestable habits of a liliputian mind to credit other people with its own malignant pettiness.

Unluckily, towards the end of the second year, M. Goriot's conduct gave some color to the idle talk about him. He asked Mme. Vauquer to give him a room on the third floor, and to make a corresponding reduction in her charges. Apparently, such strict economy was called for, that he did without a fire all through the winter. Madame Vauquer asked to be paid in advance, an arrangement to which M. Goriot consented, and thenceforward she always spoke of him as "old Goriot."

What had brought about this decline and fall? Conjecture was keen, but investigation was difficult. Father Goriot was not communicative; in the sham Countess' phrase, he was "a curmudgeon." Empty-headed people who babble about their own affairs because they have nothing else to occupy them, naturally conclude that if people say nothing of their doings it is because their doings will not bear being talked about; so the highly respectable merchant became a scoundrel, and the late beau was an old rogue. Opinion fluctuated. Sometimes, according to Vautrin, who came about this time to live in the Maison Vauquer, Father Goriot was a man who went on 'Change and *dabbled* (to use the sufficiently expressive language of the Stock Exchange) in stocks and shares after he had ruined himself by heavy speculation. Sometimes it was held that he was one of those petty gamblers who nightly play for small stakes until they win a few francs. A theory that he was a detective in the employ of the Home Office found favor at one time, but Vautrin urged that "Goriot was not sharp enough for one of that sort." There were yet other solutions; Father Goriot was a skinflint, a shark of a money-lender, a man

who lived by selling lottery tickets. He was by turns all the most mysterious brood of vice and shame and misery; yet, however vile his life might be, the feeling of repulsion which he aroused in others was not so strong that he must be banished from their society—he paid his way. Besides, Goriot had his uses, every one vented his spleen or sharpened his wit on him; he was pelted with jokes and belabored with hard words. The general consensus of opinion was in favor of a theory which seemed the most likely; this was Mme. Vauquer's view. According to her, the man so well preserved at his time of life, as sound as her eyesight, with whom a woman might be very happy, was a libertine who had strange tastes. These are the facts upon which Mme. Vauquer's slanders were based.

Early one morning, some few months after the departure of the unlucky Countess who had managed to live for six months at the widow's expense, Mme. Vauquer (not yet dressed) heard the rustle of a silk dress and a young woman's light footstep on the stair; some one was going to Goriot's room. He seemed to expect the visit, for his door stood ajar. The portly Sylvie presently came up to tell her mistress that a girl too pretty to be honest, "dressed like a goddess," and not a speck of mud on her laced cashmere boots, had glided in from the street like a snake, had found the kitchen, and asked for M. Goriot's room. Mme. Vauquer and the cook, listening, overheard several words affectionately spoken during the visit, which lasted for some time. When M. Goriot went downstairs with the lady, the stout Sylvie forthwith took her basket and followed the lover-like couple, under pretext of going to do her marketing.

"M. Goriot must be awfully rich, all the same, madame," she reported on her return, "to keep her in such style. Just imagine it! There was a splendid carriage waiting at the corner of the Place de l'Estrapade, and *she* got into it."

While they were at dinner that evening, Mme. Vauquer

went to the window and drew the curtain, as the sun was shining into Goriot's eyes.

"You are beloved of fair ladies, M. Goriot—the sun seeks you out," she said, alluding to his visitor. "*Peste!* you have good taste; she was very pretty."

"That was my daughter," he said, with a kind of pride in his voice, and the rest chose to consider this as the fatuity of an old man who wishes to save appearances.

A month after this visit M. Goriot received another. The same daughter who had come to see him that morning came again after dinner, this time in evening dress. The boarders, in deep discussion in the dining-room, caught a glimpse of a lovely, fair-haired woman, slender, graceful, and much too distinguished-looking to be a daughter of Father Goriot.

"Two of them!" cried the portly Sylvie, who did not recognize the lady of the first visit.

A few days later, and another young lady—a tall, well-moulded brunette, with dark hair and bright eyes—came to ask for M. Goriot.

"Three of them!" said Sylvie.

Then the second daughter, who had first come in the morning to see her father, came shortly afterwards in the evening. She wore a ball dress, and came in a carriage.

"Four of them!" commented Mme. Vauquer and her plump handmaid. Sylvie saw not a trace of resemblance between this great lady and the girl in her simple morning dress who had entered her kitchen on the occasion of her first visit.

At that time Goriot was paying twelve hundred francs a year to his landlady, and Mme. Vauquer saw nothing out of the common in the fact that a rich man had four or five mistresses; nay, she thought it very knowing of him to pass them off as his daughters. She was not at all inclined to draw a hard-and-fast line, or to take umbrage at his sending for them to the Maison Vauquer; yet, inasmuch as these visits ex-

plained her boarder's indifference to her, she went so far (at the end of the second year) as to speak of him as an "ugly old wretch." When at length her boarder declined to nine hundred francs a year, she asked him very insolently what he took her house to be, after meeting one of these ladies on the stairs. Father Goriot answered that the lady was his eldest daughter.

"So you have two or three dozen daughters, have you?" said Mme. Vanquer sharply.

"I have only two," her boarder answered meekly, like a ruined man who is broken in to all the cruel usage of misfortune.

Towards the end of the third year Father Goriot reduced his expenses still further; he went up to the third story, and now paid forty-five francs a month. He did without snuff, told his hairdresser that he no longer required his services, and gave up wearing powder. When Goriot appeared for the first time in this condition, an exclamation of astonishment broke from his hostess at the color of his hair—a dingy olive gray. He had grown sadder day by day under the influence of some hidden trouble; among all the faces round the table, his was the most woe-begone. There was no longer any doubt. Goriot was an elderly libertine, whose eyes had only been preserved by the skill of the physician from the malign influence of the remedies necessitated by the state of his health. The disgusting color of his hair was a result of his excesses, and of the drugs which he had taken that he might continue his career. The poor old man's mental and physical condition afforded some ground for the absurd rubbish talked about him. When his outfit was worn out, he replaced the fine linen by calico at fourteen *sous* the ell. His diamonds, his old snuff-box, watch-chain and trinkets, disappeared one by one. He had left off wearing the cornflower blue coat, and was sumptuously arrayed, summer as winter, in a coarse chest-

nut-brown coat, a plush waistcoat, and doeskin breeches. He grew thinner and thinner; his legs were shrunken, his cheeks, once so puffed out by contented bourgeois prosperity, were covered with wrinkles, and the outlines of the jawbones were distinctly visible; there were deep furrows in his forehead. In the fourth year of his residence in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève he was no longer like his former self. The hale vermicelli manufacturer, sixty-two years of age, who had looked scarce forty, the stout, comfortable, prosperous tradesman, with an almost bucolic air, and such a brisk demeanor that it did you good to look at him; the man with something boyish in his smile, had suddenly sunk into his dotage, and had become a feeble, vacillating septuagenarian.

The keen, bright blue eyes had grown dull, and faded to a steel-gray color; the red inflamed rims looked as though they had shed tears of blood. He excited feelings of repulsion in some, and of pity in others. The young medical students who came to the house noticed the drooping of his lower lip and the conformation of the facial angle; and, after teasing him for some time to no purpose, they declared that crétinism was setting in.

One evening after dinner Mme. Vauquer said half-banteringly to him, "So those daughters of yours don't come to see you any more, eh?" meaning to imply her doubts as to his paternity; but Father Goriot shrank as if his hostess had touched him with a sword-point.

"They come sometimes," he said in a tremulous voice.

"Aha! you still see them sometimes?" cried the students.  
"Bravo, Father Goriot!"

The old man scarcely seemed to hear the witticisms at his expense that followed on the words; he had relapsed into the dreamy state of mind that these superficial observers took for senile torpor, due to his lack of intelligence. If they had only known, they might have been deeply interested by the problem of his condition; but few problems were more

obscure. It was easy, of course, to find out whether Goriot had really been a vermicelli manufacturer ; the amount of his fortune was readily discoverable ; but the old people, who were most inquisitive as to his concerns, never went beyond the limits of the Quarter, and lived in the lodging-house much as oysters cling to a rock. As for the rest, the current of life in Paris daily awaited them, and swept them away with it ; so soon as they left the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, they forgot the existence of the old man, their butt at dinner. For those narrow souls, or for careless youth, the misery in Father Goriot's withered face and its dull apathy were quite incompatible with wealth or any sort of intelligence. As for the creatures whom he called his daughters, all Mme. Vauquer's boarders were of her opinion. With the faculty for severe logic sedulously cultivated by elderly women during long evenings of gossip till they can always find an hypothesis to fit all circumstances, she was wont to reason thus—

“ If Father Goriot had daughters of his own as rich as those ladies who came here seemed to be, he would not be lodging in my house, on the fourth floor, at forty-five francs a month ; and he would not go about dressed like a poor man.”

No objection could be raised to these inferences. So by the end of the month of November, 1819, at the time when the curtain rises on this drama, every one in the house had come to have a very decided opinion as to the poor old man. He had never had either wife or daughter ; excesses had reduced him to this sluggish condition ; he was a sort of human mollusc who should be classed among the *capulidæ*, so said one of the dinner contingent, an employé at the Muséum, who had a pretty wit of his own. Poiret was an eagle, a gentleman, compared with Goriot. Poiret would join the talk, argue, answer when he was spoken to ; as a matter of fact, his talk, arguments, and responses contributed nothing to the conversation, for Poiret had a habit of repeating what the others said in different words ; still, he did join in the

talk; he was alive, and seemed capable of feeling; while Father Goriot (to quote the Muséum official again) was invariably at zero—Réaumur.

Eugène de Rastignac had just returned to Paris in a state of mind not unknown to young men who are conscious of unusual powers, and to those whose faculties are so stimulated by a difficult position, that for the time being they rise above the ordinary level.

Rastignac's first year of study for the preliminary examinations in law had left him free to see the sights of Paris and to enjoy some of its amusements. A student has not much time on his hands if he sets himself to learn the repertory of every theatre, and to study the ins and outs of the labyrinth of Paris. To know its customs; to learn the language, and become familiar with the amusements of the capital, he must explore its recesses, good and bad, follow the studies that please him best, and form some idea of the treasures contained in galleries and museums.

At this stage of his career a student grows eager and excited about all sorts of follies that seem to him to be of immense importance. He has his hero, his great man, a professor at the Collège de France, paid to talk down to the level of his audience. He adjusts his cravat, and strikes various attitudes for the benefit of the women in the first galleries at the Opéra-Comique. As he passes through all these successive initiations, and breaks out of his sheath, the horizons of life widen around him, and at length he grasps the plan of society with the different human strata of which it is composed.

If he begins by admiring the procession of carriages on sunny afternoons in the Champs-Élysées, he soon reaches the further stage of envying their owners. Unconsciously, Eugène had served his apprenticeship before he went back to Angoulême for the long vacation after taking his degrees as bachelor of arts and bachelor of law. The illusions of

childhood had vanished, so also had the ideas he brought with him from the provinces ; he had returned thither with an intelligence developed, with loftier ambitions, and saw things as they were at home in the old manor house. His father and mother, his two brothers and two sisters, with an aged aunt, whose whole fortune consisted in annuities, lived on the little estate of Rastignac. The whole property brought in about three thousand francs ; and though the amount varied with the season (as must always be the case in a vine-growing district), they were obliged to spare an unvarying twelve hundred francs out of their income for him. He saw how constantly the poverty, which they had generously hidden from him, weighed upon them ; he could not help comparing the sisters, who had seemed so beautiful to his boyish eyes, with women in Paris, who had realized the beauty of his dreams. The uncertain future of the whole family depended upon him. It did not escape his eyes that not a crumb was wasted in the house, nor that the wine they drank was made from the second pressing ; a multitude of small things, which it is useless to speak of in detail here, made him burn to distinguish himself, and his ambition to succeed increased tenfold.

He meant, like all great souls, that his success should be owing entirely to his merits ; but his was pre-eminently a southern temperament, the execution of his plans was sure to be marred by the vertigo that seizes on youth when youth sees itself alone in a wide sea, uncertain how to spend its energies, whither to steer its course, how to adapt its sails to the winds. At first he determined to fling himself heart and soul into his work, but he was diverted from this purpose by the need of society and connections ; then he saw how great an influence women exert in social life, and suddenly made up his mind to go out into this world to seek a protectress there. Surely a clever and high-spirited young man, whose wit and courage were set off to advantage by a graceful figure, and the vigorous kind of beauty that readily strikes

a woman's imagination, need not despair of finding a protectress. These ideas occurred to him in his country walks with his sisters, whom he had once joined so gaily. The girls thought him very much changed.

His aunt, Mme. de Marcillac, had been presented at court, and had moved among the highest heights of that lofty region. Suddenly the young man's ambition discerned in those recollections of hers, which had been like nursery fairy tales to her nephews and nieces, the elements of a social success at least as important as the success which he had achieved at the *École de droit*. He began to ask his aunt about those relations; some of the old ties might still hold good. After much shaking of the branches of the family tree, the old lady came to the conclusion that of all persons who could be useful to her nephew among the selfish genius of rich relations, the Vicomtesse de Beauséant was the least likely to refuse. To this lady, therefore, she wrote in the old-fashioned style, recommending Eugène to her; pointing out to her nephew that if he succeeded in pleasing Mme. de Beauséant, the Vicomtesse would introduce him to other relations. A few days after his return to Paris, therefore, Rastignac sent his aunt's letter to Mme. de Beauséant. The Vicomtesse replied by an invitation to a ball for the following evening. This was the position of affairs at the *Maison Vauquer* at the end of November, 1819.

A few days later, after Mme. de Beauséant's ball, Eugène came in at two o'clock in the morning. The persevering student meant to make up for the lost time by working until daylight. It was the first time that he had attempted to spend the night in this way in that silent quarter. The spell of a factitious energy was upon him; he had beheld the pomp and splendor of the world. He had not dined at the *Maison Vauquer*; the boarders probably would think that he would walk home at daybreak from the dance, as he had done sometimes on former occasions, after a fête at the Prado, or a ball

at the Odéon, splashing his silk stockings thereby, and ruining his pumps.

It so happened that Christophe took a look into the street before drawing the bolts of the door; and Rastignac, coming in at that moment, could go up to his room without making any noise, followed by Christophe, who made a great deal. Eugène exchanged his dress suit for a shabby overcoat and slippers, kindled a fire with some blocks of patent fuel, and prepared for his night's work in such a way that the faint sounds he made were drowned by Christophe's heavy tramp on the stairs.

Eugène sat absorbed in thought for a few moments before plunging into his law books. He had just become aware of the fact that the Vicomtesse de Beauséant was one of the queens of fashion, that her house was thought to be the pleasantest in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. And not only so, she was, by right of her fortune, and the name she bore, one of the most conspicuous figures in that aristocratic world. Thanks to his aunt, thanks to Mme. de Marcillac's letter of introduction, the poor student had been kindly received in that house before he knew the extent of the favor thus shown to him. It was almost like a patent of nobility to be admitted to those gilded salons; he had appeared in the most exclusive circle in Paris, and now all doors were open for him. Eugène had been dazzled at first by the brilliant assembly, and had scarcely exchanged a few words with the Vicomtesse; he had been content to single out a goddess from among this throng of Parisian divinities, one of those women who are sure to attract a young man's fancy.

The Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud was tall and gracefully made; she had one of the prettiest figures in Paris. Imagine a pair of great dark eyes, a magnificently moulded hand, a shapely foot. There was a fiery energy in her movements; the Marquis de Ronquerolles had called her a "thoroughbred," but this fineness of nervous organization had brought

no accompanying defect; the outlines of her form were full and rounded, without any tendency to stoutness. "A thoroughbred," "a pure pedigree," these figures of speech have replaced the "heavenly angel" and Ossianic nomenclature; the old mythology of love is extinct, doomed to perish by modern dandyism. But for Rastignac, Mme. Anastasie de Restaud was the woman for whom he had sighed. He had contrived to write his name twice upon the list of partners upon her fan, and had snatched a few words with her during the first quadrille.

"Where shall I meet you again, madame?" he asked abruptly, and the tones of his voice were full of the vehement energy that women like so well.

"Oh, everywhere!" said she, "in the Bois, at the Bouffons, in my own house."

With the impetuosity of his adventurous southern temper, he did all he could to cultivate an acquaintance with this lovely Countess, making the best of his opportunities in the quadrille and during a waltz that she gave him. When he had told her that he was a cousin of Mme. de Beauséant, the Countess, whom he took for a great lady, asked him to call at her house, and, after her parting smile, Rastignac felt convinced that he must make this visit. He was so lucky as to light upon some one who did not laugh at his ignorance, a fatal defect among the gilded and insolent youth of that period; the coterie of Maulincourts, Maximes de Trailles, de Marsays, Ronquerolles, Ajuda-Pintos, and Vandenesses, who shone there in all the glory of coxcombry among the best-dressed women of fashion in Paris—Lady Brandon, the Duchesse de Langeais, the Comtesse de Kergarouët, Mme. de Sérizy, the Duchesse de Carigliano, the Comtesse Ferraud, Mme. de Lanty, the Marquise d'Aiglemont, Mme. Firmiani, the Marquise de Listomère and the Marquise d'Espard, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and the Grandlieus. Luckily, therefore, for him, the novice happened upon the Marquis de Montriveau,

the lover of the Duchesse de Langeais, a general as simple as a child ; from him Rastignac learned that the Comtesse lived in the Rue du Helder.

Ah, what it is to be young, eager to see the world, greedily on the watch for any chance that brings you nearer the woman of your dreams, and behold two houses open their doors to you ! To set foot in the Vicomtesse de Beauséant's house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain ; to fall on your knees before a Comtesse de Restaud in the Chaussée d'Antin ; to look at one glance across a vista of Paris drawing-rooms, conscious that, possessing sufficient good looks, you may hope to find aid and protection there in a feminine heart ! To feel ambitious enough to spurn the tight-rope on which you must walk with the steady head of an acrobat for whom a fall is impossible, and to find in a charming woman the best of all balancing poles.

He sat there with his thoughts for a while, law on the one hand and poverty on the other, beholding a radiant vision of a woman rise above the dull, smoldering fire. Who would not have paused and questioned the future as Eugène was doing ? who would not have pictured it full of success ? His wandering thoughts took wings ; he was transported out of the present into that blissful future ; he was sitting by Mme. de Restaud's side, when a sort of sigh, like the grunt of an overburdened St. Joseph, broke the silence of the night. It vibrated through the student, who took the sound for a death-groan. He opened his door noiselessly, went out upon the landing, and saw a thin streak of light under Father Goriot's door. Eugène feared that his neighbor had been taken ill ; he went over and looked through the key-hole ; the old man was busily engaged in an occupation so singular and so suspicious that Rastignac thought he was only doing a piece of necessary service to society to watch the self-styled vermicelli-maker's nocturnal industries.

The table was upturned, and Goriot had doubtless in some

way secured a silver plate and cup to the bar before knotting a thick rope round them ; he was pulling at this rope with such enormous force that they were being crushed and twisted out of shape ; to all appearance he meant to convert the richly wrought metal into ingots.

“ *Peste !* what a man ! ” said Rastignac, as he watched Goriot’s muscular arms ; there was not a sound in the room while the old man, with the aid of the rope, was kneading the silver like dough. “ Was he, then, indeed, a thief, or a receiver of stolen goods, who affected imbecility and decrepitude, and lived like a beggar that he might carry on his pursuits the more securely ? ” Eugène stood for a moment revolving these questions in his mind, then he looked again through the keyhole as before.

Father Goriot had unwound his coil of rope ; he had covered the table with a blanket, and was now employed in rolling the flattened mass of silver into a bar, an operation which he performed with marvelous dexterity.

“ Why, he must be as strong as Augustus, King of Poland ! ” said Eugène to himself when the bar was nearly finished.

Father Goriot looked sadly at his handiwork, tears fell from his eyes, he blew out the dip which had served him for a light while he manipulated the silver, and Eugène heard him sigh as he lay down again.

“ He is mad, ” thought the student.

“ *Poor child !* ” Father Goriot said aloud. Rastignac, hearing those words, concluded to keep silence ; he would not hastily condemn his neighbor. He was just in the doorway of his room when a strange sound from the staircase below reached his ears ; it might have been made by two men coming up in list slippers. Eugène listened ; two men there certainly were, he could hear their breathing. Yet there had been no sound of opening the street-door, no footsteps in the passage. Suddenly, too, he saw a faint gleam of light on the second story ; it came from M. Vautrin’s room.

“There are a good many mysteries here for a lodging-house !” he said to himself.

He went part of the way downstairs and listened again. The rattle of gold reached his ears. In another moment the light was put out, and again he distinctly heard the breathing of two men, but no sound of a door being opened or shut. The two men went downstairs, the faint sounds growing fainter as they went.

“Who is there ?” cried Mme. Vauquer out of her bedroom window, she having heard slight sounds of the departing footsteps and the closing of the outer door.

“I, Mme. Vauquer,” answered Vautrin’s deep bass voice. “I am coming in.”

“That is odd ! Christophe drew the bolts,” said Eugène, going back to his room. “You have to sit up at night, it seems, if you really mean to know all that is going on about you in Paris.”

These incidents turned his thoughts from his ambitious dreams ; he betook himself to his work, but his thoughts wandered back to Father Goriot’s suspicious occupation ; Mme. de Restaud’s face swam again and again before his eyes like a vision of a brilliant future, and at last he lay down and slept with clenched fists. When a young man makes up his mind that he will work all night, the chances are that seven times out of ten he will sleep till morning. Such vigils do not begin before we are turned twenty.

The next morning Paris was wrapped in one of the dense fogs that throw the most punctual people out in their calculations as to the time ; even the most business-like folk fail to keep their appointments in such weather, and ordinary mortals wake up at noon and fancy it is eight o’clock. On this morning it was half-past nine, and Mme. Vauquer still lay abed. Christophe was late, Sylvie was late, but the two sat comfortably taking their coffee as usual. It was Sylvie’s custom to take the cream off the milk destined for the boarders’ break-

fast for her own, and to boil the remainder for some time, so that madame should not discover this illegal exaction.

“Sylvie,” said Christophe, as he dipped a piece of toast into the coffee, “M. Vautrin, who is not such a bad sort, all the same, had two people come to see him again last night. If madame says anything, mind you say nothing about it.”

“Has he given you something?”

“He gave me a five-franc piece this month, which is as good as saying, ‘Hold your tongue.’”

“Except him and Mme. Couture, who don’t look twice at every penny, there’s no one in the house that doesn’t try to get back with the left hand all that they give with the right at New Year,” said Sylvie.

“And, after all,” said Christophe, “what do they give you? A miserable five-franc piece. There is Father Goriot, who has cleaned his shoes himself these two years past. There is that old beggar Poiret, who goes without blacking altogether; he would sooner drink it than put it on his boots. Then there is that whipper-snapper of a student, who gives me a couple of francs. Two francs will not pay for my brushes, and he sells his old clothes, and gets more for them than they are worth. Oh! they’re a shabby lot!”

“Pooh!” said Sylvie, sipping her coffee, “our places are the best in the Quarter, that I know. But about that great big chap Vautrin, Christophe; has any one told you anything about him?”

“Yes. I met a gentleman in the street a few days ago; he said to me, ‘There’s a gentleman at your place, isn’t there? a tall man that dyes his whiskers?’ I told him, ‘No, sir; they aren’t dyed. A gay fellow like him hasn’t the time to do it.’ And when I told M. Vautrin about it afterwards, he said, ‘Quite right, my boy. That is the way to answer them. There is nothing more unpleasant than to have your little weaknesses known; it might spoil many a match.’”

“Well, and for my part,” said Sylvie, “a man tried to

humbug me at the market wanting to know if I had seen him put on his shirt. Such bosh! There," she cried, interrupting herself, "that's a quarter to ten striking at the Val-de-Grâce, and not a soul stirring!"

"Pooh! they are all gone out. Mme. Couture and the girl went out at eight o'clock to take the wafer at Saint-Étienne. Father Goriot started off somewhere with a parcel, and the student won't be back from his lecture till ten o'clock. I saw them go while I was sweeping the stairs; Father Goriot knocked up against me, and his parcel was as hard as iron. What is the old fellow up to I wonder? He is as good as a plaything for the rest of them; they can never let him alone; but he is a good man, all the same, and worth more than all of them put together. He doesn't give you much himself, but he sometimes sends you with a message to ladies who fork out famous tips; they are dressed grandly, too."

"His daughters, as he calls them, eh? There are a dozen of them."

"I have never been to more than two—the two who came here."

"There is madame moving overhead; I shall have to go, or she will raise a fine racket. Just keep an eye on the milk, Christophe! don't let the cat get at it."

Sylvie went up to her mistress' room.

"Sylvie! How is this? It's nearly ten o'clock, and you let me sleep on like a dormouse! Such a thing has never happened before."

"It is the fog; it is that thick, you could cut it with a knife."

"But how about breakfast?"

"Bah! the boarders are possessed, I'm sure. They all cleared out before there was a wink of daylight."

"Do speak properly, Sylvie," Mme. Vauquer retorted; "say a blink of daylight."

"Ah, well, madame, whichever you please. Anyhow, you

can have breakfast at ten o'clock. La Michonnette and Poireau have neither of them stirred. There are only those two upstairs, and they are sleeping like the logs they are."

"But, Sylvie, you put their names together as if——"

"As if what?" said Sylvie, bursting into a guffaw. "The two of them make a pair."

"It is a strange thing, isn't it, Sylvie, how M. Vautrin got in last night after Christophe had bolted the door?"

"Not at all, madame. Christophe heard M. Vautrin, and went down and undid the door for him. And here are you imagining that——"

"Give me my bodice, and be quick and get breakfast ready. Dish up the rest of the mutton with the potatoes, and you can put the stewed pears on the table, those at five a penny."

A few moments later Mme. Vauquer came down, just in time to see the cat knock down a plate that covered a bowl of milk, and begin to lap in all haste.

"Mistigris!" she cried.

The cat fled, but promptly returned to rub against her ankles.

"Oh! yes, you can wheedle, you old hypocrite!" she said. "Sylvie! Sylvie!"

"Yes, madame; what is it?"

"Just see what the cat has done!"

"It is all that stupid Christophe's fault. I told him to stop and lay the table. What has become of him? Don't you worry, madame; Father Goriot shall have it. I will fill it up with water, and he won't know the difference; he never notices anything, not even what he eats."

"I wonder where the old heathen can have gone?" said Mme. Vauquer, setting the plates round the table.

"Who knows? He is up to all sorts of tricks."

"I have overslept myself," said Mme. Vauquer.

"But madame looks as fresh as a rose, all the same."

The door-bell rang at that moment, and Vautrin came through the sitting-room, singing loudly—

*“’Tis the same old story everywhere,  
A roving heart and a roving glance——”*

“ Oh ! Mamma Vauquer ! good-morning ! ” he cried at the sight of his hostess, and he put his arm gaily round her waist.

“ There ! have done—— ”

“ ‘ Impertinence ! ’ Say it ! ” he answered. “ Come, say it ! Now isn’t that what you really mean ? Stop a bit, I will help you to set the table. Ah ! I am a nice man, am I not ?

*“ ‘ For the locks of brown and the golden hair  
A sighing lover.’ ”*

“ Oh ! I have just seen something so funny——

*“ ‘ ——led by chance.’ ”*

“ What ? ” asked the widow.

“ Father Goriot in the goldsmith’s shop in the Rue Dauphine at half-past eight this morning. They buy old spoons and forks and gold lace there, and Goriot sold a piece of silver plate for a good round sum. It had been twisted out of shape very neatly for a man that’s not used to the trade.”

“ Really ? You don’t say so ? ”

“ Yes. One of my friends is expatriating himself ; I had been to see him off on board the Royal Mail steamer, and was coming back here. I waited after that to see what Father Goriot would do ; it is a comical affair. He came back to this quarter of the world, to the Rue des Grès, and went into a money-lender’s house ; everybody knows him, Gobseck, a stuck-up rascal, that would make dominoes out of his father’s bones ; a Turk, a heathen, an old Jew, a Greek ; it would be a difficult matter to rob *him*, for he puts all his coin into the bank.”

“ Then what was Father Goriot doing there ? ”

“Doing?” said Vautrin. “Nothing; he was bent on his own undoing. He is a simpleton, stupid enough to ruin himself by running after——”

“There he is!” said Sylvie.

“Christophe,” cried Father Goriot’s voice, “come upstairs with me.”

Christophe went up, and shortly afterwards came down again.

“Where are you going?” Mme. Vauquer asked of her servant.

“Out on an errand for M. Goriot.”

“What may that be?” said Vautrin, pouncing on a letter in Christophe’s hand. “*Mme. la Comtesse Anastasie de Restaud,*” he read. “Where are you going with it?” he added, as he gave the letter back to Christophe.

“To the Rue du Helder. I have orders to give this into her hands myself.”

“What is there inside it?” said Vautrin, holding the letter up to the light. “A bank-note? No.” He peered into the envelope. “A receipted account!” he cried. “My word! ’tis a gallant old dotard. Off with you, old chap,” he said, bringing down a hand on Christophe’s head, and spinning the man round like a thimble; “you will have a famous tip.”

By this time the table was set. Sylvie was boiling the milk; Mme. Vauquer was lighting a fire in the stove with some assistance from Vautrin, who kept on humming to himself—

“*The same old story everywhere,  
A roving heart and a roving glance.*”

When everything was ready, Mme. Couture and Mlle. Taillefer came in.

“Where have you been this morning, fair lady?” said Mme. Vauquer, turning to Mme. Couture.

“We have just been to say our prayers at Saint-Étienne du Mont. To-day is the day when we must go to see M. Taillefer. Poor little thing! She is trembling like a leaf,” Mme. Couture went on, as she seated herself before the fire and held the steaming soles of her boots to the blaze.

“Warm yourself, Victorine,” said Mme. Vauquer.

“It is quite right and proper, mademoiselle, to pray to heaven to soften your father’s heart,” said Vautrin, as he drew a chair nearer to the orphan girl; “but that is not enough. What you want is a friend who will give the monster a piece of his mind; a barbarian that has three millions (so they say), and will not give you a dowry; and a pretty girl needs a dowry nowadays.”

“Poor child!” said Mme. Vauquer. “Never mind, my pet, your wretch of a father is going just the way to bring trouble upon himself.”

Victorine’s eyes filled with tears at the words, and the widow checked herself at a sign from Mme. Couture.

“If we could only see him!” said the commissary-general’s widow; “if I could speak to him myself and give him his wife’s last letter! I have never dared to run the risk of sending it by post; he knew my handwriting——”

““Oh woman, persecuted and injured innocent!”” exclaimed Vautrin, breaking in upon her. “So that is how you are, is it? In a few days’ time I will look into your affairs, and it will be all right, you shall see.”

“Oh! sir,” said Victorine, with a tearful but eager glance at Vautrin, who showed no sign of being touched by it, “if you know of any way of communicating with my father, please be sure and tell him that his affection and my mother’s honor are more to me than all the money in the world. If you can induce him to relent a little towards me, I will pray to God for you. You may be sure of my gratitude——”

“*The same old story everywhere,*” sang Vautrin, with a satirical intonation. At this juncture, Goriot, Mlle. Michonneau,

and Poiret came downstairs together; possibly the scent of the gravy which Sylvie was making to serve with the mutton had announced breakfast. The seven people thus assembled bade each other good-morning, and took their places at the table; the clock struck ten, and the student's footsteps were heard outside.

"Ah! here you are, M. Eugène," said Sylvie; "every one is breakfasting at home to-day."

The student exchanged greetings with the lodgers, and sat down beside Goriot.

"I have just met with a queer adventure," he said, as he helped himself abundantly to the mutton, and cut a slice of bread, which Madame Vauquer's sharp and watchful eyes gauged as usual.

"An adventure?" queried Poiret.

"Well, and what is there to astonish you in that, old boy?" Vautrin asked of Poiret. "M. Eugène is cut out for that kind of thing."

Mlle. Taillefer stole a timid glance at the young student.

"Tell us about your adventure," said Mme. Vauquer.

"Yesterday evening I went to a ball given by a cousin of mine, the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. She has a magnificent house; the rooms were hung with silk—in short, it was a splendid affair, and I was as happy as a king——"

"Fisher," put in Vautrin, interrupting.

"What do you mean, sir?" said Eugène sharply.

"I said 'fisher,' because kingfishers see a good deal more fun than kings."

"Quite true; I would much rather be the little careless bird than a king," said Poiret the ditto-ist, "because——"

"In fact"—the law student cut him short—"I danced with one of the handsomest women in the room, a charming countess, the most exquisite creature I have ever seen. There was peach blossom in her hair, and she had the loveliest bouquet of flowers—real flowers, that scented the air—— but

there! it is no use trying to describe a woman glowing with the dance. You ought to have seen her! Well, and this morning I met this divine countess about nine o'clock, on foot in the Rue des Grès. Oh! how my heart beat! I began to think——”

“That she was coming here,” said Vautrin, with a keen look at the student. “I expect that she was going to call on old Gobseck, a money-lender. If ever you explore a Parisian woman’s heart, you will find the money-lender first, and the lover afterwards. Your countess is called Anastasie de Restaud, and she lives in the Rue de Helder.”

The student stared hard at Vautrin. Father Goriot raised his head at the words, and gave the two speakers a glance so full of intelligence and uneasiness that the lodgers beheld him with astonishment.

“Then Christophe was too late, and she must have gone to him!” cried Goriot, with anguish in his voice.

“It is just as I guessed,” said Vautrin, leaning over to whisper in Mme. Vauquer’s ear.

Goriot went on with his breakfast, but seemed unconscious of what he was doing. He had never looked more stupid nor more taken up with his own thoughts than he did at that moment.

“Who the devil could have told you her name, M. Vautrin?” asked Eugène.

“Aha! there you are!” answered Vautrin. “Old Father Goriot there knew it quite well! and why should not I know it too?”

“M. Goriot?” the student cried.

“What is it?” said the old man. “So she was very beautiful, was she, yesterday night?”

“Who?”

“Mme. de Restaud.”

“Look at the old wretch,” said Mme. Vauquer, speaking to Vautrin; “how his eyes light up!”

“Then does he really keep her?” said Mlle. Michonneau, in a whisper to the student.

“Oh! yes, she was tremendously pretty,” Eugène answered. Father Goriot watched him with eager eyes. “If Mme. de Beauséant had not been there, my divine countess would have been the queen of the ball; none of the younger men had eyes for any one else. I was the twelfth on her list, and she danced every quadrille. The other women were furious. She must have enjoyed herself, if ever creature did! It is a true saying that there is no more beautiful sight than a frigate in full sail, a galloping horse, or a woman dancing.”

“So the wheel turns,” said Vautrin; “yesterday night at a duchess’ ball, this morning in a money-lender’s office, on the lowest rung of the ladder—just like a Parisienne! If their husbands cannot afford to pay for their frantic extravagance, they will sell themselves. Or if they cannot do that, they will tear out their mothers’ hearts to find something to pay for their splendor. They will turn the world upside down. Just a Parisienne through and through!”

Father Goriot’s face, which had shone at the student’s words like the sun on a bright day, clouded over all at once at this cruel speech of Vautrin’s.

“Well,” said Mme. Vauquer, “but where is your adventure? Did you speak to her? Did you ask her if she wanted to study law?”

“She did not see me,” said Eugène. “But only think of meeting one of the prettiest women in Paris in the Rue des Grès at nine o’clock! She could not have reached home after the ball till two o’clock this morning. Wasn’t it queer? There is no place like Paris for these sort of adventures.”

“Pshaw! much funnier things than *that* happen here!” exclaimed Vautrin.

Mlle. Taillefer had scarcely heeded the talk, she was so absorbed by the thought of the new attempt that she was about to make. Mme. Couture made a sign that it was time

to go upstairs and dress ; the two ladies went out, and Father Goriot followed their example.

“ Well, did you see ? ” said Mme. Vauquer, addressing Vautrin and the rest of the circle. “ He is ruining himself for those women, that is plain.”

“ Nothing will ever make me believe that that beautiful Comtesse de Restaud is anything to Father Goriot,” cried the student.

“ Well, and if you don't,” broke in Vautrin, “ we are not set on convincing you. You are too young to know Paris thoroughly yet ; later on you will find out that there are what we call men with a passion——”

Mlle. Michonneau gave Vautrin a quick glance at these words. They seemed to be like the sound of a trumpet to a trooper's horse. “ Aha ! ” said Vautrin, stopping in his speech to give her a searching glance, “ so we have had our little experiences, have we ? ”

The old maid lowered her eyes like a nun who sees a statue.

“ Well,” he went on, “ when folk of that kind get a notion into their heads, they cannot drop it. They must drink the water from some particular spring—it is stagnant as often as not ; but they will sell their wives and families, they will sell their own souls to the devil to get it. For some this spring is play, or the stock exchange, or music, or a collection of pictures or insects ; for others it is some woman who can give them the dainties they like. You might offer these last all the women on earth—they would turn up their noses ; they will have the only one who can gratify their passion. It often happens that the woman does not care for them at all, and treats them cruelly ; they buy their morsels of satisfaction very dear ; but no matter, the fools are never tired of it ; they will take their last blanket to the pawnbroker to give their last five-franc piece to her. Father Goriot here is one of that sort. He is discreet, so the Countess exploits him—just the way of the gay world. The poor old fellow thinks of her and

of nothing else. In all other respects you see he is a stupid animal; but get him on that subject, and his eyes sparkle like diamonds. That secret is not difficult to guess. He took some plate himself this morning to the melting-pot, and I saw him at Daddy Gobseck's in the Rue des Grès. And now, mark what follows—he came back here, and gave a letter for the Comtesse de Restaud to that noodle of a Christophe, who showed us the address; there was a receipted bill inside it. It is clear that it was an urgent matter if the Countess also went herself to the old money-lender. Father Goriot has financed her handsomely. There is no need to tack a tale together; the thing is self-evident. So that shows you, sir student, that all the time your countess was smiling, dancing, flirting, swaying her peach-flower crowned head, with her gown gathered into her hand, her slippers were pinching her, as they say; she was thinking of her protested bills, or her lover's protested bills."

"You have made me wild to know the truth," cried Eugène de Rastignac; "I will go to call on Mme. de Restaud to-morrow."

"Yes," echoed Poiret; "you must go and call on Mme. de Restaud."

"And perhaps you will find Father Goriot there, who will take payment for the assistance he politely rendered."

Eugène looked disgusted. "Why, then, this Paris of yours is a slough."

"And an uncommonly queer slough, too," replied Vautrin. "The mud splashes you as you drive through it in your carriage—you are a respectable person; you go afoot and are splashed—you are a scoundrel. You are so unlucky as to walk off with something or other belonging to somebody else, and they exhibit you as a curiosity in the Place du Palais-de-Justice; you steal a million, and you are pointed out in every salon as a model of virtue. And you pay thirty millions for the police and the courts of justice, for the

maintenance of law and order! A pretty state of things it is!"

"What," cried Mme. Vauquer, "has Father Goriot really melted down his silver posset-dish?"

"There were two turtle-doves on the lid, were there not?" asked Eugène.

"Yes, that there were."

"Then, was he fond of it!" said Eugène. "He cried while he was breaking up the cup and plate. I happened to see him by accident."

"It was dear to him as his own life," answered the widow.

"There! you see how infatuated the old fellow is," cried Vautrin. "The woman yonder can coax the soul out of him."

The student went up to his room. Vautrin went out, and a few minutes later Mme. Couture and Victorine drove away in a cab which Sylvie had called for them. Poiret gave his arm to Mlle. Michonneau, and they went together to spend the two sunniest hours of the day in the Jardin des Plantes.

"Well, those two are as good as married," was the portly Sylvie's comment. "They are going out together to-day for the first time. They are such a couple of dry sticks that if they happen to strike against each other they will draw sparks like flint and steel."

"Keep clear of Mlle. Michonneau's shawl, then," said Mme. Vauquer, laughing; "it would flare up like tinder."

At four o'clock that evening, when Goriot came in, he saw, by the light of two smoky lamps, that Victorine's eyes were red. Mme. Vauquer was listening to the history of the visit made that morning to M. Taillefer; it had been made in vain. Taillefer was tired of the annual application made by his daughter and her elderly friend; he gave them a personal interview in order to arrive at an understanding with them.

“My dear lady,” said Mme. Couture, addressing Mme. Vauquer, “just imagine it; he did not even ask Victorine to sit down, she was standing the whole time. He said to me quite coolly, without putting himself in a passion, that we might spare ourselves the trouble of going there; that the young lady (he would not call her his daughter) was injuring her cause by importuning him (*importuning!* once a year, the wretch!); that as Victorine’s mother had nothing when he married her, Victorine ought not to expect anything from him; in fact, he said the most cruel things, that made the poor child burst out crying. The little thing threw herself at her father’s feet and spoke up bravely; she said that she only persevered in her visits for her mother’s sake; that she would obey him without a murmur, but that she begged him to read her poor dead mother’s farewell letter. She took it up and gave it to him, saying the most beautiful things in the world, most beautifully expressed; I do not know where she learned them; God must have put them into her head, for the poor child was inspired to speak so nicely that it made me cry like a fool to hear her talk. And what do you think the monster was doing all the time? Cutting his nails! He took the letter that poor Mme. Taillefer had soaked with tears, and flung it on to the chimney-piece. ‘That is all right,’ he said. He held out his hands to raise his daughter, but she covered them with kisses, and he drew them away again. Scandalous, isn’t it? And his great booby of a son came in and took no notice of his sister.”

“Very singular conduct, indeed!” exclaimed Mme. Vauquer.

“What inhuman wretches they must be!” said Father Goriot.

“And then they both went out of the room,” Mme. Couture went on, without heeding the worthy vermicelli-maker’s exclamation; “father and son bowed to me, and asked me to excuse them on account of urgent business! That is the history of our call. Well, he has seen his daughter at any rate.

How he can refuse to acknowledge her I cannot think, for they are as like as two peas."

The boarders dropped in one after another, interchanging greetings and the empty jokes that certain classes of Parisians regard as humorous and witty. Dulness is their prevailing ingredient, and the whole point consists in mispronouncing a word or in a gesture. This kind of argot is always changing. The essence of the jest consists in some catchword suggested by a political event, an incident in the police courts, a street song, or a bit of burlesque at some theatre, and forgotten in a month. Anything and everything serves to keep up a game of battle-dore and shuttlecock with words and ideas. The diorama, a recent invention, which carried an optical illusion, a degree farther than panoramas, had given rise to a mania among art students for ending every word with *rama*. The Maison Vauquer had caught the infection from a young artist among the boarders.

"Well, Monsieur-r-r Poiret," said the employé from the Muséum, "how is your health-orama?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he turned to Mme. Couture and Victorine with a "Ladies, you seem melancholy."

"Is dinner ready?" cried Horace Bianchon, a medical student, and a friend of Rastignac's; "my stomach is sinking *usque ad talones*."

"There is an uncommon *frozerama* outside!" said Vautrin. "Make room there, Father Goriot! Confound it! your foot covers the whole front of the stove. Let somebody else have a show."

"Illustrious M. Vautrin," put in Bianchon, "why do you say *frozerama*? It is incorrect; it should be *frozenrama*."

"No, it shouldn't," said the official from the Muséum; "*frozerama* is right by the same rule that you say 'My feet are *frose*.'"

"Ah! ah!"

"Here is his excellency the Marquis de Rastignac, Doctor

of the Law of Contraries," cried Bianchon, seizing Eugène by the throat, and almost throttling him.

"Hallo there! hallo!"

Mlle. Michonneau came noiselessly in, bowed to the rest of the party, and took her place beside the three women without saying a word.

"That old bat always makes me shudder," said Bianchon in a low voice, indicating Mlle. Michonneau to Vautrin. "I have studied Gall's system, and I am sure she has the bump of Judas."

"Then you have seen a case before?" said Vautrin.

"Who has not?" answered Bianchon. "Upon my word, that ghastly old maid looks just like one of the long worms that will gnaw a beam through, give them time enough."

"That is the way, young man," returned he of the forty years and the dyed whiskers—

*"The rose has lived the life of a rose—  
A morning's space."*

"Aha! here is a magnificent *soupe-au-rama*," cried Poiret as Christophe came in bearing the soup with cautious heed.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mme. Vauquer; "it is *soupe aux choux*."

All the young men roared with laughter.

"Had you there, Poiret!"

"Poir-r-r-rette! she had you there!"

"Score two points to Mamma Vauquer," said Vautrin.

"Did any one notice the fog this morning?" asked the official.

"It was a frantic fog," said Bianchon, "a fog unparalleled, doleful, melancholy, sea-green, asthmatical—a Goriot of a fog!"

"A Goriorama," said the art student, "because you couldn't see a thing in it."

“Hey! Milord Gâôriotte, they air talking about yoo-ou.”

Father Goriot, seated at the lower end of the table, close to the door through which the servant entered, raised his face; he had smelt at a scrap of bread that lay under his table napkin, an old trick acquired in his commercial capacity, that still showed itself at times.

“Well,” Mme. Vauquer cried in sharp tones, that rang above the rattle of spoons and plates and the sound of other voices, “and is there anything the matter with the bread?”

“Nothing whatever, madame,” he answered; “on the contrary, it is made of the best quality of corn; flour from Etampes.”

“How could you tell?” asked Eugène.

“By the color, by the flavor.”

“You knew the flavor by the smell, I suppose,” said Mme. Vauquer. “You have grown so economical, you will find out how to live on the smell of cooking at last.”

“Take out a patent for it then,” cried the Muséum official; “you would make a handsome fortune.”

“Never mind him,” said the artist; “he does that sort of thing to delude us into thinking that he was a vermicelli-maker.”

“Your nose is a corn-sampler, it appears?” inquired the official.

“Corn *what?*” asked Bianchon.

“Corn-el.”

“Corn-et.”

“Corn-elian.”

“Corn-ice.”

“Corn-ucopia.”

“Corn-crake.”

“Corn-cockle.”

“Corn-orama.”

The eight responses came like a rolling fire from every part

of the room, and the laughter that followed was the more uproarious because poor Father Goriot stared at the other with a puzzled look, like a foreigner trying to catch the meaning of words in a language that he does not understand.

“Corn?——” he said, turning to Vautrin, his next neighbor.

“Corn on your foot, old man!” said Vautrin, and he drove Father Goriot’s cap down over his eyes by a blow on the crown.

The poor old man thus suddenly attacked was for a moment too bewildered to do anything. Christophe carried off his plate, thinking that he had finished his soup, so that when Goriot had pushed back his cap from his eyes his spoon encountered the table. Every one burst out laughing. “You are a disagreeable joker, sir,” said the old man, “and if you take any further liberties with me——”

“Well, what then, old boy?” Vautrin interrupted.

“Well, then, you shall pay dearly for it some day——”

“Down below, eh?” said the artist, “in the little dark corner where they put naughty boys.”

“Well, mademoiselle,” Vautrin said, turning to Victorine, “you are eating nothing. So papa was refractory, was he?”

“A monster!” said Mme. Couture.

“Mademoiselle might make application for aliment pending her suit; she is not eating anything. Eh! eh! just see how Father Goriot is staring at Mlle. Victorine.”

The old man had forgotten his dinner, he was so absorbed in gazing at the poor girl; the sorrow in her face was unmistakable—the slighted love of a child whose father would not recognize her.

“We are mistaken about Father Goriot, my dear boy,” said Eugène in a low voice. “He is not an idiot, nor wanting in energy. Try your Gall system on him, and let me know what you think. I saw him crush a silver dish last night as if it had been made of wax; there seems to be some-

thing extraordinary going on in his mind just now, to judge by his face. His life is so mysterious that it must be worth studying. Oh, you may laugh, Bianchon ; I am not joking."

"The man is a subject, is he?" said Bianchon ; "all right ! I will dissect him if he will give me a chance."

"No ; feel his bumps."

"Hm !—his stupidity might perhaps be contagious."

The next day Rastignac dressed himself very elegantly, and about three o'clock in the afternoon went to call on Mme. de Restaud. On the way thither he indulged in the wild intoxicating dreams which fill a young head so full of delicious excitement. Young men at his age take no account of obstacles nor of dangers ; they see success in every direction ; imagination has free play, and turns their lives into a romance ; they are saddened or discouraged by the collapse of one of the wild visionary schemes that have no existence save in their heated fancy. If youth were not ignorant and timid, civilization would be impossible.

Eugène took unheard-of pains to keep himself in a spotless condition, but on his way through the streets he began to think about Mme. de Restaud and what he should say to her. He equipped himself with wit, rehearsed repartees in the course of an imaginary conversation, and prepared certain neat speeches *à la* Talleyrand, conjuring up a series of small events which should prepare the way for the declaration on which he had based his future ; and during these musings the law student was bespattered with mud, and by the time he reached the Palais Royal he was obliged to have his boots blacked and his trousers brushed.

"If I were rich," he said, as he changed the five-franc piece he had brought with him in case anything might happen, "I would take a cab, then I could think at my ease."

At last he reached the Rue de Helder, and asked for the Comtesse de Restaud. He bore the contemptuous glances of

the servants, who had seen him cross the court on foot, with the cold fury of a man who knows that he will succeed some day. He understood the meaning of their glances at once, for he had felt his inferiority as soon as he entered the court, where a smart cab was waiting. All the delights of life in Paris seemed to be implied by this visible and manifest sign of luxury and extravagance. A fine horse, in magnificent harness, was pawing the ground, and all at once the law student felt out of humor with himself. Every compartment in his brain which he had thought to find so full of wit was bolted fast; he grew positively stupid. He sent up his name to the Countess, and waited in the ante-chamber, standing on one foot before a window that looked out upon the court; mechanically he leaned his elbow against the sash, and stared before him. The time seemed long; he would have left the house but for the southern tenacity of purpose which works miracles when it is single-minded.

“Madame is in her boudoir, and cannot see any one at present, sir,” said the servant. “She gave me no answer; but if you will go into the dining-room, there is some one already there.”

Rastignac was impressed with a sense of the formidable power of the lackey who can accuse or condemn his masters by a word; he coolly opened the door by which the man had just entered the ante-chamber, meaning, no doubt, to show these insolent flunkeys that he was familiar with the house; but he found that he had thoughtlessly precipitated himself into a small room full of dressers, where lamps were standing, and hot-water pipes, on which towels were being dried; a dark passage and a back staircase lay beyond it. Stifled laughter from the ante-chamber added to his confusion.

“This way to the drawing-room, sir,” said the servant, with the exaggerated respect which seemed to be one more jest at his expense.

Eugène turned so quickly that he stumbled against a bath,





*THE HORSE TOOK FRIGHT AT THE UMBRELLA.*



By good luck, he managed to keep his hat on his head, and saved it from immersion in the water; but just as he turned, a door opened at the farther end of the dark passage, dimly lighted by a small lamp. Rastignac heard voices and the sound of a kiss; one of the speakers was Mme. de Restaud, the other was Father Goriot. Eugène followed the servant through the dining-room into the drawing-room; he went to a window that looked out into the courtyard, and stood there for a while. He meant to know whether this Goriot was really the Goriot that he knew. His heart beat unwontedly fast; he remembered Vautrin's hideous insinuations. A well-dressed young man suddenly emerged from the room almost as Eugène entered it, saying impatiently to the servant who stood at the door: "I am going, Maurice. Tell Madame la Comtesse that I waited more than half an hour for her."

Whereupon this insolent being, who, doubtless, had a right to be insolent, sang an Italian trill, and went towards the window where Eugène was standing, moved thereto quite as much by a desire to see the student's face as by a wish to look out into the courtyard.

"But M. le Comte had better wait a moment longer; madame is disengaged," said Maurice, as he returned to the ante-chamber.

Just at that moment Father Goriot appeared close to the gate; he had emerged from a door at the foot of the back staircase. The worthy soul was preparing to open his umbrella regardless of the fact that the great gate had opened to admit a tilbury, in which a young man with a ribbon at his button-hole was seated. Father Goriot had scarcely time to start back and save himself. The horse took fright at the umbrella, swerved, and dashed forward towards the flight of steps. The young man looked round in annoyance, saw Father Goriot, and greeted him as he went out with constrained courtesy, such as people usually show to a money-lender so long as they require his services, or the sort of respect they feel it necessary to

show for some one whose reputation has been blown upon, so that they blush to acknowledge his acquaintance. Father Goriot gave him a little friendly nod and a good-natured smile. All this happened with lightning speed. Eugène was so deeply interested that he forgot that he was not alone till he suddenly heard the Countess' voice.

“Oh! Maxime, were you going away?” she said reproachfully, with a shade of pique in her manner. The Countess had not seen the incident nor the entrance of the tilbury. Rastignac turned abruptly and saw her standing before him, coquettishly dressed in a loose white cashmere gown with knots of rose-colored ribbon here and there; her hair was carelessly coiled about her head, as is the wont of Parisian women in the morning; there was a soft fragrance about her—doubtless she was fresh from a bath—her graceful form seemed more flexible, her beauty more luxuriant. Her eyes glistened. A young man can see everything at a glance; he feels the radiant influence of woman as a plant discerns and absorbs its nutriment from the air; he did not need to touch her hands to feel their cool freshness. He saw faint rose tints through the cashmere of the dressing-gown; it had fallen slightly open, giving glimpses of a bare throat, on which the student's eyes rested. The Countess had no need of the adventitious aid of corsets; her girdle defined the outlines of her slender waist; her throat was a challenge to love; her feet, thrust into slippers, were daintily small. As Maxime took her hand and kissed it, Eugène became aware of Maxime's existence, and the Countess saw Eugène.

“Oh! is that you M. de Rastignac? I am very glad to see you,” she said, but there was something in her manner that a shrewd observer would have taken as a hint to depart.

Maxime, as the Countess Anastasie had called the young man with the haughty insolence of bearing, looked from Eugène to the lady, and from the lady to Eugène; it was sufficiently evident that he wished to be rid of the latter.

An exact and faithful rendering of the glance might be given in the words: "Look here, my dear; I hope you intend to send this little whipper-snapper about his business."

The Countess consulted the young man's face with an intent submissiveness that betrays all the secrets of a woman's heart, and Rastignac all at once began to hate him violently. To begin with, the sight of the fair carefully arranged curls on the other's comely head had convinced him that his own crop was hideous; Maxime's boots, moreover, were elegant and spotless, while his own, in spite of all his care, bore some traces of his recent walk; and, finally, Maxime's overcoat fitted the outline of his figure gracefully, he looked like a pretty woman, while Eugène was wearing a black coat at half-past two. The quick-witted child of the Charente felt the disadvantage at which he was placed beside this tall, slender dandy, with the clear gaze and the pale face, one of those men who would ruin orphan children without scruple. Mme. de Restaud fled into the next room without waiting for Eugène to speak; shaking out the skirts of her dressing-gown in her flight, so that she looked like a white butterfly, and Maxime hurried after her. Eugène, in a fury, followed Maxime and the Countess, and the three stood once more face to face by the hearth in the large drawing-room. The law student felt quite sure that the odious Maxime found him in the way, and even at the risk of displeasing Mme. de Restaud, he meant to annoy the dandy. It had struck him all at once that he had seen the young man before at Mme. de Beauséant's ball; he guessed the relation between Maxime and Mme. de Restaud; and with the youthful audacity that commits prodigious blunders or achieves signal success, he said to himself, "This is my rival; I mean to cut him out."

Rash resolve! He did not know that M. le Comte Maxime de Trailles would wait till he was insulted, so as to fire first and kill his man. Eugène was a sportsman and a good shot, but he had not yet hit the bull's eye twenty times out of twenty-

two. The young Count dropped into a low chair by the hearth, took up the tongs, and made up the fire so violently and so sulkily, that Anastasie's fair face suddenly clouded over. She turned to Eugène with a cool, questioning glance that asked plainly, "Why do you not go?" a glance which well-bred people regard as a cue to make their exit.

Eugène assumed an amiable expression.

"Madame," he began, "I hastened to call upon you——"

He stopped short. The door opened, and the owner of the tilbury suddenly appeared. He had left his hat outside, and did not greet the Countess; he looked meditatively at Rastignac, and held out his hand to Maxime with a cordial "Good-morning," that astonished Eugène not a little. The young provincial did not understand the amenities of a triple alliance.

"M. de Restaud," said the Countess, introducing her husband to the law student.

Eugène bowed profoundly.

"This gentleman," she continued, presenting Eugène to her husband, "is M. de Rastignac; he is related to Mme. la Vicomtesse de Beauséant through the Marcillacs; I had the pleasure of meeting him at her last ball."

*Related to Mme. la Vicomtesse de Beauséant through the Marcillacs!* These words, on which the Countess threw ever so slight an emphasis, by reason of the pride that the mistress of the house takes in showing that she only receives people of distinction as visitors in her house, produced a magical effect. The Count's stiff manner relaxed at once as he returned the student's bow.

"Delighted to have an opportunity of making your acquaintance," he said.

Maxime de Trailles himself gave Eugène an uneasy glance, and suddenly dropped his insolent manner. The mighty name had all the power of a fairy's wand; those closed compartments in the southern brain flew open again; Rastignac's

carefully drilled faculties returned. It was as if a sudden light had pierced the obscurity of this upper world of Paris, and he began to see, though everything was indistinct as yet. Mme. Vauquer's lodging-house and Father Goriot were very far remote from his thoughts.

"I thought that the Marcillacs were extinct," the Comte de Restaud said, addressing Eugène.

"Yes, they are extinct," answered the law student. "My great uncle, the Chevalier de Rastignac, married the heiress of the Marcillac family. They had only one daughter, who married the Maréchal de Clarimbault, Mme. de Beauséant's grandfather on the mother's side. We are the younger branch of the family, and the younger branch is all the poorer because my great-uncle, the vice-admiral, lost all that he had in the King's service. The government during the Revolution refused to admit our claims when the *Compagnie des Indes* was liquidated."

"Was not your great-uncle in command of the *Vengeur* before 1789?"

"Yes."

"Then he would be acquainted with my grandfather, who commanded the *Warwick*."

Maxime looked at Mme. de Restaud and shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "If he is going to discuss nautical matters with that fellow, it is all over with us." Anastasie understood the glance that M. de Trailles gave her. With a woman's admirable tact and shrewdness, she began to smile and said:

"Come with me, Maxime; I have something to say to you. We will leave you two gentlemen to sail in company on board the *Warwick* and the *Vengeur*."

She rose to her feet and signed to Maxime to follow her, mirth and mischief in her whole attitude, and the two went in the direction of the boudoir. The *morganatic* couple (to use a convenient German expression which has no exact

equivalent) had reached the door, when the Count interrupted himself in his talk with Eugène.

“Anastasie!” he cried pettishly, “just stay a moment, dear; you know very well that——”

“I am coming back in a minute,” she interrupted; “I have a commission for Maxime to execute, and I want to tell him about it.”

She came back almost immediately. She had noticed the inflection in her husband’s voice, and knew that it would not be safe to retire to the boudoir: like all women who are compelled to study their husband’s characters in order to have their own way, and whose business it is to know exactly how far they can go without endangering a good understanding, she was very careful to avoid petty collisions in domestic life. It was Eugène who had brought about this untoward incident; so the Countess looked at Maxime and indicated the law student with an air of exasperation. M. de Trailles addressed the Count, the Countess, and Eugène with the pointed remark, “You are busy, I do not want to interrupt you; good-day,” and he went.

“Just wait a moment, Maxime!” the Count called after him.

“Come and dine with us,” said the Countess, leaving Eugène and her husband together once more. She followed Maxime into the little drawing-room, where they sat together sufficiently long to feel sure that Rastignac had taken his leave.

The law student heard their laughter, and their voices, and the pauses in their talk; he grew malicious, exerted his conversational powers for M. de Restaud, flattered him, and drew him into discussions, to the end that he might see the Countess again and discover the nature of her relations with Father Goriot. This countess, with a husband and a lover, for Maxime clearly was her lover, was a mystery. What was the secret tie that bound her to the old tradesman? This

mystery he meant to penetrate, hoping by its means to gain a sovereign ascendancy over this fair typical Parisian.

“Anastasia!” the Count called again to his wife.

“Poor Maxime!” she said, addressing the young man. “Come, we must resign ourselves. This evening——”

“I hope, Nasie,” he said in her ear, “that you will give orders not to admit that youngster, whose eyes light up like live coals when he looks at you. He will make you a declaration, and compromise you, and then you will compel me to kill him.”

“Are you mad, Maxime?” she said. “A young lad of a student is, on the contrary, a capital lightning-conductor; is not that so? Of course, I mean to make Restaud furiously jealous of him.”

Maxime burst out laughing, and went out, followed by the Countess, who stood at the window to watch him into his carriage; he shook his whip, and made his horse prance. She only returned when the great gate had been closed after him.

“What do you think, dear?” cried the Count, her husband, “this gentleman’s family estate is not far from Verteuil, on the Charente; his great-uncle and my grandfather were acquainted.”

“Delighted to find that we have acquaintances in common,” said the Countess, with a preoccupied manner.

“More than you think,” said Eugène, in a low voice.

“What do you mean?” she asked quickly.

“Why, only just now,” said the student, “I saw a gentleman go out at the gate, Father Goriot, my next-door neighbor in the house where I am lodging.”

At the sound of this name, and the prefix that embellished it, the Count, who was stirring the fire, let the tongs fall as though they had burned his fingers, and rose to his feet.

“Sir,” he cried, “you might have called him ‘Monsieur Goriot!’”

The Countess turned pale at first at the sight of her husband's vexation, then she reddened; clearly she was embarrassed, her answer was made in a tone that she tried to make natural, and with an air of assumed carelessness—

“You could not know any one who is dearer to us both——”

She broke off, glanced at the piano as if some fancy had crossed her mind, and asked, “Are you fond of music, M. de Rastignac?”

“Exceedingly,” answered Eugène, flushing, and disconcerted by a dim suspicion that he had somehow been guilty of a clumsy piece of folly.

“Do you sing?” she cried, going to the piano, and, sitting down before it, she swept her fingers over the keyboard from end to end. R-r-r-ah!

“No, madame.”

The Comte de Restaud walked to and fro.

“That is a pity; you are without one great means of success. *Ca-ro, ca-a-ro, ca-a-a-ro, non du-bi-ta-re,*” sang the Countess.

Eugène had a second time waved a magic wand when he uttered Goriot's name, but the effect seemed to be entirely opposite to that produced by the formula “related to Mme. de Beauséant.” His position was not unlike that of some visitor permitted as a favor to inspect a private collection of curiosities, when by inadvertence he comes into collision with a glass case full of sculptured figures, and three or four heads, imperfectly secured, fall at the shock. He wished the earth would open and swallow him. Mme. de Restaud's expression was reserved and chilly, her eyes had grown indifferent, and sedulously avoided meeting those of the unlucky student of law.

“Madame,” he said, “you wish to talk with M. de Restaud; permit me to wish you good-day——”

The Countess interrupted him by a gesture, saying hastily,

“Whenever you come to see us, both M. de Restaud and I shall be delighted to see you.”

Eugène made a profound bow and took his leave, followed by M. de Restaud, who insisted, in spite of his remonstrances, on accompanying him into the hall.

“Neither your mistress nor I are at home to that gentleman when he calls,” the Count said to Maurice, his servant, when the door had closed after Eugène.

As Eugène set foot on the steps, he saw that it was raining.

“Come,” said he to himself, “somehow I have just made a mess of it, I do not know how. And now I am going to spoil my hat and coat into the bargain. I ought to stop in my corner, grind away at law, and never look to be anything but a boorish country magistrate. How can I go into society, when to manage properly you want a lot of cabs, varnished boots, gold watch-chains, and all sorts of things; you have to wear white doeskin gloves that cost six francs in the morning, and primrose kid gloves every evening? A fig for that old humbug of a Goriot!”

When he reached the street-door, the driver of a hackney coach, who had probably just deposited a wedding party at their door, and asked nothing better than a chance of making a little money for himself without his employer's knowledge, saw that Eugène had no umbrella, remarked his black coat, white waistcoat, yellow gloves, and varnished boots, and stopped and looked at him inquiringly. Eugène, in the blind desperation that drives a young man to plunge deeper and deeper into an abyss, as if he might hope to find a fortunate issue in its lowest depths, nodded in reply to the driver's signal, and stepped into the cab; a few stray petals of orange blossom and scraps of wire bore witness to its recent occupation by a wedding party.

“Where am I to drive, sir?” demanded the man, who, by this time, had taken off his white gloves.

“Confound it!” Eugène said to himself, “I am in for

it now, and at least I will not spend cab-hire for nothing! Drive to the Hôtel Beauséant," he said aloud.

"Which?" asked the man, a portentous word that reduced Eugène to confusion. This young man of fashion, *species incerta*, did not know that there were two Hôtels Beauséant; he was not aware how rich he was in relations who did not care about him.

"The Vicomte de Beauséant, Rue——"

"De Grenelle," interrupted the driver, with a jerk of his head. "You see, there are the hôtels of the Marquis and Comte de Beauséant in the Rue Saint-Dominique," he added, drawing up the step.

"I know all about that," said Eugène, severely. "Everybody is laughing at me to-day, it seems!" he said to himself, as he deposited his hat on the opposite seat. "This escapade will cost me a king's ransom, but, at any rate, I shall call on my so-called cousin in a thoroughly aristocratic fashion. Goriot has cost me ten francs already, the old scoundrel! My word! I will tell Mme. de Beauséant about my adventure; perhaps it may amuse her. Doubtless she will know the secret of the criminal relation between that handsome woman and the old rat without a tail. It would be better to find favor in my cousin's eyes than to come in contact with that shameless woman, who seems to me to have very expensive tastes. Surely the beautiful Vicomtesse's personal interest would turn the scale for me, when the mere mention of her name produces such an effect. Let us look higher. If you set yourself to carry the heights of heaven, you must face God."

The innumerable thoughts that surged through his brain might be summed up in these phrases. He grew calmer, and recovered something of his assurance as he watched the falling rain. He told himself that though he was about to squander two of the precious five-franc pieces that remained to him, the money was well laid out in preserving his coat, boots, and hat; and his cabman's cry of "Gate, if you please," almost put

him in spirits. A Swiss, in scarlet and gold, appeared, the great door groaned on its hinges, and Rastignac, with sweet satisfaction, beheld his equipage pass under the archway and stop before the flight of steps beneath the awning. The driver, in a blue-and-red greatcoat, dismounted and let down the step. As Eugène stepped out of the cab, he heard smothered laughter from the peristyle. Three or four lackeys were making merry over the festal appearance of the vehicle. In another moment the law student was enlightened as to the cause of their hilarity; he felt the full force of the contrast between his equipage and one of the smartest broughams in Paris; a coachman, with powdered hair, seemed to find it difficult to hold a pair of spirited horses, who stood chafing the bit. In Mme. de Restaud's courtyard, in the *Chaussée d'Antin*, he had seen the neat turnout of a young man of six-and-twenty; in the *Faubourg Saint-Germain* he found the luxurious equipage of a man of rank; thirty thousand francs would not have purchased it.

"Who can be here?" said Eugène to himself. He began to understand, though somewhat tardily, that he must not expect to find many women in Paris who were not already appropriated, and that the capture of one of these queens would be likely to cost something more than bloodshed. "Confound it all! I expect my cousin also has her Maxime."

He went up the steps, feeling that he was a blighted being. The glass door was opened for him; the servants were as solemn as jackasses under the currycomb. So far, Eugène had only been in the ballroom on the ground floor of the *Hôtel Beauséant*; the fête had followed so closely on the invitation that he had not had time to call on his cousin, and had therefore never seen Mme. de Beauséant's apartments; he was about to behold for the first time a great lady among the wonderful and elegant surroundings that reveal her character and reflect her daily life. He was the more curious, because Mme. de Restaud's drawing-room had provided him with a standard of comparison.

At half-past four the Vicomtesse de Beauséant was visible. Five minutes earlier she would not have received her cousin, but Eugène knew nothing of the recognized routine of various houses in Paris. He was conducted up the wide, white-painted, crimson-carpeted staircase, between the gilded balusters and masses of flowering plants, to Mme. de Beauséant's apartments. He did not know the rumor current about Mme. de Beauséant, one of the biographies told, with variations, in whispers, every evening in the salons of Paris.

For three years past her name had been spoken of in connection with that of one of the most wealthy and distinguished Portuguese nobles, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto. It was one of those innocent *liaisons* which possess so much charm for the two thus attached to each other that they find the presence of a third person intolerable. The Vicomte de Beauséant, therefore, had himself set an example to the rest of the world by respecting, with as good a grace as might be, this morganatic union. Any one who came to call on the Vicomtesse in the early days of this friendship was sure to find the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto there. As, under the circumstances, Mme. de Beauséant could not very well shut her door against these visitors, she gave them such a cold reception, and showed so much interest in the study of the ceiling, that no one could fail to understand how much he bored her; and when it became known in Paris that Mme. de Beauséant was bored by callers between two and four o'clock, she was left in perfect solitude during that interval. She went to the Bouffons or to the Opéra with M. de Beauséant and M. d'Ajuda-Pinto; and M. de Beauséant, like a well-bred man of the world, always left his wife and the Portuguese as soon as he had installed them. But M. d'Ajuda-Pinto must marry, and a Mlle. de Rochefide was the young lady. In the whole fashionable world there was but one person who as yet knew nothing of the arrangement, and that was Mme. de Beauséant. Some of her friends had hinted at the possibility, and she had

laughed at them, believing that envy had prompted those ladies to try to make mischief. And now, though the banns were about to be published, and although the handsome Portuguese had come that day to break the news to the Vicomtesse, he had not found courage as yet to say one word about his treachery. How was it? Nothing is doubtless more difficult than the notification of an *ultimatum* of this kind. There are men who feel more at their ease when they stand up before another man who threatens their lives with sword or pistol than in the presence of a woman who, after two hours of lamentations and reproaches, falls into a dead swoon and requires salts. At this moment, therefore, M. d'Ajuda-Pinto was on thorns, and anxious to take his leave. He told himself that in some way or other the news would reach Mme. de Beauséant; he would write, it would be much better to do it by letter, and not to utter the words that should stab her to the heart.

So when the servant announced M. Eugène de Rastignac, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto trembled with joy. To be sure, a loving woman shows even more ingenuity in inventing doubts of her lover than in varying the monotony of his happiness; and when she is about to be forsaken, she instinctively interprets every gesture as rapidly as Virgil's courser detected the presence of his companion by snuffing the breeze. It was impossible, therefore, that Mme. de Beauséant should not detect that involuntary thrill of satisfaction; slight though it was, it was appalling in its artlessness.

Eugène had yet to learn that no one in Paris should present himself in any house without first making himself acquainted with the whole history of its owner, and of its owner's wife and family, so that he may avoid making any of the terrible blunders which in Poland draw forth the picturesque exclamation, "Harness five bullocks to your cart!" probably because you will need them all to pull you out of the quagmire into which a false step has plunged you. If, down to the present

day, our language has no name for these conversational disasters, it is probably because they are believed to be impossible, the publicity given in Paris to every scandal is so prodigious. After the awkward incident at Mme. de Restaud's, no one but Eugène could have reappeared in his character of bullock-driver in Mme. de Beauséant's drawing-room. But if Mme. de Restaud and M. de Trailles had found him horribly in the way, M. d'Ajuda-Pinto hailed his coming with relief.

"Good-by," said the Portuguese, hurrying to the door, as Eugène made his entrance into a dainty little pink-and-gray drawing-room, where luxury seemed nothing more than good taste.

"Until this evening," said Mme. de Beauséant, turning her head to give the Marquis a glance. "We are going to the Bouffons, are we not?"

"I cannot go," he said, with his fingers on the door-handle.

Mme. de Beauséant rose and beckoned to him to return. She did not pay the slightest attention to Eugène, who stood there dazzled by the sparkling marvels around him; he began to think that this was some story out of the "Arabian Nights" made real, and did not know where to hide himself, when the woman before him seemed to be unconscious of his existence. The Vicomtesse had raised the forefinger of her right hand, and gracefully signed to the Marquis to seat himself beside her. The Marquis felt the imperious sway of passion in her gesture; he came back towards her. Eugène watched him, not without a feeling of envy.

"That is the owner of the brougham!" he said to himself. "But is it necessary to have a pair of spirited horses, servants in livery, and torrents of gold to draw a glance from a woman here in Paris?"

The demon of luxury gnawed at his heart, greed burned in his veins, his throat was parched with the thirst of gold.

He had a hundred and thirty francs every quarter. His father, mother, brothers, sisters, and aunt did not spend two hundred francs a month among them. This swift comparison between his present condition and the aims he had in view helped to benumb his faculties.

“Why not?” the Vicomtesse was saying, as she smiled at the Portuguese. “Why can you not come to the Italiens?”

“Affairs! I am to dine with the English ambassador.”

“Throw him over.”

When a man once enters on a course of deception, he is compelled to add lie to lie. M. d’Ajuda therefore said, smiling, “Do you lay your commands on me?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“That was what I wanted to have you say to me,” he answered, dissembling his feelings in a glance which would have reassured any other woman.

He took the Vicomtesse’s hand, kissed it, and went.

Eugène ran his fingers through his hair, and constrained himself to bow. He thought that now Mme. de Beauséant would give him her attention; but suddenly she sprang forward, rushed to a window in the gallery, and watched M. d’Ajuda step into his carriage; she listened to the order that he gave, and heard the Swiss repeat it to the coachman—

“To M. de Rochefide’s house.”

Those words, and the way in which M. d’Ajuda flung himself back in the carriage, were like a lightning flash and a thunderbolt for her; she walked back again with a deadly fear gnawing at her heart. The most terrible catastrophes only happen among the heights. The Vicomtesse went to her own room, sat down at a table, and took up a sheet of dainty note-paper.

“When, instead of dining with the English ambassador,” she wrote, “you go to the Rochefides, you owe me an explanation, which I am waiting to hear.”

She retraced several of the letters, for her hand was trembling so that they were indistinct; then she signed the note with an initial C. for "Claire de Bourgogne," and rang the bell.

"Jacques," she said to the servant, who appeared immediately, "take this note to M. de Rochefide's house at half-past seven, and ask for the Marquis d'Ajuda. If M. d'Ajuda is there, leave the note without waiting for an answer; if he is not there, bring the note back to me."

"Madame la Vicomtesse, there is a visitor in the drawing-room."

"Ah! yes, of course," she said, opening the door.

Eugène was beginning to feel very uncomfortable, but at last the Vicomtesse appeared; she spoke to him, and the tremulous tones of her voice vibrated through his heart.

"Pardon me, monsieur," she said; "I had a letter to write. Now I am quite at liberty."

She scarcely knew what she was saying, for even as she spoke she thought, "Ah! he means to marry Mlle. de Rochefide! But is he still free? This evening the marriage shall be broken off, or else—— But before to-morrow I shall know."

"Cousin——" the student replied.

"Eh?" said the Countess, with an insolent glance that sent a cold shudder through Eugène; he understood what that "Eh?" meant; he had learned a great deal in three hours, and his wits were on the alert. He reddened—

"Madame——" he began; he hesitated a moment, and then went on. "Pardon me; I am in such need of protection that the merest scrap of relationship could do me no harm."

Mme. de Beauséant smiled, but there was sadness in her smile; even now she felt forebodings of the coming pain, the air she breathed was heavy with the storm that was about to burst.

“If you knew how my family are situated,” he went on, “you would love to play the part of a beneficent fairy god-mother who graciously clears the obstacles from the path of her protégé.”

“Well, cousin,” she said laughing, “and how can I be of service to you?”

“But do I know even that? I am distantly related to you, and this obscure and remote relationship is even now a perfect godsend to me. You have confused my ideas; I cannot remember the things that I meant to say to you. I know no one else here in Paris—— Ah! if I could only ask you to counsel me, ask you to look upon me as a poor child who would fain cling to the hem of your dress, who would lay down his life for you.”

“Would you kill a man for me?”

“Two,” said Eugène.

“You, child! Yes, you are a child,” she said, keeping back the tears that came to her eyes; “you would love sincerely.”

“Oh!” he cried, flinging up his head.

The audacity of the student’s answer interested the Vicomtesse in him. The southern brain was beginning to scheme for the first time. Between Mme. de Restaud’s blue boudoir and Mme. de Beauséant’s rose-colored drawing-room he had made a three years’ advance in a kind of law which is not a recognized study in Paris, although it is a sort of higher jurisprudence, and, when well understood, is a high-road to success of every kind.

“Ah! this is what I meant to say!” said Eugène. “I met Mme. de Restaud at your ball, and this morning I went to see her.”

“You must have been very much in the way,” said Mme. de Beauséant, smiling as she spoke.

“Yes, indeed. I am a novice, and my blunders will set every one against me, if you do not give me your counsel. I

believe that in Paris it is very difficult to meet with a young, beautiful, and wealthy woman of fashion who would be willing to teach me, what you women can explain so well—life. I shall find a M. de Trailles everywhere. So I have come to you to ask you to give me a key to a puzzle, to entreat you to tell me what sort of blunder I made this morning. I mentioned an old man——”

“Madame la Duchesse de Langeais!” Jacques cut the student short; Eugène gave expression to his intense annoyance by a gesture.

“If you mean to succeed,” said the Vicomtesse in a low voice, “in the first place you must not be so demonstrative.”

“Ah! good-morning, dear,” she continued, and, rising and crossing the room, she grasped the Duchess’ hand as affectionately as if they had been sisters; the Duchess responded in the prettiest and most gracious way.

“Two intimate friends!” said Rastignac to himself. “Henceforward I shall have two protectresses; those two women are great friends, no doubt, and this new-comer will doubtless interest herself in her friend’s cousin.”

“To what happy inspiration do I owe this piece of good fortune, dear Antoinette?” asked Mme. de Beauséant.

“Well, I saw M. d’Ajuda-Pinto at M. de Rochefide’s door, so I thought that if I came I should find you alone.”

Mme. de Beauséant’s mouth did not tighten, her color did not rise, her expression did not alter, or rather, her brow seemed to clear as the Duchess uttered those deadly words.

“If I had known that you were engaged——” the speaker added, glancing at Eugène.

“This gentleman is M. Eugène de Rastignac, one of my cousins,” said the Vicomtesse. “Have you any news of General de Montriveau?” she continued. “Sérizy told me yesterday that he never goes anywhere now; has he been to see you to-day?”

It was believed that the Duchess was desperately in love

with M. de Montriveau, and that he was a faithless lover ; she felt the question in her very heart, and her face flushed as she answered.

“ He was at the Élysée yesterday.”

“ In attendance ? ”

“ Claire,” returned the Duchess, and hatred overflowed in the glances she threw at Mme. de Beauséant ; “ of course you know that M. d’Ajuda-Pinto is going to marry Mlle. de Rochefide ; the banns will be published to-morrow.”

This thrust was too cruel ; the Vicomtesse’s face grew white, but she answered, laughing, “ One of those rumors that fools amuse themselves with. What should induce M. d’Ajuda to take one of the noblest names in Portugal to the Rochefides ? The Rochefides were only ennobled yesterday.”

“ But Bertha will have two hundred thousand livres a year, they say.”

“ M. d’Ajuda is too wealthy to marry for money.”

“ But, my dear, Mlle. de Rochefide is a charming girl.”

“ Indeed ? ”

“ And, as a matter of fact, he is dining with them to-day ; the thing is settled. It is very surprising to me that you should know so little about it.”

Mme. de Beauséant turned to Rastignac. “ What was the blunder that you made, monsieur ? ” she asked. “ The poor boy is only just launched into the world, Antoinette, so that he understands nothing of all this that we are speaking of. Be merciful to him, and let us finish our talk to-morrow. Everything will be announced to-morrow, you know, and your kind informal communication can be accompanied by official confirmation.”

The Duchess gave Eugène one of those insolent glances that measure a man from head to foot and leave him crushed and annihilated.

“ Madame, I have unwittingly plunged a dagger into Mme. de Restaud’s heart ; unwittingly—therein lies my offense,”

said the student of law, whose keen brain had served him sufficiently well, for he had detected the biting epigrams that lurked beneath this friendly talk. "You continue to receive, possibly you fear, those who know the amount of pain that they deliberately inflict; but a clumsy blunderer who has no idea how deeply he wounds is looked upon as a fool who does not know how to make use of his opportunities, and every one despises him."

Mme. de Beauséant gave the student a glance, one of those glances in which a great soul can mingle dignity and gratitude. It was like balm to the law student, who was still smarting under the Duchess' insolent scrutiny; she had looked at him as an auctioneer might look at some article to appraise its value.

"Imagine, too, that I had just made some progress with the Comte de Restaud; for I should tell you, madame," he went on, turning to the Duchess with a mixture of humility and malice in his manner, "that as yet I am only a poor devil of a student, very much alone in the world, and very poor——"

"You should not tell us that, M. de Rastignac. We women never care about anything that no one else will take."

"Bah!" said Eugène. "I am only two-and-twenty, and I must make up my mind to the drawbacks of my time of life. Besides, I am confessing my sins, and it would be impossible to kneel in a more charming confessional; you commit your sins in one drawing-room, and receive absolution for them in another."

The Duchess' expression grew colder; she did not like the flippant tone of these remarks, and showed that she considered them to be in bad taste by turning to the Vicomtesse with—"This gentleman has only just come——"

Mme. de Beauséant began to laugh outright at her cousin and at the Duchess both.

"He has only just come to Paris, dear, and is in search of some one who will give him lessons in good taste."

“Mme. la Duchesse,” said Eugène, “is it not natural to wish to be initiated into the mysteries which charm us?” (“Come, now,” he said to himself, “my language is super-finely elegant, I’m sure.”)

“But Mme. de Restaud is herself, I believe, M. de Trailles’ pupil,” said the Duchess.

“Of that I had no idea, madame,” answered the law student, “so I rashly came between them. In fact, I got on very well with the lady’s husband, and his wife tolerated me for a time until I took it into my head to tell them that I knew some one of whom I had just caught a glimpse as he went out by a back staircase, a man who had given the Countess a kiss at the end of a passage.”

“Who was it?” both women asked together.

“An old man who lives at the rate of two louis a month in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, where I, a poor student, lodge likewise. He is a truly unfortunate creature, everybody laughs at him—we call him old Goriot.”

“Why, child that you are,” cried the Vicomtesse, “Mme. de Restaud was a Mlle. Goriot!”

“The daughter of a vermicelli manufacturer,” the Duchess added; “and when the little creature went to court, the daughter of a pastry-cook was presented on the same day. Do you remember, Claire? The King began to laugh, and made some joke in Latin about flour. People—what was it?—people——”

“*Ejusdem farinae*,” said Eugène.

“Yes, that was it,” said the Duchess.

“Oh! is that her father?” the law student continued, aghast.

“Yes, certainly; the old man had two daughters; he dotes on them, so to speak, though they will scarcely acknowledge him.”

“Didn’t the second daughter marry a banker with a German name?” the Vicomtesse asked, turning to Mme. de

Langeais, "a Baron de Nucingen? And her name is Delphine, is it not? Isn't she a fair-haired woman who has a side-box at the Opéra? She comes sometimes to the Bouffons, and laughs loudly to attract attention."

The Duchess smiled and said—

"I wonder at you, dear. Why do you take so much interest in people of that kind? One must have been as madly in love as Restaud was, to be infatuated with Mlle. Anastasie and her flour-sacks. Oh! he will not find her a good bargain! She is in M. de Trailles' hands, and he will ruin her."

"And they do not acknowledge their father!" Eugène repeated.

"Oh! well, yes, their father, the father, a father," replied the Vicomtesse, "a kind father who gave them each five or six hundred thousand francs, it is said, to secure their happiness by marrying them well; while he only kept eight or ten thousand livres a year for himself, thinking that his daughters would always be his daughters, thinking that in them he would live his life twice over again, that in their houses he should find two homes, where he would be loved and looked up to, and made much of. And in two years' time both his sons-in-law had turned him out of their houses as if he were one of the lowest outcasts."

Tears came into Eugène's eyes. He was still under the spell of youthful beliefs, he had but just left home, pure and sacred feelings had been stirred within him, and this was his first day on the battlefield of civilization in Paris. Genuine feeling is so infectious that for a moment the three looked at each other in silence.

"Well, my God!" said Mme. de Langeais; "yes, it seems very horrible, and yet we see such things every day. Is there not a reason for it? Tell me, dear, have you ever really thought what a son-in-law is? A son-in-law is the man for whom we bring up, you and I, a dear little one, bound to

us very closely in innumerable ways ; for seventeen years she will be the joy of her family, its 'white soul,' as Lamartine says, and suddenly she will become its scourge. When *he* comes and takes her from us, his love from the very beginning is like an axe laid to the root of all the old affection in our darling's heart, and all the ties that bound her to her family are severed. But yesterday our little daughter thought of no one but her mother and father, as we had no thought that was not for her ; by to-morrow she will have become a hostile stranger. The tragedy is always going on under our eyes. On the one hand you see a father who has sacrificed himself to his son, and his daughter-in-law shows him the last degree of insolence. On the other hand, it is the son-in-law who turns his wife's mother out of the house. I sometimes hear it said that there is nothing dramatic about society in these days ; but the Drama of the Son-in-law is appalling, to say nothing of our marriages, which have come to be very poor farces. I can explain how it all came about in the old vermicelli-maker's case. I think I recollect that Foriot—"

"Goriot, madame."

"Yes, that Moriot was once president of his section during the Revolution. He was in the secret of the famous scarcity of grain, and laid the foundation of his fortune in those days by selling flour for ten times its cost. He had as much flour as he wanted. My grandmother's steward sold him immense quantities. No doubt Noriot shared the plunder with the Committee of Public Salvation, as that sort of person always did. I recollect the steward telling my grandmother that she might live at Grandvilliers in complete security, because her corn was as good as a certificate of civism. Well, then, this Loriot, who sold corn to those butchers, has never had but one passion, they say—he idolizes his daughters. He settled one of them under Restaud's roof, and grafted the other into the Nucingen family tree, the Baron de Nucingen being a rich banker who had turned Royalist. You can quite

understand that so long as Bonaparte was Emperor, the two sons-in-law could manage to put up with old Ninety-three; but after the restoration of the Bourbons, M. de Restaud felt bored by the old man's society, and the banker was still more tired of it. His daughters were still fond of him; they wanted 'to keep the goat and the cabbage,' so they used to see the Joriot whenever there was no one there, under pretense of affection. 'Come to-day, papa, we shall have you all to ourselves, and that will be much nicer!' and all that sort of thing. As for me, dear, I believe that love has second sight: poor Ninety-three, his heart must have bled! He saw that his daughters were ashamed of him, that if they loved their husbands his visits must make mischief. So he immolated himself. He made the sacrifice because he was a father; he went into voluntary exile. His daughters were satisfied, so he thought that he had done the best thing he could; but it was a family crime, and father and daughters were accomplices. You see this sort of thing everywhere. What could this Father Doriot have been but a splash of mud in his daughters' drawing-rooms? He would only have been in the way and bored other people, besides being bored himself. And this that happened between father and daughters may happen to the prettiest woman in Paris and the man she loves best; if her love grows tiresome, he will go; he will descend to the basest trickery to leave her. It is the same with all love and friendship. Our heart is a treasury; if you pour out all its wealth at once, you are bankrupt. We show no more mercy to the affection that reveals its utmost extent than we do to another kind of prodigal who has not a penny left. Their father had given them all he had. For twenty years he had given his whole heart to them; then, one day, he gave them all his fortune too. The lemon was squeezed; the girls left the rest in the gutter."

"The world is very base," said the Vicomtesse, plucking at the threads of her shawl. She did not raise her eyes as

she spoke; the words that Mme. de Langeais had meant for her in the course of the story had cut her to the quick.

“Base? Oh, no,” answered the Duchess; “the world goes its own way, that is all. If I speak in this way, it is only to show that I am not duped by it. I think as you do,” she said, pressing the Vicomtesse’s hand. “The world is a slough; let us try to live on the heights above it.”

She rose to her feet and kissed Mme. de Beauséant on the forehead as she said: “You look very charming to-day, dear. I have never seen such a lovely color in your cheeks before.”

Then she went out, with a slight inclination of the head to the cousin.

“Father Goriot is sublime!” said Eugène to himself, as he remembered how he had watched his neighbor work the silver vessel into a shapeless mass that night.

Mme. de Beauséant did not hear him; she was absorbed in her own thoughts. For several minutes the silence remained unbroken till the law student became almost paralyzed with embarrassment, and was equally afraid to go or stay or speak a word.

“The world is basely ungrateful and ill-natured,” said the Vicomtesse at last. “No sooner does a trouble befall you than a friend is ready to bring the tidings and to probe your heart with the point of a dagger while calling on you to admire the handle. Epigrams and sarcasms already! Ah! I will defend myself!”

She raised her head like the great lady that she was, and lightnings flashed from her proud eyes.

“Ah!” she said, as she saw Eugène, “are you there?”

“Still,” he said piteously.

“Well, then, M. de Rastignac, deal with the world as it deserves. You are determined to succeed? I will help you. You shall sound the depths of corruption in woman; you shall measure the extent of man’s pitiful vanity. Deeply as I am versed in such learning, there were pages in the book of

life that I had not read. Now I know all. The more cold-blooded your calculations, the farther you will go. Strike ruthlessly; you will be feared. Men and women for you must be nothing more than post-horses; take a fresh relay, and leave the last to drop by the roadside; in this way you will reach the goal of your ambition. You will be nothing here, you see, unless a woman interests herself in you; and she must be young and wealthy, and a woman of the world. Yet, if you have a heart, lock it carefully away like a treasure; do not let any one suspect it, or you will be lost; you would cease to be the executioner, you would take the victim's place. And if ever you should love, never let your secret escape you! Trust no one until you are very sure of the heart to which you open your heart. Learn to mistrust every one; take every precaution for the sake of the love which does not exist as yet. Listen, Miguel"—the name slipped from her so naturally that she did not notice her mistake—"there is something still more appalling than the ingratitude of daughters who have cast off their old father and wish that he were dead, and that is a rivalry between the two sisters. Restaud comes of a good family; his wife has been received into their circle; she has been presented at court; and her sister, her wealthy sister, Mme. Delphine de Nucingen, the wife of a great capitalist, is consumed with envy, and ready to die of spleen. There is a gulf set between the sisters—indeed, they are sisters no longer—the two women who refuse to acknowledge their father do not acknowledge each other. So Mme. de Nucingen would lap all the mud that lies between the Rue Saint-Lazare and the Rue de Grenelle to gain admittance to my salon. She fancied that she should gain her end through de Marsay; she has made herself de Marsay's slave, and she bores him. De Marsay cares very little about her. If you will introduce her to me, you will be her darling, her Benjamin; she will idolize you. If, after that, you can love her, do so; if not, make her useful. I will ask her to come once

or twice to one of my great crushes, but I will never receive her here in the morning. I will bow to her when I see her, and that will be quite sufficient. You have shut the Comtesse de Restaud's door against you by mentioning Father Goriot's name. Yes, my good friend, you may call at her house twenty times, and every time out of the twenty you will find that she is not at home. The servants have their orders, and will not admit you. Very well, then, now let Father Goriot gain the right of entry into her sister's house for you. The beautiful Mme. de Nucingen will give the signal for a battle. As soon as she singles you out, other women will begin to lose their heads about you, and her enemies and rivals and intimate friends will all try to take you from her. There are women who will fall in love with a man because another woman has chosen him; like the city madames, poor things, who copy our millinery, and hope thereby to acquire our manners. You will have a success, and in Paris success is everything; it is the key of power. If the women credit you with wit and talent, the men will follow suit so long as you do not undeceive them yourself. There will be nothing you may not aspire to; you will go everywhere, and you will find out what the world is—an assemblage of fools and knaves. But you must be neither the one nor the other. I am giving you my name like Ariadne's clue of thread to take with you into this labyrinth; make no unworthy use of it," she said, with a queenly glance and curve of her throat; "give it back to me unsullied. And now, go; leave me. We women also have our battles to fight."

"And if you should ever need some one who would gladly set a match to a train for you——"

"Well?" she asked.

He tapped his heart, smiled in answer to his cousin's smile, and went.

It was five o'clock, and Eugène was hungry; he was afraid lest he should not be in time for dinner, a misgiving which

made him feel that it was pleasant to be borne so quickly across Paris. This sensation of physical comfort left his mind free to grapple with the thoughts that assailed him. A mortification usually sends a young man of his age into a furious rage; he shakes his fists at society, and vows vengeance when his belief in himself is shaken. Just then Rastignac was overwhelmed by the words, "You have shut the Countess' door against you."

"I shall call!" he said to himself, "and if Mme. de Beauséant is right, if I never find her at home—I—— well, Mme. de Restaud shall meet me in every salon in Paris. I will learn to fence, and have some pistol practice, and kill that Maxime of hers!"

"And money?" cried an inward monitor. "How about money, where is that to come from?" And all at once the wealth displayed in the Comtesse de Restaud's drawing-room rose before his eyes. That was the luxury which Goriot's daughter had loved too well; the gilding, the ostentatious splendor, the unintelligent luxury of the parvenu, the riotous extravagance of a courtesan. Then the attractive vision suddenly went under an eclipse as he remembered the stately grandeur of the Hôtel de Beauséant. As his fancy wandered among these lofty regions in the great world of Paris, innumerable dark thoughts gathered in his heart; his ideas widened, and his conscience grew more elastic. He saw the world as it is; saw how the rich lived beyond the jurisdiction of law and public opinion, and found in success the world's last argument.

"Vautrin is right, success is virtue!" he said to himself.

Arrived in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, he rushed up to his room for ten francs wherewith to satisfy the demands of the cabman, and went in to dinner. He glanced round the squalid room, saw the eighteen poverty-stricken creatures about to feed like cattle in their stalls, and the sight filled

him with loathing. The transition was too sudden, and the contrast was so violent that it could not but act as a powerful stimulant; his ambition developed and grew beyond all bounds. On the one hand, he beheld a vision of social life in its most charming and refined forms, of quick-pulsed youth, of fair, impassioned faces invested with all the charm of poetry, framed in a marvelous setting of luxury or art; and, on the other hand, he saw a sombre picture, the miry verge beyond these faces, in which passion was extinct and nothing was left of the drama but the cords and pulleys and bare mechanism. Mme. de Beauséant's counsels, the words uttered in anger by the forsaken lady, her petulant offer, came to his mind, and poverty was a ready expositor. Rastignac determined to open two parallel trenches, so as to insure success; he would be a learned doctor of law and a man of fashion. Clearly he was still a child! Those two lines are asymptotes, and will never meet.

“You are very dull, my lord marquis,” said Vautrin, with one of the shrewd glances that seem to read the innermost secrets of another mind.

“I am not in the humor to stand jokes from people who call me ‘my lord marquis,’” answered Eugène. “A marquis here in Paris, if he is not the veriest sham, ought to have a hundred thousand livres a year at least; and a lodger in the Maison Vauquer is not exactly fortune's favorite.”

Vautrin's glance at Rastignac was half-paternal, half-contemptuous. “Puppy!” it seemed to say; “I should make one mouthful of him!” Then he answered—

“You are in a bad humor; perhaps your visit to the beautiful Comtesse de Restaud was not a success.”

“She has shut her door against me because I told her that her father dined at our table,” cried Rastignac.

Glances were exchanged all round the room; Father Goriot looked down.

“You have sent some snuff into my eye,” he said to his

neighbor, turning a little aside to rub his hand over his face.

“Any one who molests Father Goriot will have henceforward to reckon with me,” said Eugène, looking at the old man’s neighbor; “he is worth all the rest of us put together—I am not speaking of the ladies,” he added, turning in the direction of Mlle. Taillefer.

Eugène’s remarks produced a sensation, and his tone silenced the dinner table. Vautrin alone spoke. “If you are going to champion Father Goriot, and set up for his responsible editor into the bargain, you had need be a crack-shot and know how to handle the foils,” he said, banteringly.

“So I intend,” said Eugène.

“Then are you taking the field to-day?”

“Perhaps,” Rastignac answered. “But I owe no account of myself to any one, especially as I do not try to find out what other people do of a night.”

Vautrin looked askance at Rastignac.

“If you do not mean to be deceived by the puppets, my boy, you must go behind and see the whole show, and not peep through holes in the curtain. That is enough,” he added, seeing that Eugène was about to fly into a passion. “We can have a little talk whenever you like.”

There was a general feeling of gloom and constraint. Father Goriot was so deeply dejected by the student’s remark that he did not notice the change in the disposition of his fellow-lodgers, nor know that he had met with a champion capable of putting an end to the persecution.

“Then, M. Goriot sitting there is the father of a countess,” said Mme. Vauquer in a low voice.

“And of a baroness,” answered Rastignac.

“That is about all he is capable of,” said Bianchon to Rastignac; “I have taken a look at his head; there is only one bump—the bump of paternity; he must be an *eternal father*.”

Eugène was too intent on his thoughts to laugh at Bianchon’s

joke. He determined to profit by Mme. de Beauséant's counsels, and was asking himself how he could obtain the necessary money. He grew grave. The wide savannas of the world stretched before his eyes; all things lay before him, nothing was his. Dinner came to an end, the others went, and he was left in the dining-room.

“So you have seen my daughter?” Goriot spoke tremulously, and the sound of his voice broke in upon Eugène's dreams. The young man took the elder's hand, and looked at him with something like kindness in his eyes.

“You are a good and noble man,” he said. “We will have some talk about your daughters by and by.”

He rose without waiting for Goriot's answer, and went to his room. There he wrote the following letter to his mother:

“MY DEAR MOTHER:—Can you nourish your child from your breast again? I am in a position to make a rapid fortune, but I want twelve hundred francs—I must have them at all costs. Say nothing about this to my father; perhaps he might make objections, and unless I have the money, I may be led to put an end to myself, and so escape the clutches of despair. I will tell you everything when I see you. I will not begin to try to describe my present situation; it would take volumes to put the whole story clearly and fully. I have not been gambling, my kind mother, I owe no one a penny; but if you would preserve the life that you gave me, you must send me the sum I mention. As a matter of fact, I go to see the Vicomtesse de Beauséant; she is using her influence for me; I am obliged to go into society, and I have not a penny to lay out on clean gloves. I can manage to exist on bread and water, or go without food, if need be, but I cannot do without the tools with which they cultivate the vineyards in this country. I must resolutely make up my mind at once to make my way, or stick in the mire for the rest of my days. I know that all your hopes are set on me,

and I want to realize them quickly. Sell some of your old jewelry, my kind mother ; I will give you other jewels very soon. I know enough of our affairs at home to know all that such a sacrifice means, and you must not think that I would lightly ask you to make it ; I should be a monster if I could. You must think of my entreaty as a cry forced from me by imperative necessity. Our whole future lies in the subsidy with which I must begin my first campaign, for life in Paris is one continual battle. If you cannot otherwise procure the whole of the money, and are forced to sell our aunt's lace, tell her that I will send her some still handsomer," and so forth.

He wrote to ask each of his sisters for their savings—would they despoil themselves for him, and keep the sacrifice a secret from the family? To his request he knew that they would not fail to respond gladly, and he added to it an appeal to their delicacy by touching the chord of honor that vibrates so loudly in young and highly strung natures.

Yet when he had written the letters, he could not help feeling misgivings in spite of his youthful ambition ; his heart beat fast, and he trembled. He knew the spotless nobleness of the lives buried away in the lonely manor house ; he knew what trouble and what joy his request would cause his sisters, and how happy they would be as they talked at the bottom of the orchard of that dear brother of theirs in Paris. Visions rose before his eyes ; a sudden strong light revealed his sisters secretly counting over their little store, devising some girlish stratagem by which the money could be sent to him *incognito*, essaying, for the first time in their lives, a piece of deceit that reached the sublime in its unselfishness.

"A sister's heart is a diamond for purity, a deep sea of tenderness !" he said to himself. He felt ashamed of those letters.

What power there must be in the petitions put up by such

hearts; how pure the fervor that bears their souls to heaven in prayer! What exquisite joy they would find in self-sacrifice! What a pang for his mother's heart if she could not send him all that he asked for! And this noble affection, these sacrifices made at such terrible cost, were to serve as the ladder by which he meant to climb to Delphine de Nucingen. A few tears, like the last grains of incense flung upon the sacred altar fire of the hearth, fell from his eyes. He walked up and down, and despair mingled with his emotion. Father Goriot saw him through the half-open door.

"What is the matter, sir?" he asked from the threshold.

"Ah! my good neighbor, I am as much a son and brother as you are a father. You do well to fear for the Comtesse Anastasie; there is one M. Maxime de Trailles, who will be her ruin."

Father Goriot withdrew, stammering some words, but Eugène failed to catch their meaning.

The next morning Rastignac went out to post his letters. Up to the last moment he wavered and doubted, but he ended by flinging them into the box. "I shall succeed!" he said to himself. So says the gambler; so says the great captain; but the three words that have been the salvation of some few have been the ruin of many more.

A few days after this Eugène called at Mme. de Restaud's house; she was not at home. Three times he tried the experiment, and three times he found her doors closed against him, though he was careful to choose an hour when M. de Trailles was not there. The Vicomtesse was right.

The student studied no longer. He put in an appearance at lectures simply to answer to his name, and, after thus attesting his presence, departed forthwith. He had been through a reasoning process familiar to most students. He had seen the advisability of deferring his studies to the last moment before going up for his examinations; he made up his mind to cram his second and third year's work into the third year,

when he meant to begin to work in earnest and to complete his studies in law with one great effort. In the meantime he had fifteen months in which to navigate the ocean of Paris, to spread the nets and set the lines that should bring him a protectress and a fortune. Twice during that week he saw Mme. de Beauséant ; he did not go to her house until he had seen the Marquis d'Ajuda drive away.

Victory for yet a few more days was with the great lady, the most poetic figure in the Faubourg Saint-Germain ; and the marriage of the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto with Mlle. de Rochefide was postponed. The dread of losing her happiness filled those days with a fever of joy unknown before, but the end was only so much the nearer. The Marquis d'Ajuda and the Rochefides agreed that this quarrel and reconciliation was a very fortunate thing ; Mme. de Beauséant (so they hoped) would gradually become reconciled to the idea of the marriage, and in the end would be brought to sacrifice d'Ajuda's morning visits to the exigencies of a man's career, exigencies which she must have foreseen. In spite of the most solemn promises, daily renewed, M. d'Ajuda was playing a part, and the Vicomtesse was eager to be deceived. "Instead of taking the leap heroically from the window, she is falling headlong down the staircase," said her most intimate friend, the Duchesse de Langeais. Yet this after-glow of happiness lasted long enough for the Vicomtesse to be of service to her young cousin. She had a half-superstitious affection for him. Eugène had shown her sympathy and devotion at a crisis when a woman sees no pity, no real comfort in any eyes ; when if a man is ready with soothing flatteries, it is because he has an interested motive.

Rastignac made up his mind that he must learn the whole of Goriot's previous history ; he would come to his bearings before attempting to board the *Maison de Nucingen*. The results of his inquiries may be given briefly as follows :

In the days before the Revolution, Jean-Joachim Goriot

was simply a workman in the employ of a vermicelli-maker. He was a skillful, thrifty workman, sufficiently enterprising to buy his master's business when the latter fell a chance victim to the disturbances of 1789. Goriot established himself in the Rue de la Jussienne, close to the Corn Exchange. His plain good sense led him to accept the position of president of the section, so as to secure for his business the protection of those in power at that dangerous epoch. This prudent step had led to success; the foundations of his fortune were laid in the time of the scarcity (real or artificial), when the price of grain of all kinds rose enormously in Paris. People used to fight for bread at the bakers' doors; while other persons went to the grocers' shops and bought Italian paste foods without brawling over it. It was during this year that Goriot made the money, which, at a later time, was to give him all the advantage of the great capitalist over the small buyer; he had, moreover, the usual luck of average ability; his mediocrity was the salvation of him. He excited no one's envy; it was not even suspected that he was rich till the peril of being rich was over, and all his intelligence was concentrated, not on political, but on commercial speculations. Goriot was an authority second to none on all questions relating to corn, flour, and "middlings;" and the production, storage, and quality of grain. He could estimate the yield of the harvest, and foresee market prices; he bought his cereals in Sicily, and imported Russian wheat. Any one who had heard him hold forth on the regulations that control the importation and exportation of grain, who had seen his grasp of the subject, his clear insight into the principles involved, his appreciation of weak points in the way that the system worked, would have thought that here was the stuff of which a minister is made. Patient, active, and persevering, energetic and prompt in action, he surveyed his business horizon with an eagle's eye. Nothing there took him by surprise; he foresaw all things, knew all that was happening, and kept his own counsel; he

was a diplomatist in his quick comprehension of a situation ; and in the routine of business he was as patient and plodding as a soldier on the march. But beyond this business horizon he could not see. He used to spend his hours of leisure on the threshold of his shop, leaning against the framework of the door. Take him from his dark little counting-house, and he became once more the rough, slow-witted workman, a man who cannot understand a piece of reasoning, who is indifferent to all intellectual pleasures, and falls asleep at the play, a Parisian Dolibom in short, against whose stupidity other minds are powerless.

Natures of this kind are nearly all alike ; in almost all of them you will find some hidden depth of sublime affection. Two all-absorbing affections filled the vermicelli-maker's heart to the exclusion of every other feeling ; into them he seemed to put all the forces of his nature, as he put the whole power of his brain into the corn trade. He had regarded his wife, the only daughter of a rich farmer of La Brie, with a devout admiration ; his love for her had been boundless. Goriot had felt the charm of a lovely and sensitive nature, which, in its delicate strength, was the very opposite of his own. Is there any instinct more deeply implanted in the heart of man than the pride of protection, a protection which is constantly exerted for a fragile and defenseless creature ? Join love thereto, the warmth of gratitude that all generous souls feel for the source of their pleasures, and you have the explanation of many strange incongruities in human nature.

After seven years of unclouded happiness, Goriot lost his wife. It was very unfortunate for him. She was beginning to gain an ascendancy over him in other ways ; possibly she might have brought that barren soil under cultivation, she might have widened his ideas and given other directions to his thoughts. But when she was dead, the instinct of fatherhood developed in him till it almost became a mania. All the affection balked by death seemed to turn to his daughters,

and he found full satisfaction for his heart in loving them. More or less brilliant proposals were made to him from time to time; wealthy merchants or farmers with daughters vied with each other in offering inducements to him to marry again; but he determined to remain a widower. His father-in-law, the only man for whom he felt a decided friendship, gave out that Goriot had made a vow to be faithful to his wife's memory. The frequenters of the Corn Exchange, who could not comprehend this sublime piece of folly, joked about it among themselves, and found a ridiculous nickname for him. One of them ventured (after a glass over a bargain) to call him by it, and a blow from the vermicelli-maker's fist sent him headlong into a gutter in the Rue Oblin. He could think of nothing else when his children were concerned; his love for them made him fidgety and anxious; and this was so well known, that one day a competitor, who wished to get rid of him to secure the field to himself, told Goriot that Delphine had just been knocked down by a cab. The vermicelli-maker turned ghastly pale, left the Exchange at once, and did not return for several days afterwards; he was ill in consequence of the shock and the subsequent relief on discovering that it was a false alarm. This time, however, the offender did not escape with a bruised shoulder; at a critical moment in the man's affairs, Goriot drove him into bankruptcy, and forced him to disappear from the Corn Exchange.

As might have been expected, the two girls were spoiled. With an income of sixty thousand francs, Goriot scarcely spent twelve hundred on himself, and found all his happiness in satisfying the whims of the two girls. The best masters were engaged, that Anastasie and Delphine might be endowed with all the accomplishments which distinguish a good education. They had a chaperon—luckily for them, she was a woman who had sense and good taste; they learned to ride; they had a carriage for their use; they lived as the mistress of a rich old lord might live; they had only to express a wish,

their father would hasten to give them their most extravagant desires, and asked nothing of them in return but a kiss. Goriot had raised the two girls to the level of the angels; and, quite naturally, he himself was left beneath them. Poor man! he loved them even for the pain that they gave him.

When the girls were old enough to be married, they were left free to choose for themselves. Each had half her father's fortune as her dowry; and when the Comte de Restaud came to woo Anastasie for her beauty, her social aspirations led her to leave her father's house for a more exalted sphere. Delphine wished for money; she married Nucingen, a banker of German extraction, who became a baron of the Holy Roman Empire. Goriot remained a vermicelli-maker as before. His daughters and his sons-in-law began to demur; they did not like to see him still engaged in trade, though his whole life was bound up with his business. For five years he stood out against their entreaties, then he yielded, and consented to retire on the amount realized by the sale of his business and the savings of the last few years. It was this capital that Mme. Vauquer, in the early days of his residence with her, had calculated would bring in eight or ten thousand livres in a year. He had taken refuge in her lodging-house, driven there by despair when he knew that his daughters were compelled by their husbands not only to refuse to receive him as an inmate in their houses, but even to see him no more except in private.

This was all the information which Rastignac gained from a M. Muret who had purchased Goriot's business, information which confirmed the Duchesse de Langeais' suppositions, and herewith the preliminary explanation of this obscure but terrible Parisian tragedy comes to an end.

Towards the end of the first week in December Rastignac received two letters—one from his mother and one from his eldest sister. His heart beat fast, half with happiness, half

with fear, at the sight of the familiar handwriting. Those two little scraps of paper contained life or death for his hopes. But while he felt a shiver of dread as he remembered their dire poverty at home, he knew their love for him so well that he could not help fearing that he was draining their very life-blood. His mother's letter ran as follows :

“MY DEAR CHILD :—I am sending you the money that you asked for. Make a good use of it. Even to save your life I could not raise so large a sum a second time without your father's knowledge, and there would be trouble about it. We should be obliged to mortgage the land. It is impossible to judge of the merits of schemes of which I am ignorant ; but what sort of schemes can they be that you should fear to tell me about them ! Volumes of explanation would not have been needed ; we mothers can understand at a word, and that word would have spared me the anguish of uncertainty. I do not know how to hide the painful impression that your letter has made upon me, my dear son. What can you have felt when you were moved to send this chill of dread through my heart ? It must have been very painful to you to write the letter that gave me so much pain as I read it. To what courses are you committed ? You are going to appear to be something that you are not, and your whole life and success depends upon this ? You are about to see a society into which you cannot enter without rushing into expense that you cannot afford, without losing precious time that is needed for your studies ? Ah ! my dear Eugène, believe your mother, crooked ways cannot lead to great ends. Patience and endurance are the two qualities most needed in your position. I am not scolding you ; I do not want any tinge of bitterness to spoil our offering. I am only talking like a mother whose trust in you is as great as her foresight for you. You know the steps that you must take, and I, for my part, know your purity of heart, and how good your intentions are ; so I can

say to you without a doubt, 'Go forward, beloved!' If I tremble, it is because I am a mother, but my prayers and blessings will be with you at every step. Be very careful, dear boy. You must have a man's prudence, for it lies with you to shape the destinies of five others who are dear to you, and must look to you. Yes, our fortunes depend upon you, and your success is ours. We all pray to God to be with you in all that you do. Your aunt Marcillac has been most generous beyond words in this matter; she saw at once how it was, even down to your gloves. 'But I have a weakness for the eldest!' she said gaily. You must love your aunt very much, dear Eugène. I shall wait till you have succeeded before telling you all that she has done for you, or her money would burn your fingers. You, who are young, do not know what it is to part with something that is a piece of your past! But what would we not sacrifice for your sake? Your aunt says that I am to send you a kiss on the forehead from her, and that kiss is to bring you luck again and again, she says. She would have written to you herself, the dear kind-hearted woman, but she is troubled with the gout in her fingers just now. Your father is very well. The vintage of 1819 has turned out better than we expected. Good-by, dear boy; I will say nothing about your sisters, because Laure is writing to you, and I must let her have the pleasure of giving you all the home news. Heaven send that you may succeed! Oh! yes, dear Eugène, you must succeed. I have come, through you, to a knowledge of a pain so sharp that I do not think I could endure it a second time. I have come to know what it is to be poor, and to long for money for my children's sake. There, good-by! Do not leave us for long without news of you; and here, at the last, take a kiss from your mother.'

By the time Eugène had finished the letter he was in tears. He thought of Father Goriot crushing his silver keepsake

into a shapeless mass before he sold it to meet his daughter's bill of exchange.

“Your mother has broken up her jewels for you,” he said to himself; “your aunt shed tears over those relics of hers before she sold them for your sake. What right have you to heap execrations on Anastasie? You have followed her example; you have selfishly sacrificed others to your own future, and she sacrifices her father to her lover; and of you two, which is the worse?”

He was ready to renounce his attempts; he could not bear to take that money. The fires of remorse burned in his heart, and gave him intolerable pain, the generous secret remorse which men seldom take into account when they sit in judgment upon their fellow-men; but perhaps the angels in heaven, beholding it, pardon the criminal whom our justice condemns. Rastignac opened his sister's letter; its simplicity and kindness revived his heart.

“Your letter came just at the right time, dear brother. Agathe and I had thought of so many different ways of spending our money, that we did not know what to buy with it; and now you have come in, and, like the servant who upset all the watches that belonged to the King of Spain, you have restored harmony; for, really and truly, we did not know which of all the things we wanted we needed most, and we were always quarreling about it, never thinking, dear Eugène, of a way of spending our money which would satisfy us completely. Agathe jumped for joy. Indeed, we have been like two mad things all day, ‘to such a prodigious degree’ (as aunt would say), that mother said, with her severe expression, ‘Whatever can be the matter with you, mesdemoiselles?’ I think if we had been scolded a little, we should have been still better pleased. A woman ought to be very glad to suffer for one she loves! I, however, in my inmost soul, was doleful and cross in the midst of all my joy. I shall make a bad

wife, I am afraid, I am too fond of spending. I had bought two sashes and a nice little stiletto for piercing eyelet-holes in my stays, trifles that I really did not want, so that I have less than that slow-coach Agathe, who is so economical, and hoards her money like a magpie. She had two hundred francs! And I have only one hundred and fifty! I am nicely punished; I could throw my sash down the well; it will be painful to me to wear it now. Poor dear, I have robbed you. And Agathe was so nice about it. She said, 'Let us send the three hundred and fifty francs in our two names!' But I could not help telling you everything just as it happened.

"Do you know how we managed to keep your commandments? We took our glittering hoard, we went out for a walk, and when once fairly on the highway we ran all the way to Ruffec, where we handed over the coin, without more ado, to M. Grimbert of the M<sup>é</sup>ssageries Royales. We came back again like swallows on the wing. 'Don't you think that happiness has made us lighter?' Agathe said. We said all sorts of things, which I shall not tell you, Monsieur le Parisien, because they were all about you. Oh, we love you dearly, dear brother; it was all summed up in those few words. As for keeping the secret, little masqueraders like us are capable of anything (according to our aunt), even of holding our tongues. Our mother has been on a mysterious journey to Angoulême, and the aunt went with her, not without solemn councils, from which we were shut out, and M. le Baron likewise. They are silent as to the weighty political considerations that prompted their mission, and conjectures are rife in the State of Rastignac. The Infants are embroidering a muslin robe with open-work sprigs for her majesty the Queen; the work progresses in the most profound secrecy. There are but two more breadths to finish. A decree has gone forth that no wall shall be built on the side of Verteuil, but that a hedge shall be planted instead thereof. Our subjects

may sustain some disappointment of fruit and espaliers, but strangers will enjoy a fair prospect. Should the heir-presumptive lack pocket-handkerchiefs, be it known unto him that the dowager lady of Marcillac, exploring the recesses of her drawers and boxes (known respectively as Pompeii and Herculanæum), having brought to light a fair piece of cambric whereof she wotted not, the Princesses Agathe and Laure place at their brother's disposal their thread, their needles, and hands somewhat of the reddest. The two young Princes, Don Henri and Don Gabriel, retain their fatal habits of stuffing themselves with grape-jelly, of teasing their sisters, of taking their pleasure by going a-birdnesting, and of cutting switches for themselves from the osier-beds, maugre the laws of the realm. Moreover, they list not to learn aught, wherefore the Papal Nuncio (called of the commonalty, M. le Curé) threateneth them with excommunication, since that they neglect the sacred canons of grammatical construction for the construction of other canons, deadly engines made of the stems of elder.

“Farewell, dear brother, never did letter carry so many wishes for your success, so much love fully satisfied. You will have a great deal to tell us when you come home! You will tell me everything, won't you? I am the oldest. From something the aunt let fall, we think you must have had some success.

*“‘Something was said of a lady, but nothing more was said——’*

“Of course not, in our family! Oh, by-the-by, Eugène, would you rather we made that piece of cambric into shirts for you instead of pocket-handkerchiefs? If you want some really nice shirts at once, we ought to lose no time in beginning upon them; and if the fashion is different now in Paris, send us one for a pattern; we want more particularly to know about the cuffs. Good-by! good-by! Take my kiss on the

left side of your forehead, on the temple that belongs to me, and to no one else in the world. I am leaving the other side of the sheet for Agathe, who has solemnly promised not to read a word that I have written ; but, all the same, I mean to sit by her while she writes, so as to be quite sure that she keeps her word. Your loving sister,

“LAURE DE RASTIGNAC.”

“Yes!” said Eugène to himself. “Yes! Success at all costs now! Riches could not repay such devotion as this. I wish I could give them every sort of happiness! Fifteen hundred and fifty francs,” he went on after a pause. “Every shot must go to the mark! Laure is right. Trust a woman! I have only calico shirts. Where some one else’s welfare is concerned, a young girl becomes as ingenious as a thief. Guileless where she herself is in question, and full of foresight for me—she is like a heavenly angel forgiving the strange incomprehensible sins of earth.”

The world lay before him. His tailor had been summoned and sounded, and had finally surrendered. When Rastignac met M. de Trailles, he had seen at once how great a part the tailor plays in a young man’s career ; a tailor is either a deadly enemy or a stanch friend, with an invoice for a bond of friendship ; between these two extremes there is, alack ! no middle term. In this representative of his craft Eugène discovered a man who understood that his was a sort of paternal function for young men at their entrance into life, who regarded himself as a stepping-stone between a young man’s present and future. And Rastignac in gratitude made the man’s fortune by an epigram of a kind in which he excelled at a later period of his life.

“I have twice known a pair of trousers turned out by him make a match of twenty thousand livres a year !”

Fifteen hundred francs, and as many suits of clothes as he chose to order ! At that moment the poor child of the south

felt no more doubts of any kind. The young man went down to breakfast with the indefinable air which the consciousness of the possession of money gives to youth. No sooner are the coins slipped into a student's pocket than his wealth, in imagination at least, is piled into a fantastic column, which affords him a moral support. He begins to hold up his head as he walks; he is conscious that he has a means of bringing his power to bear on a given point; he looks you straight in the face; his gestures are quick and decided; only yesterday he was diffident and shy, any one might have pushed him aside; to-morrow he will take the walk of a prime minister. A miracle has been wrought in him. Nothing is beyond the reach of his ambition, and his ambition soars at random; he is light-hearted, generous, and enthusiastic; in short, the fledgling bird has discovered that he has wings. A poor student snatches at every chance pleasure much as a dog runs all sorts of risks to steal a bone, cracking it and sucking the marrow as he flies from pursuit; but a young man who can rattle a few runaway gold coins in his pocket can take his pleasure deliberately, can taste the whole of the sweets of secure possession; he soars far above earth; he has forgotten what the word *poverty* means; all Paris is his. Those are days when the whole world shines radiant with light, when everything glows and sparkles before the eyes of youth, days that bring joyous energy that is never brought into harness, days of debts and of painful fears that go hand-in-hand with every delight. Those who do not know the left bank of the Seine between the Rue Saint-Jacques and the Rue des Saints-Pères know nothing of life.

“Ah! if the women of Paris but knew,” said Rastignac, as he devoured Mme. Vauquer's stewed pears (at five for a penny), “they would come here in search of a lover.”

Just then a porter from the Royal Express appeared at the door of the room; they had previously heard the bell ring as the wicket opened to admit him. The man asked for

M. Eugène de Rastignac, holding out two bags for him to take, and a form of receipt for his signature. Vautrin's keen glance cut Eugène like a lash.

“Now you will be able to pay for those fencing lessons and go to the shooting gallery,” he said.

“Your ship has come in,” said Mme. Vauquer, eyeing the bags.

Mlle. Michonneau did not dare to look at the money, for fear her eyes should betray her cupidity.

“You have a kind mother,” said Mme. Couture.

“You have a kind mother, sir,” echoed Poiret.

“Yes, mamma has been drained dry,” said Vautrin, “and now you can have your fling, go into society, and fish for heiresses, and dance with countesses who have peach blossom in their hair. But take my advice, young man, and don't neglect your pistol practice.”

Vautrin struck an attitude, as if he were facing an antagonist. Rastignac, meaning to give the porter a tip, felt in his pockets and found nothing. Vautrin flung down a franc-piece on the table.

“Your credit is good,” he remarked, eyeing the student, and Rastignac was forced to thank him, though, since the sharp encounter of wits at dinner that day, after Eugène came in from calling on Mme. de Beauséant, he had made up his mind that Vautrin was insufferable. For a week, in fact, they had both kept silence in each other's presence, and watched each other. The student tried in vain to account to himself for this attitude.

An idea, of course, gains in force by the energy with which it is expressed; it strikes where the brain sends it, by a law as mathematically exact as the law that determines the course of a shell from a mortar. The amount of impression it makes is not to be determined so exactly. Sometimes, in an impressible nature, the idea works havoc, but there are, no less, natures so robustly protected, that this sort of projectile

falls flat and harmless on skulls of triple brass, as cannon-shot against solid masonry; then there are flaccid and spongy-fibred natures into which ideas from without sink like spent bullets into the earthworks of a redoubt. Rastignac's head was something of the powder-magazine order; the least shock sufficed to bring about an explosion. He was too quick, too young, not to be readily accessible to ideas; and open to that subtle influence of thought and feeling in others which causes so many strange phenomena that make an impression upon us of which we are all unconscious at the time. Nothing escaped his mental vision; he was lynx-eyed; in him the mental powers of perception, which seem like duplicates of the senses, had the mysterious power of swift projection that astonishes us in intellects of a high order—slingers who are quick to detect the weak spot in any armor.

In the past month Eugène's good qualities and defects had rapidly developed with his character. Intercourse with the world and the endeavor to satisfy his growing desires had brought out his defects. But Rastignac came from the south side of the Loire, and had the good qualities of his countrymen. He had the impetuous courage of the south, that rushes to the attack of a difficulty, as well as the southern impatience of delay or suspense. These traits are held to be defects in the north; they made the fortune of Murat, but they likewise cut short his career. The moral would appear to be that when the dash and boldness of the south side of the Loire meets, in a southern temperament, with the guile of the north, the character is complete, and such a man will gain (and keep) the crown of Sweden.

Rastignac, therefore, could not stand the fire from Vautrin's batteries for long without discovering whether this was a friend or a foe. He felt as if this strange being was reading his inmost soul and dissecting his feelings, while Vautrin himself was so close and secretive that he seemed to have something of the profound and unmoved serenity of a sphinx,

seeing and hearing all things and saying nothing. Eugène, conscious of that money in his pocket, grew rebellious.

“Be so good as to wait a moment,” he said to Vautrin, as the latter rose, after slowly emptying his coffee-cup, sip by sip.

“What for?” inquired the older man, as he put on his large-brimmed hat and took up the sword-cane that he was wont to twirl like a man who will face three or four footpads without flinching.

“I will repay you in a minute,” returned Eugène. He unsealed one of the bags as he spoke, counted out a hundred and forty francs, and pushed them towards Mme. Vauquer. “Short reckonings make long friends,” he added, turning to the widow; “that clears our accounts till the end of the year. Can you give me change for a five-franc piece?”

“Good friends make short reckonings,” echoed Poiret, with a glance at Vautrin.

“Here is your franc,” said Rastignac, holding out the coin to the sphinx in the black wig.

“Any one might think that you were afraid to owe me a trifle,” exclaimed the latter, with a searching glance that seemed to read the young man’s inmost thoughts; there was a satirical and cynical smile on Vautrin’s face such as Eugène had seen scores of times already; every time he saw it, it exasperated him almost beyond endurance.

“Well—— so I am,” he answered. He held both the bags in his hand, and had risen to go up to his room.

Vautrin made as if he were going out through the sitting-room, and the student turned to go through the second door that opened into the square lobby at the foot of the staircase.

“Do you know, Monsieur le Marquis de Rastignacorama, that what you were saying just now was not exactly polite?” Vautrin remarked, as he rattled his sword-cane across the panels of the sitting-room door, and came up to the student.

Rastignac looked coolly at Vautrin, drew him to the foot

of the staircase, and shut the dining-room door. They were standing in the little square lobby between the kitchen and the dining-room; the place was lighted by an iron-barred fanlight above a door that gave access into the garden. Sylvie came out of her kitchen, and Eugène chose that moment to say—

“*Monsieur* Vautrin, I am not a marquis, and my name is not Rastignacorama.”

“They will fight,” said Mlle. Michonneau, in an indifferent tone.

“Fight!” echoed Poiret.

“Not they,” replied Mme. Vauquer, lovingly fingering her pile of coins.

“But there they are under the lime trees,” cried Mlle. Victorine, who had risen so that she might see out into the garden. “Poor young man! he was in the right, after all.”

“We must go upstairs, my pet,” said Mme. Couture; “it is no business of ours.”

At the door, however, Mme. Couture and Victorine found their progress barred by the portly form of Sylvie the cook.

“What ever can have happened?” she said. “M. Vautrin said to M. Eugène, ‘Let us have an explanation!’ then he took him by the arm, and there they are, out among the artichokes.”

Vautrin came in while she was speaking. “Mamma Vauquer,” he said, smiling, “don’t frighten yourself at all. I am only going to try my pistols under the lime trees.”

“Oh! monsieur,” cried Victorine, clasping her hands as she spoke, “why do you want to kill M. Eugène?”

Vautrin stepped back a pace or two, and gazed at Victorine.

“Oh! this is something fresh!” he exclaimed in a bantering tone, that brought the color into the poor girl’s face. “That young fellow yonder is very nice, isn’t he?” he went on. “You have given me a notion, my pretty child; I will make you both happy.”

Mme. Couture laid her hand on the arm of her ward, and drew the girl away, as she said in her ear—

“Why, Victorine, I cannot imagine what has come over you this morning.”

“I don’t want any shots fired in my garden,” said Mme. Vauquer. “You will frighten the neighborhood and bring the police up here all in a moment.”

“Come, keep cool, Mamma Vauquer,” answered Vautrin. “There, there; it’s all right; we will go to the shooting-gallery.”

He went back to Rastignac, laying his hand familiarly on the young man’s arm.

“When I have given you ocular demonstrations of the fact that I can put a bullet through the ace on a card five times running at thirty-five paces,” he said, “that won’t take away your appetite, I suppose. You look to me to be inclined to be a trifle quarrelsome this morning, and as if you would rush on your death like a blockhead.”

“Do you draw back?” asked Eugène.

“Don’t try to raise my temperature,” answered Vautrin; “it is not cold this morning. Let us go and sit over there,” he added, pointing to the green-painted garden seats; “no one can overhear us. I want a little talk with you. You are not a bad sort of youngster, and I have no quarrel with you. I like you, take Tromp—(confound it!)—take Vautrin’s word for it. What makes me like you? I will tell you by-and-by. Meantime, I can tell you that I know you as well as if I had made you myself, as I will prove to you in a minute. Put down your bags,” he continued, pointing to the round table.

Rastignac deposited his money on the table, and sat down. He was consumed with curiosity, which the sudden change in the manner of the man before him had excited to the highest pitch. Here was a strange being who, a moment ago, had talked of killing him, and now posed as his protector.

“You would like to know who I really am, what I was,

and what I do now," Vautrin went on "You want to know too much, youngster. Come! come! keep cool! You will hear more astonishing things than that. I have had my misfortunes. Just hear me out first, and you shall have your turn afterwards. Here is my past in three words. Who am I? Vautrin. What do I do? Just what I please. Let us change the subject. You want to know my character. I am good-natured to those who do me a good turn, or to those whose hearts speak to mine. These last may do anything they like with me; they may bruise my shins, and I shall not tell them to 'mind what they are about;' but, by my pipe, the devil himself is not an uglier customer than I can be if people annoy me, or if I don't happen to take to them; and you may just as well know at once that I think no more of killing a man than of that," and he spat before him as he spoke. "Only when it is absolutely necessary to do so, I do my best to kill him properly. I am what you call an artist. I have read Benvenuto Cellini's 'Memoirs,' such as you see me; and, what is more, in Italian! A fine-spirited fellow he was! From him I learned to follow the example set us by Providence, who strikes us down at random, and to admire the beautiful whenever and wherever it is found. And, setting other questions aside, is it not a glorious part to play, when you pit yourself against mankind, and the luck is on your side? I have thought a good deal about the constitution of your present social dis-order. A duel is downright childish, my boy! utter nonsense and folly! When one of two living men must be gotten out of the way, none but an idiot would leave chance to decide which it is to be; and in a duel it is a toss-up—heads or tails—and there you are! Now I, for instance, can hit the ace in the middle of a card five times running, send one bullet after another through the same hole, and at thirty-five paces, moreover! With that little accomplishment you might think yourself certain of killing your man, mightn't you? Well, I have fired at twenty paces and

missed, and the rogue who had never handled a pistol in his life—look here!”—(he unbuttoned his waistcoat and exposed his chest, covered, like a bear’s back, with a shaggy fell; the student gave a startled shudder)—“he was a raw lad, but he made his mark on me,” the extraordinary man went on, drawing Rastignac’s fingers over a deep scar on his breast. “But that happened when I myself was a mere boy; I was one-and-twenty then (your age), and I had some beliefs left—in a woman’s love, and in a pack of rubbish that you will be over head and ears in directly. You and I were to have fought just now, weren’t we? You might have killed me. Suppose that I were put under the earth, where would you be? You would have to clear out of this, go to Switzerland, draw on papa’s purse—and he has none too much in it as it is. I mean to open your eyes to your real position, that is what I am going to do; but I shall do it from the point of view of a man who, after studying the world very closely, sees that there are but two alternatives—stupid obedience or revolt. I obey nobody; is that clear? Now, do you know how much you will want at the pace you are going? A million; and promptly, too, or that little head of ours will be swaying to and fro in the drag-nets at Saint-Cloud, while we are gone to find out whether or not there is a Supreme Being. I will put you in the way of that million.”

He stopped for a moment and looked at Eugène.

“Aha! you do not look so sourly at Papa Vautrin now! At the mention of the million you look like a young girl when somebody has said, ‘I will come for you this evening!’ and she betakes herself to her toilet as a cat licks its whiskers over a saucer of milk. All right. Come, now, let us go into the question, young man; all between ourselves, you know. We have a papa and a mamma down yonder, a great-aunt, two sisters (aged eighteen and seventeen), two young brothers (one fifteen and the other ten), that is about the roll-call of the crew. The aunt brings up the two sisters; the curé comes

and teaches the boys Latin. Boiled chestnuts are oftener on the table than white bread. Papa makes a suit of clothes last a long while ; if mamma has a different dress winter and summer, it is about as much as she has ; the sisters manage as best they can. I know all about it ; I have lived in the south.

“ That is how things are at home. They send you twelve hundred francs a year, and the whole property only brings in three thousand francs all told. We have a cook and a manservant ; papa is a baron, and we must keep up appearances. Then we have our ambitions ; we are connected with the Beauséants, and we go afoot through the streets ; we want to be rich, and we have not a penny ; we eat Mme. Vauquer’s messes, and we like grand dinners in the Faubourg Saint-Germain ; we sleep on a truckle-bed, and dream of a mansion ! I do not blame you for wanting these things. It is not given to every one to have ambition, my little trump. What sort of men do the women run after ? Men of ambition. Men of ambition have stronger frames, their blood is richer in iron, their hearts are warmer than those of ordinary men. Women feel that when their power is greatest they look their best, and that those are their happiest hours ; they like power in men, and prefer the strongest even if it is a power that may be their own destruction. I am going to make an inventory of your desires in order to put the question at issue before you. Here it is—

“ We are as hungry as a wolf, and those newly-cut teeth of ours are sharp ; what are we to do to keep the pot boiling ? In the first place, we have the Code to browse upon ; it is not amusing, and we are none the wiser for it, but that cannot be helped. So far so good. We mean to make an advocate of ourselves with a prospect of one day being made president of a court of assize, when we shall send poor devils, our betters, to the galleys with a T. F.\* on their shoulders, so that the rich may be convinced that they can sleep in peace.

\* *Travaux forcés* :—forced workers.

There is no fun in that ; and you are a long while coming to it ; for, to begin with, there are two years of nauseous drudgery in Paris, we see all the lollipops that we long for out of our reach. It is tiresome to want things and never to have them. If you were a pallid creature of the mollusc order, you would have nothing to fear, but it is different when you have the hot blood of a lion and are ready to get into a score of scrapes every day of your life. This is the ghastliest form of torture known in this inferno of God's making, and you will give in to it. Or suppose that you are a good boy, drink nothing stronger than milk, and bemoan your hard lot ; you, with your generous nature, will endure hardships that would drive a dog mad, and make a start, after long waiting, as deputy to some rascal or other in a hole of a place where the government will fling you a thousand francs a year like the scraps that are thrown to the butcher's dog. Bark at thieves, plead the cause of the rich, send men of heart to the guillotine, that is your work ! Many thanks ! If you have no influence, you may rot in your provincial tribunal. At thirty you will be a justice with twelve hundred francs a year (if you have not flung off the gown for good before then). By the time you are forty you may look to marry a miller's daughter, an heiress with some six thousand livres a year. Much obliged ! If you have influence, you may possibly be public prosecutor by the time you are thirty ; with a salary of a thousand crowns, you could look to marry the mayor's daughter. Some petty piece of political trickery, such as mistaking Villèle for Manuel in a bulletin (the names rhyme, and that quiets your conscience), and you will probably be procureur général by the time you are forty, with a chance of becoming a deputy. Please to observe, my dear boy, that our conscience will have been a little damaged in the process, and that we shall endure twenty years of drudgery and hidden poverty, and that our sisters are wearing Diana's livery. I have the honor to call your attention to another fact, to wit :

that there are but twenty procureurs généraux at a time in all France, while there are some twenty thousand of you young men who aspire to that elevated position ; that there are some mountebanks among you who would sell their family to screw their fortunes a peg higher. If this sort of thing sickens you, try another course. The Baron de Rastignac thinks of becoming an advocate, does he ? There's a nice prospect for you ! Ten years of drudgery straight away. You are obliged to live at the rate of a thousand francs a month ; you must have a library of law-books, live in chambers, go into society, go down on your knees to ask a solicitor for briefs, lick the dust off the floor of the Palais de Justice. If this kind of business led to anything, I should not say no ; but just give me the names of five advocates here in Paris who by the time that they are fifty are making fifty thousand francs a year ! Bah ! I would sooner turn pirate on the high-seas than have my soul shrivel up inside me like that. How will you find the capital ? There is but one way, marry a woman who has money. There is no fun in it. Have you a mind to marry ? You hang a stone round your neck ; for if you marry for money, what becomes of our exalted notions of honor and so forth ? You might as well fly in the face of social conventions at once. Is it nothing to crawl like a serpent before your wife, to lick her mother's feet, to descend to dirty actions that would sicken swine ?—faugh !—never mind if you at least make your fortune. But you will be as doleful as a dripstone if you marry for money. It is better to wrestle with men than to wrangle at home with your wife. You are at the crossway of the roads of life, my boy ; choose your way.

“ But you have chosen already. You have gone to see your cousin of Beauséant, and you have had an inkling of luxury ; you have been to Madame de Restaud's house, and in Father Goriot's daughter you have seen a glimpse of the Parisienne for the first time. That day you came back with a word written upon your forehead. I knew it, I could read it—

‘*Success!*’ Yes, success at any price. ‘Bravo,’ said I to myself, ‘here is the sort of fellow for me.’ You wanted money. Where was it to come from? You have drained your sisters’ little hoards (all brothers sponge more or less on their sisters). Those fifteen hundred francs of yours (got together, God knows how! in a country where there are more chestnuts than five-franc pieces) will slip away like soldiers after pillage. And, then, what will you do? Shall you begin to work? Work, or what you understand by work at this moment, means, for a man of Poiret’s calibre, an old age in Mamma Vauquer’s lodging-house. There are fifty thousand young men in your position at this moment, all bent as you are on solving one and the same problem—how to acquire a fortune rapidly. You are but a unit in that aggregate. You can guess, therefore, what efforts you must make, how desperate the struggle is. There are not fifty thousand good positions for you; you must fight and devour one another like spiders in a pot. Do you know how a man makes his way here? By brilliant genius or by skillful corruption. You must either cut your way through these masses of men like a cannon-ball or steal among them like a plague. Honesty is nothing to the purpose. Men bow before the power of genius; they hate it, and try to slander it, because genius does not divide the spoil; but if genius persists, they bow before it. To sum it all up in a phrase, if they fail to smother genius in the mud, they fall on their knees and worship it. Corruption is a great power in the world, and talent is scarce. So corruption is the weapon of superfluous mediocrity; you will be made to feel the point of it everywhere. You will see women who spend more than ten thousand francs a year on dress, while their husband’s salary (his whole income) is but six thousand francs. You will see officials buying estates on twelve hundred francs a year. You will see women who sell themselves body and soul to drive in a carriage belonging to a son of a peer of France, who has a right to drive in the middle

rank at Longchamp. You have seen that poor simpleton of a Goriot obliged to meet a bill with his daughter's name at the back of it, though her husband has fifty thousand francs a year. I defy you to walk a couple of yards anywhere in Paris without stumbling on some infernal complication. I'll bet my head to a head of that salad that you will stir up a hornet's nest by taking a fancy to the first young, rich, and pretty woman you meet. They are all dodging the law, all at loggerheads with their husbands. If I were to begin to tell you all that vanity or necessity (virtue is not often mixed up in it, you may be sure), all that vanity and necessity drive them to do for lovers, finery, housekeeping, or children, I should never come to an end. So an honest man is the common enemy.

“But do you know what an honest man is? Here, in Paris, an honest man is the man who keeps his own counsel, and will not divide the plunder. I am not speaking now of those poor bond-slaves who do the work of the world without a reward for their toil—God Almighty's outcasts, I call them. Among them, I grant you, is virtue in all the flower of its stupidity, but poverty is no less their portion. At this moment, I think I see the long faces those good folk would pull if God played a practical joke on them and stayed away at the last judgment.

“Well, then, if you mean to make a fortune quickly, you must either be rich to begin with, or make people believe that you are rich. It is no use playing here except for high stakes; once take to low play, it is all up with you. If in the scores of professions that are open to you, there are ten men who rise very rapidly, people are sure to call them thieves. You can draw your own conclusions. Such is life. It is no cleaner than a kitchen; it reeks like a kitchen; and if you mean to cook your dinner, you must expect to soil your hands; the real art is in getting them clean again, and therein lies the whole morality of our epoch. If I take this tone in

speaking of the world to you, I have the right to do so ; I know it well. Do you think that I am blaming it ? Far from it ; the world has always been as it is now. Moralists' strictures will never change it. Mankind is not perfect, but one age is more or less hypocritical than another, and then simpletons say that its morality is high or low. I do not think that the rich are any worse than the poor ; man is much the same, high or low, or wherever he is. In a million of these human cattle there may be half a score of bold spirits who rise above the rest, above the laws ; I am one of them. And you, if you are cleverer than your fellows, make straight to your end, and hold your head high. But you must lay your account with envy and slander and mediocrity, and every man's hand will be against you. Napoleon met with a minister of war, Aubry by name, who all but sent him to the colonies.

“ Feel your pulse. Think whether you can get up morning after morning, strengthened in yesterday's purpose. In that case I will make you an offer that no one would decline. Listen attentively. You see, I have an idea of my own. My idea is to live a patriarchal life on a vast estate, say a hundred thousand acres, somewhere in the Southern States of America. I mean to be a planter, to have slaves, to make a few snug millions by selling my cattle, timber, and tobacco ; I want to live an absolute monarch, and to do just as I please ; to lead such a life as no one here in these squalid dens of lath and plaster ever imagines. I am a great poet ; I do not write my poems, I feel them, and act them. At this moment I have fifty thousand francs, which might possibly buy forty negroes. I want two hundred thousand francs, because I want to have two hundred negroes to carry out my notions of the patriarchal life properly. Negroes, you see, are like a sort of family ready grown, and there are no inquisitive public prosecutors out there to interfere with you. That investment in ebony ought to mean three or four million francs in ten years' time. If I am successful, no one will ask me who I am. I shall be

Mr. Four Millions, an American citizen. I shall be fifty years old by then, and sound and hearty still; I shall enjoy life after my own fashion. In two words, if I find you an heiress with a million, will you give me two hundred thousand francs? Twenty per cent. commission, eh? Is that too much? Your little wife will be very much in love with you. Once married, you will show signs of uneasiness and remorse; for a couple of weeks you will be depressed. Then, some night, after sundry grimacings, comes the confession, between two kisses, 'Two hundred thousand francs of debts, my darling!' This sort of farce is played every day in Paris, and by young men of the highest fashion. When a young wife has given her heart, she will not refuse her purse. Perhaps you are thinking that you will lose the money for good? Not you. You will make two hundred thousand francs again by some stroke of business. With your capital and your brains you should be able to accumulate as large a fortune as you could wish. *Ergo*, in six months you will have made your own fortune, and your old friend Vautrin's, and made an amiable woman very happy, to say nothing of your people at home, who must blow on their fingers to warm them, in the winter, for lack of firewood. You need not be surprised at my proposal, nor at the demand I make. Forty-seven out of every sixty great matches here in Paris are made after just such a bargain as this. The Chamber of Notaries compels my gentleman to——"

"What must I do?" said Rastignac, eagerly interrupting Vautrin's speech.

"Next to nothing," returned the other, with a slight involuntary movement, the suppressed exultation of the angler when he feels a bite at the end of his line. "Follow me carefully! The heart of a girl whose life is wretched and unhappy is a sponge that will thirstily absorb love; a dry sponge that swells at the first drop of sentiment. If you pay court to a young girl whose existence is a compound of loneliness, despair, and poverty, and who has no suspicion that

she will come into a fortune, good Lord! it is quint and quatorze at piquet; it is knowing the numbers of the lottery beforehand; it is speculating in the funds when you have news from a sure source; it is building up a marriage on an indestructible foundation. The girl may come in for millions, and she will fling them, as if they were so many pebbles, at your feet. 'Take it, my beloved! Take it, Alfred, Adolphe, Eugène!' or whoever it was that showed his sense by sacrificing himself for her. And as for sacrificing himself, this is how I understand it. You sell a coat that is getting shabby, so that you can take her to the *Cadran bleu*, treat her to mushrooms on toast, and then go to the *Ambigu-Comique* in the evening; you pawn your watch to buy her a shawl. I need not remind you of the fiddle-faddle sentimentality that goes down so well with all women; you spill a few drops of water on your stationery, for instance; those are the tears you shed while far away from her. You look to me as if you were perfectly acquainted with the argot of the heart. Paris, you see, is like a forest in the New World, where you have to deal with a score of varieties of savages—Iroquois and Hurons—who live on the proceeds of their social hunting. You are a hunter of millions; you set your snares; you use lures and nets; there are many ways of hunting. Some hunt heiresses, others a legacy; some fish for souls, yet others sell their clients, bound hand and foot. Every one who comes back from the chase with his game-bag well filled meets with a warm welcome in good society. In justice to this hospitable part of the world, it must be said that you have to do with the most easy and good-natured of great cities. If the proud aristocracies of the rest of Europe refuse admittance among their ranks to a disreputable millionaire, Paris stretches out a hand to him, goes to his banquets, eats his dinners, and hob-nobs with his infamy."

"But where is such a girl to be found?" asked Eugène.

"Under your eyes; she is yours already."

“ Mlle. Victorine ? ”

“ Precisely. ”

“ And what was that you said ? ”

“ She is in love with you already, your little *Baronne de Rastignac* ! ”

“ She has not a penny, ” Eugène continued, much mystified.

“ Ah ! now we are coming to it ! Just another word or two, and it will all be clear enough. Her father, *Taillefer*, is an old scoundrel ; it is said that he murdered one of his friends at the time of the Revolution. He is one of your comedians that sets up to have opinions of his own. He is a banker—senior partner in the house of *Frédéric Taillefer and Company*. He has one son, and means to leave all he has to the boy, to the prejudice of *Victorine*. For my part, I don't like to see injustice of this sort. I am like *Don Quixote*, I have a fancy for defending the weak against the strong. If it should please God to take that youth away from him, *Taillefer* would only have his daughter left ; he would want to leave his money to some one or other ; an absurd notion, but it is only human nature, and he is not likely to have any more children, as I know. *Victorine* is gentle and amiable ; she will soon twist her father round her fingers, and set his head spinning like a German top by plying him with sentiment ! She will be too much touched by your devotion to forget you ; you will marry her. I mean to play Providence for you, and Providence is to do my will. I have a friend whom I have attached closely to myself, a colonel in the Army of the Loire, who has just been transferred into the Royal Guard. He has taken my advice and turned ultra-royalist ; he is not one of those fools who never change their opinions. Of all pieces of advice, my cherub, I would give you this—don't stick to your opinions any more than to your words. If any one asks you for them, let him have them—at a price. A man who prides himself on going in a straight line through life is an

idiot who believes in infallibility. There are no such things as principles; there are only events, and there are no laws but those of expediency: a man of talent accepts events and the circumstances in which he finds himself, and turns everything to his own ends. If laws and principles were fixed and invariable, nations would not change them as readily as we change our shirts. The individual is not obliged to be more particular than the nation. A man whose services to France have been of the very slightest is a fetich looked on with superstitious awe because he has always seen everything in red; but he is good, at the most, to be put into the Museum of Arts and Crafts, among the automatic machines, and labeled La Fayette; while the prince at whom everybody flings a stone, the man who despises humanity so much that he spits as many oaths as he is asked for in the face of humanity, saved France from being torn in pieces at the Congress of Vienna; and they who should have given him laurels fling mud at him. Oh! I know something of affairs, I can tell you; I have the secrets of many men! Enough. When I find three minds in agreement as to the application of a principle, I shall have a fixed and immovable opinion—I shall have to wait a long while first. In the Tribunals you will not find three judges of the same opinion on a single point of law. To return to the man I was telling you of. He would crucify Jesus Christ again, if I bade him. At a word from his old chum Vautrin he will pick a quarrel with a scamp that will not send so much as five francs to his sister, poor girl, and"—(here Vautrin rose to his feet and stood like a fencing-master about to lunge)—“turn him off into the dark!” he added.

“How frightful!” said Eugène. “You do not really mean it? M. Vautrin, you are joking! I cannot believe that you are sincere in what you are saying.”

“There! there! Keep cool!” said the other. “Don’t behave like a baby. But if you find any amusement in it, be

indignant, flare up! Say that I am a scoundrel, a rascal, a rogue, a bandit; but do not call me a blackleg nor a spy! There, out with it, fire away! I forgive you; it is quite natural at your age. I was like that myself once. Only remember this, you will do worse things yourself some day. You will flirt with some pretty woman and take her money. You have thought of that, of course," said Vautrin, "for how are you to succeed unless love is laid under contribution? There are no two ways about virtue, my dear student; it either is or it is not. Talk of doing penance for your sins! It is a nice system of business, when you pay for your crime by an act of contrition! You seduce a woman that you may set your foot on such and such a rung of the social ladder; you sow dissension among the children of a family; you descend, in short, to every base action that can be committed at home or abroad to gain your own ends for your own pleasure or your profit; and can you imagine that these are acts of faith, hope, or charity? How is it that a dandy, who in a night has robbed a boy of half his fortune, gets only a couple of months in prison; while a poor devil who steals a bank-note for a thousand francs, with aggravating circumstances, is condemned to penal servitude? Those are your laws. Not a single provision but lands you in some absurdity. That man with yellow gloves and a golden tongue commits many a murder; he sheds no blood, but he drains his victim's veins as surely; a desperado forces open a door with a crowbar, dark deeds both of them! You yourself will do every one of the things that I suggest to you to-day, bar the bloodshed. Do you believe that there is any absolute standard in this world? Despise mankind and find out the meshes that you can slip through in the net of the Code. The secret of a great success for which you are at a loss to account is a crime that has never been found out, because it was properly executed."

"Silence, sir! I will not hear any more; you make me

doubt myself. At this moment my sentiments are all my science."

"Just as you please, my fine fellow; I did not think you were so weak-minded," said Vautrin, "I shall say no more about it. One last word, however"—and he looked hard at the student—"you have my secret," he said.

"A young man who refuses your offer knows that he must forget it."

"Quite right, quite right; I am glad to hear you say so. Somebody else might not be so scrupulous, you see. Keep in mind what I want to do for you. I will give you a fortnight. The offer is still open."

"What a head of iron the man has!" said Eugène to himself as he watched Vautrin walk unconcernedly away with his cane under his arm. "Yet Mme. de Beauséant said as much more gracefully; he has only stated the case in cruder language. He would tear my heart with claws of steel. What made me think of going to Mme. de Nucingen? He guessed my motives before I knew them myself. To sum it up, that outlaw has told me more about virtue than all I have learned from men and books. If virtue admits of no compromises, I have certainly robbed my sisters," he said, throwing down the bags on the table.

He sat down again and fell, unconscious of his surroundings, into deep thought.

"To be faithful to an ideal of virtue! A heroic martyrdom! Pshaw! every one believes in virtue, but who is virtuous? Nations have made an idol of liberty, but what nation on the face of the earth is free? My youth is still like a blue and cloudless sky. If I set myself to obtain wealth or power, does it not mean that I must make up my mind to lie, and fawn, and cringe, and swagger, and flatter, and dissemble? To consent to be the servant of others who have likewise fawned, and lied, and flattered? Must I cringe to them before I can hope to be their accomplice? Well,

then, I decline. I mean to work nobly and with a single heart. I will work day and night ; I will owe my fortune to nothing but my own exertions. It may be the slowest of all roads to success, but I shall lay my head on the pillow at night untroubled by evil thoughts. Is there a greater or a better thing than this—to look back over your life and know that it is stainless as a lily ! I and my life are like a young man and his betrothed. Vautrin has put before me all that comes after ten years of marriage. The devil ! my head is swimming. I do not want to think at all ; the heart is a sure guide.”

Eugène was roused from his musings by the voice of the stout Sylvie, who announced that the tailor had come, and Eugène therefore made his appearance before the man with the two money-bags, and was not ill pleased that it should be so. When he had tried on his dress suit, he put on his new morning costume, which completely metamorphosed him.

“I am quite equal to M. de Trailles,” he said to himself. “In short, I look like a gentleman.”

“You asked me, sir, if I knew the houses where Mme. de Nucingen goes,” Father Goriot’s voice spoke from the doorway of Eugène’s room.

“Yes.”

“Very well then, she is going to the Duchesse de Carigliano’s ball on Monday. If you can manage to be there, I shall hear from you whether my two girls enjoyed themselves, and how they were dressed, and all about it, in fact.”

“How did you find that out, my good Goriot ?” said Eugène, putting a chair by the fire for his visitor.

“Her maid told me. I hear all about their doings from Thérèse and Constance,” he added gleefully.

The old man looked like a lover who is still young enough to be made happy by the discovery of some little stratagem which brings him information of his lady-love without her knowledge.

“*You* will see them both !” he said, giving artless expression to a pang of jealousy.

“I do not know,” answered Eugène. “I will go to Mme. de Beauséant and ask her to give me an introduction to the Duchesse.”

Eugène felt a thrill of pleasure at the thought of appearing before the Vicomtesse, dressed as henceforward he always meant to be. The “abysses of the human heart,” in the moralists’ phrase, are only insidious thoughts, involuntary promptings of personal interest. The instinct of enjoyment turns the scale; those rapid changes of purpose which have furnished the text for so much rhetoric are calculations prompted by the hope of pleasure. Rastignac, beholding himself well dressed and impeccable as to gloves and boots, forgot his virtuous resolutions. Youth, moreover, when bent upon wrong-doing does not dare to behold itself in the mirror of consciousness; mature age has seen itself; and therein lies the whole difference between these two phases of life.

A friendship between Eugène and his neighbor, Father Goriot, had been growing up for several days past. This secret friendship and the antipathy that the student had begun to entertain for Vautrin arose from the same psychological causes. The bold philosopher who shall investigate the effects of mental action upon the physical world will doubtless find more than one proof of the material nature of our sentiments in the relations which they create between human beings and other animals. What physiognomist is as quick to discern character as a dog is to discover from a stranger’s face whether this is a friend or not? Those by-words—“atoms,” “affinities”—are facts surviving in modern languages for the confusion of philosophic wiseacres who amuse themselves by winnowing the chaff of language to find its grammatical roots. We *feel* that we are loved. Our sentiments make themselves felt in everything, even at a great distance. A letter is a living soul, and so faithful an echo of the voice that speaks

in it that finer natures look upon a letter as one of love's most precious treasures. Father Goriot's affection was of the instinctive order, a canine affection raised to a sublime pitch; he had scented compassion in the air, and the kindly respect and youthful sympathy in the student's heart. This friendship had, however, scarcely reached the stage at which confidences are made. Though Eugène had spoken of his wish to meet Mme. de Nucingen, it was not because he counted on the old man to introduce him to her house, for he hoped that his own audacity might stand him in good stead. All that Father Goriot had said as yet about his daughters had referred to the remarks that the student had made so freely in public on that day of the two visits.

“How could you think that Mme. de Restaud bore you a grudge for mentioning my name?” he had said on the day following that scene at dinner. “My daughters are very fond of me; I am a happy father; but my sons-in-law have behaved badly to me, and rather than make trouble between my darlings and their husbands, I choose to see my daughters secretly. Fathers who can see their daughters at any time have no idea of all the pleasure that this mystery gives me; I cannot always see mine when I wish, do you understand? So when it is fine I walk out in the Champs-Élysées, after finding out from their waiting-maids whether my daughters mean to go out. I wait near the entrance; my heart beats fast when the carriages begin to come; I admire them in their dresses, and as they pass they give me a little smile, and it seems that everything was lighted up for me by a ray of bright sunlight. I wait, for they always go back the same way, and then I see them again; the fresh air has done them good and brought color into their cheeks; all about me people say, ‘What a beautiful woman that is!’ and it does my heart good to hear them.

“Are they not my own flesh and blood? I love the very horses that draw them; I envy the little lap-dog on their

knees. Their happiness is my life. Every one loves after his own fashion, and mine does no one any harm; why should people trouble their heads about me? I am happy in my own way. Is there any law against my going to see my girls in the evening when they are going out to a ball? And what a disappointment it is when I get there too late, and am told that 'madame has gone out!' Once I waited till three o'clock in the morning for Nasie; I had not seen her for two whole days. I was so pleased that it was almost too much for me! Please do not speak of me unless it is to say how good my daughters are to me. They are always wanting to heap presents upon me, but I will not have it. 'Just keep your money,' I tell them. 'What should I do with it? I want nothing.' And what am I, sir, after all? An old carcass, whose soul is always where my daughters are. When you have seen M<sup>me</sup>. de Nucingen, tell me which you like the most," said the old man after a moment's pause, while Eugène put the last touches to his toilet. The student was about to go out to walk in the Garden of the Tuileries until the hour when he could venture to appear in M<sup>me</sup>. de Beauséant's drawing-room.

That walk was a turning-point in Eugène's career. Several women noticed him; he looked so handsome, so young, and so well dressed. This almost admiring attention gave a new turn to his thoughts. He forgot his sisters and the aunt who had robbed herself for him; he no longer remembered his own virtuous scruples. He had seen hovering above his head the fiend so easy to mistake for an angel, the devil with rainbow wings, who scatters rubies, and aims his golden shafts at palace fronts, who invests women with purple, and thrones with a glory that dazzles the eyes of fools till they forget the simple origins of royal dominion; he had heard the rustle of that vanity whose tinsel seems to us to be the symbol of power. However cynical Vautrin's words had been, they had made an impression on his mind, as the sordid features of the old crone

who whispers, "A lover, and gold in torrents," remain engraven on a young girl's memory.

Eugène lounged about the walks till it was nearly five o'clock, then he went to Mme. de Beauséant's, and received one of the terrible blows against which young hearts are defenseless. Hitherto the Vicomtesse had received him with the kindly urbanity, the bland grace of manner that is the result of fine breeding, but is only complete when it comes from the heart.

To-day Mme. de Beauséant bowed constrainedly, and spoke curtly—

"M. de Rastignac, I cannot possibly see you, at least not at this moment. I am engaged——"

An observer, and Rastignac instantly became an observer, could read the whole history, the character and customs of caste, in the phrase, in the tones of her voice, in her glance and bearing. He caught a glimpse of the iron hand beneath the velvet glove—the personality, the egoism beneath the manner, the wood beneath the varnish. In short, he heard that unmistakable I THE KING that issues from the plumed canopy of the throne, and finds its last echo under the crest of the simplest gentleman.

Eugène had trusted too implicitly to the generosity of a woman; he could not believe in her haughtiness. Like all the unfortunate, he had subscribed, in all good faith, the generous compact which should bind the benefactor to the recipient, and the first article in that bond, between two large-hearted natures, is a perfect equality. The kindness which knits two souls together is as rare, as divine, and as little understood as the passion of love, for both love and kindness are the lavish generosity of noble natures. Rastignac was set upon going to the Duchesse de Carigliano's ball, so he meekly swallowed down this rebuff, and concealed any manifestation of his disappointment.

"Madame," he faltered out, "I would not have come to

trouble you about a trifling matter ; be so kind as to permit me to see you later, I can wait."

"Very well, come and dine with me," she said, a little confused by the harsh way in which she had spoken, for this lady was as genuinely kind-hearted as she was high-born.

Eugène was touched by this sudden relenting, but none the less he said to himself as he went away, "Crawl in the dust, put up with every kind of treatment. What must the rest of the world be like when one of the kindest of women forgets all her promises of befriending me in a moment, and tosses me aside like an old shoe? So it is every one for himself? It is true that her house is not a shop, and I have put myself in the wrong by needing her help. You should cut your way through the world like a cannon-ball, as Vautrin said."

But the student's bitter thoughts were soon dissipated by the pleasure which he promised himself in this dinner with the Vicomtesse. Fate seemed to determine that the smallest accidents in his life should combine to urge him into a career, which the terrible sphinx of the Maison Vauquer had described as a field of battle where you must either slay or be slain, and cheat to avoid being cheated. You leave your conscience and your heart at the barriers, and wear a mask on entering into this game of grim earnest, where, as in ancient Sparta, you must snatch your prize without being detected if you would deserve the crown.

On his return he found the Vicomtesse gracious and kindly, as she had always been to him. They went together to the dining-room, where the Vicomte was waiting for his wife. In the time of the Restoration the luxury of the table was carried, as is well known, to the highest degree, and M. de Beauséant, like many jaded men of the world, had few pleasures left but those of good-cheer ; in this matter, in fact, he was a gourmand of the schools of Louis XVIII. and of the Duc d'Escars, and luxury was supplemented by splendor. Eugène dining for the first time in a house where the tradi-

tions of grandeur had descended through many generations, had never seen any spectacle like this that at this time met his eyes.

In the time of the Empire, balls had always ended with a supper, because the officers who took part in them must be fortified for immediate service, and even in Paris might be called upon to leave the ballroom for the battlefield. This arrangement had gone out of fashion under the Monarchy, and Eugène had so far only been asked to dances. The self-possession which pre-eminently distinguished him in later life already stood him in good stead, and he did not betray his amazement. Yet as he saw for the first time the finely wrought silver-plate, the completeness of every detail, the sumptuous dinner, noiselessly served, it was difficult for such an ardent imagination not to prefer this life of studied and refined luxury to the hardships of the life which he had chosen only that morning.

His thoughts went back for a moment to the lodging-house, and, with a feeling of profound loathing, he vowed to himself that at New Year he would go; prompted at least as much by a desire to live among cleaner surroundings as by a wish to shake off Vautrin, whose huge hand he seemed to feel on his shoulder at that moment. When you consider the numberless forms, clamorous or mute, that corruption takes in Paris, common-sense begins to wonder what mental aberration prompted the state to establish great colleges and schools there, and assemble young men in the capital; how it is that pretty women are respected, or that the gold coin displayed in the money-changer's wooden saucers does not take to itself wings in the twinkling of an eye; and when you come to think further, how comparatively few cases of crime there are, and to count up the misdemeanors committed by youth, is there not a certain amount of respect due to these patient Tantaluses who wrestle with themselves and nearly always come off victorious? The struggles of the poor student in

Paris, if skillfully drawn, would furnish a most dramatic picture of modern civilization.

In vain Mme. de Beauséant looked at Eugène as if asking him to speak; the student was tongue-tied in the Vicomte's presence.

"Are you going to take me to the Italiens this evening?" the Vicomtesse asked her husband.

"You cannot doubt that I should obey you with pleasure," he answered, and there was a sarcastic tinge in his politeness which Eugène did not detect, "but I ought to go to meet some one at the Variétés."

"His mistress," said she to herself.

"Then is not Ajuda coming for you this evening?" inquired the Vicomte.

"No," she answered, petulantly.

"Very well, then, if you really must have an arm, take that of M. de Rastignac."

The Vicomtesse turned to Eugène with a smile.

"That would be a very compromising step for you," she said.

"'A Frenchman loves danger, because in danger there is glory,' to quote M. de Chateaubriand," said Rastignac, with a bow.

A few moments later he was sitting beside Mme. de Beauséant in a brougham, that whirled them through the streets of Paris to a fashionable theatre. It seemed to him that some fairy magic had suddenly transported him into a box facing the stage. All the lorgnettes of the house were pointed at him as he entered, and at the Vicomtesse in her charming toilet. He went from enchantment to enchantment.

"You must talk to me, you know," said Mme. de Beauséant. "Ah! look! There is Mme. de Nucingen in the third box from ours. Her sister and M. de Trailles are on the other side."

The Vicomtesse glanced as she spoke at the box where

Mlle. de Rochefide should have been; M. d'Ajuda was not there, and Mme. de Beauséant's face lighted up in a marvelous way.

"She is charming," said Eugène, after looking at Mme. de Nucingen.

"She has white eyelashes."

"Yes, but she has such a pretty slender figure!"

"Her hands are large."

"Such beautiful eyes!"

"Her face is long."

"Yes, but length gives distinction."

"It is lucky for her that she has some distinction in her face. Just see how she fidgets with her opera-glass! The Goriot blood shows itself in every movement," said the Vicomtesse, much to Eugène's astonishment.

Indeed, Mme. de Beauséant seemed to be engaged in making a survey of the house, and to be unconscious of Mme. Nucingen's existence; but no movement made by the latter was lost upon the Vicomtesse. The house was full of the loveliest women in Paris, so that Delphine de Nucingen was not a little flattered to receive the undivided attention of Mme. de Beauséant's young, handsome, and well-dressed cousin, who seemed to have no eyes for any one else.

"If you look at her so persistently, you will make people talk, M. de Rastignac. You will never succeed if you fling yourself at any one's head like that."

"My dear cousin," said Eugène, "you have protected me indeed so far, and now if you would complete your work, I only ask of you a favor which will cost you but little, and be of very great service to me. I have lost my heart."

"Already!"

"Yes."

"And to that woman!"

"How could I aspire to find any one else to listen to me?" he asked, with a keen glance at his cousin. "Her grace the

Duchesse de Carigliano is a friend of the Duchesse de Berri," he went on, after a pause; "you are sure to see her, will you be so kind as to present me to her, and to take me with you to her ball on Monday? I shall meet Mme. de Nucingen there, and enter upon my first skirmish."

"Willingly," she said. "If you have a liking for her already, your affairs of the heart are likely to prosper. That is de Marsay over there in the Princesse Galathionne's box. Mme. de Nucingen is racked with jealousy. There is no better time for approaching a woman, especially if she happens to be a banker's wife. All those ladies of the Chaussée-d'Antin love revenge."

"Then what would you do yourself in such a case?"

"I should suffer in silence."

At this point the Marquis d'Ajuda appeared in Mme. de Beauséant's box.

"I have made a muddle of my affairs to come to you," he said, "and I am telling you about it, so that it may not be a sacrifice."

Eugène saw the glow of joy on the Vicomtesse's face, and knew that this was love, and learned the difference between love and the affectations of Parisian coquetry. He admired his cousin, grew mute, and yielded his place to M. d'Ajuda with a sigh.

"How noble, how sublime a woman is when she loves like that!" he said to himself. "And *he* could forsake her for a doll! Oh! how could any one forsake her?"

There was a boy's passionate indignation in his heart. He could have flung himself at Mme. de Beauséant's feet; he longed for the power of the devil if he could snatch her away and hide her in his heart, as an eagle snatches up some white yeanling from the plains and bears it to his eyrie. It was humiliating to him to think that in all this gallery of fair pictures he had not one picture of his own. "To have a mistress and an almost royal position is a sign of power," he

said to himself. And he looked at Mme. de Nucingen as a man measures another who has insulted him.

The Vicomtesse turned to him, and the expression of her eyes thanked him a thousand times for his discretion. The first act came to an end just then.

“Do you know Mme. de Nucingen well enough to present M. de Rastignac to her?” she asked of the Marquis d’Ajuda.

“She will be delighted,” said the Marquis. The handsome Portuguese rose as he spoke and took the student’s arm, and in another moment Eugène found himself in Mme. de Nucingen’s box.

“Madame,” said the Marquis, “I have the honor of presenting to you the Chevalier Eugène de Rastignac; he is a cousin of Mme. de Beauséant’s. You have made so deep an impression upon him, that I thought I would fill up the measure of his happiness by bringing him nearer to his divinity.”

Words spoken half-jestingly to cover their somewhat disrespectful import; but such an implication, if carefully disguised, never gives offense to a woman. Mme. de Nucingen smiled, and offered Eugène the place which her husband had just left.

“I do not venture to suggest that you should stay with me, monsieur,” she said. “Those who are so fortunate as to be in Mme. de Beauséant’s company seldom desire to soon leave it.”

“Madame,” Eugène said, lowering his voice, “I think that to please my cousin I should remain with you. Before my Lord Marquis came we were speaking of you and of your exceedingly distinguished appearance,” he added aloud.

M. d’Ajuda turned and left them.

“Are you really going to stay with me, monsieur?” asked the Baroness. “Then we shall make each other’s acquaintance. Mme. de Restaud told me about you, and has made me anxious to meet you.”

“She must be very insincere, then, for she has shut her door on me.”

“What?”

“Madame, I will tell you honestly the reason why; but I must crave your indulgence before confiding such a secret to you. I am your father’s neighbor; I had no idea that Mme. de Restaud was his daughter. I was rash enough to mention his name; I meant no harm, but I annoyed your sister and her husband very much. You cannot think how severely the Duchesse de Langeais and my cousin blamed this apostasy on a daughter’s part, as a piece of bad taste. I told them all about it, and they both burst out laughing. Then Mme. de Beauséant made some comparison between you and your sister, speaking in high terms of you, and saying how very fond you were of my neighbor, M. Goriot. And, indeed, how could you help loving him? He adores you so passionately that I am jealous already. We talked about you this morning for two hours. So this evening I was quite full of all that your father had told me, and while I was dining with my cousin I said that you could not be as beautiful as affectionate. Mme. de Beauséant meant to gratify such warm admiration, I think, when she brought me here, telling me, in her gracious way, that I should see you.”

“Then, even now, I owe you a debt of gratitude, monsieur,” said the banker’s wife. “We shall be quite old friends in a little while.”

“Although a friendship with you could only be like an ordinary friendship,” said Rastignac; “I should ever wish to be your friend.”

Such stereotyped phrases as these, in the mouths of beginners, possess an unflinching charm for women, and are insipid only when read coldly; for a young man’s tone, glance, and attitude give a surpassing eloquence to the banal phrases. Mme. de Nucingen thought that Rastignac was adorable. Then, woman-like, being at a loss how to reply to the

student's outspoken admiration, she answered a previous remark.

“ Yes, it is very wrong of my sister to treat our poor father as she does,” she said ; “ he has been a providence to us. It was not until M. de Nucingen positively ordered me only to receive him in the mornings that I yielded the point. But I have been unhappy about it for a long while ; I have shed many tears over it. This violence to my feelings, with my husband's brutal treatment, have been the two causes of my unhappy married life. There is certainly no woman in Paris whose lot seems more enviable than mine, and yet, in reality, there is not one so much to be pitied. You will think I must be out of my senses to talk to you like this ; but you know my father, and I cannot very well regard you as a stranger.”

“ You will find no one,” said Eugène, “ who longs as eagerly as I do to be yours. What do all women seek ? Happiness.” (He answered his own question in low, vibrating tones.) “ And if happiness for a woman means that she is to be loved and adored, to have a friend to whom she can pour out her wishes, her fancies, her sorrows and joys ; to whom she can lay bare her heart and soul, and all her fair defects and her gracious virtues, without fear of a betrayal ; believe me, the devotion and the warmth that never fail can only be found in the heart of a young man who, at a bare sign from you, would go to his death, who neither knows nor cares to know anything as yet of the world, because you will be all the world to him. I myself, you see (you will laugh at my simplicity), have just come from a remote country district ; I am quite new to this world of Paris ; I have only known true and loving hearts ; and I made up my mind that here I should find no love. Then I chanced to meet my cousin, and to see my cousin's heart from very near ; I have divined the inexhaustible treasures of passion, and, like Cherubino, I am the lover of all women, until the day comes when I find

*the* woman to whom I may devote myself. As soon as I saw you, as soon as I came into the theatre this evening, I felt myself borne towards you as if by the current of a stream. I had so often thought of you already, but I had never dreamed that you would be so beautiful! Mme. de Beauséant told me that I must not look so much at you. She does not know the charm of your red lips, your fair face, nor see how soft your eyes are—— I also am beginning to talk nonsense; but let me talk.”

Nothing pleases women better than to listen to such whispered words as these; the most puritanical among them listens even when she ought not to reply to them; and Rastignac, having once begun, continued to pour out his story, dropping his voice, that she might lean and listen; and Mme. de Nucingen, smiling, glanced from time to time at de Marsay, who still sat in the Princesse Galathionne’s box.

Rastignac did not leave Mme. de Nucingen till her husband came to take her home.

“Madame,” Eugène said, “I shall have the pleasure of calling upon you before the Duchesse de Carigliano’s ball.”

“If matame infites you to come,” said the Baron, a thick-set Alsatian, with indications of a sinister cunning in his full-moon countenance, “you are quide sure of being well receifed.”

“My affairs seem to be in a promising way,” said Eugène to himself. “‘Can you love me?’ I asked her, and she did not resent it. The bit is in the horse’s mouth, and I have only to mount and ride;” and with that he went to pay his respects to Mme. de Beauséant, who was leaving the theatre on d’Ajuda’s arm.

The student did not know that the Baroness’ thoughts had been wandering; that she was even then expecting a letter from de Marsay, one of those letters that bring about a rupture that rends the soul; so, happy in his delusion, Eugène

went with the Vicomtesse to the peristyle, where people were waiting till their carriages were announced.

“That cousin of yours is hardly recognizable for the same man,” said the Portuguese laughingly to the Vicomtesse, when Eugène had taken leave of them. “He will break the bank. He is as supple as an eel; he will go a long way, of that I am sure. Who else could have picked out a woman for him, as you did, just when she needed consolation?”

“But it is not certain that she does not still love the faithless lover,” said Mme. de Beauséant.

The student meanwhile walked back from the Théâtre-Italien to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, making the most delightful plans as he went. He had noticed how closely Mme. de Restaud had scrutinized him when he appeared in the Vicomtesse’s box, and again when he sat beside Mme. de Nucingen, and inferred that the Countess’ doors would not be closed in future. Four important houses were now open to him—for he meant to stand well with the Duchesse; he had four supporters in the inmost circle of society in Paris. Even now it was clear to him that, once involved in this intricate social machinery, he must attach himself to a spoke of the wheel that was to turn and raise his fortunes; he would not examine himself too curiously as to the methods, but he was certain of the end, and conscious of the power to gain and keep his hold.

“If Mme. de Nucingen takes an interest in me, I will teach her how to manage her husband. That husband of hers is a great speculator; he might put me in the way of making a fortune by a single stroke.”

He did not say this bluntly in so many words; as yet, indeed, he was not sufficient of a diplomatist to sum up a situation, to see its possibilities at a glance, and calculate the chances in his favor. These were nothing but hazy ideas that floated over his mental horizon; they were less cynical than Vautrin’s notions; but if they had been tried in the crucible

of conscience, no very pure result would have issued from the test. It is by a succession of such like transactions that men sink at last to the level of the relaxed morality of this epoch, when there have never been so few of those who square their courses with their theories, so few of those noble characters who do not yield to temptation, for whom the slightest deviation from the line of rectitude is a crime. To these magnificent types of uncompromising right we owe two masterpieces—the *Alceste* of Molière, and, in our own day, the characters of Jeanie Deans and her father in Sir Walter Scott's novel. Perhaps a work which should chronicle the opposite course, which should trace out all the devious courses through which a man of the world, a man of ambitions, drags his conscience, just steering clear of crime that he may gain his end and yet save appearances, such a chronicle would be no less edifying and no less dramatic.

Rastignac went home. He was fascinated by Mme. de Nucingen ; he seemed to see her before him, slender and graceful as a swallow. He recalled the intoxicating sweetness of her eyes, her fair hair, the delicate silken tissue of the skin, beneath which it almost seemed to him that he could see the blood coursing ; the tones of her voice still exerted a spell over him ; he had forgotten nothing ; his walk perhaps heated his imagination by sending a glow of warmth through his veins. He knocked unceremoniously at Goriot's door.

“ I have seen Mme. Delphine, neighbor,” said he.

“ Where ? ”

“ At the Italiens.”

“ Did she enjoy it?— Just come inside,” and the old man left his bed, unlocked the door, and promptly returned again.

It was the first time that Eugène had been in Father Goriot's room, and he could not control his feeling of amazement at the contrast between the den in which the father lived and the costume of the daughter whom he had just beheld. The

window was curtainless, the walls were damp, in places the varnished wall-paper had come away and gave glimpses of the grimy yellow plaster beneath. The wretched bed on which the old man lay boasted but one thin blanket, and a wadded quilt made out of large pieces of Mme. Vauquer's old dresses. The floor was damp and gritty. Opposite the window stood a chest of drawers made of rosewood, one of the old-fashioned kind with a curving front and brass handles, shaped like rings of twisted vine stems covered with flowers and leaves. On a venerable piece of furniture with a wooden shelf stood an ewer and basin and shaving apparatus. A pair of shoes stood in one corner; a night-table by the bed had neither a door nor marble slab. There was not a trace of a fire in the empty grate; the square walnut table with the cross-bar against which Father Goriot had crushed and twisted his posset-dish stood near the hearth. The old man's hat was lying on a broken-down bureau. An arm-chair stuffed with straw and a couple of chairs completed the list of ramshackle furniture. From the tester of the bed, tied to the ceiling by a piece of rag, hung a strip of some cheap material in large red and black checks. No poor drudge in a garret could be worse lodged than Father Goriot in Mme. Vauquer's lodging-house. The mere sight of the room sent a chill through you and a sense of oppression; it was like the worst cell in a prison. Luckily, Goriot could not see the effect that his surroundings produced on Eugène as the latter deposited his candle on the night-table. The old man turned round, keeping the bedclothes huddled up to his chin.

"Well," he said, "and which do you like the best, Mme. de Restaud or Mme. de Nucingen?"

"I like Mme. Delphine the best," said the law student, "because she loves you the best."

At the words so heartily spoken the old man's hand slipped out from under the bedclothes and eagerly grasped that of Eugène.

“Thank you, thank you,” he said, gratefully. “Then what did she say about me?”

The student repeated the Baroness’ remarks with some embellishments of his own, the old man listening the while as though he heard a voice from heaven.

“Dear child!” he said. “Yes, yes, she is very fond of me. But you must not believe all that she tells you about Anastasie. The two sisters are jealous of each other, you see, another proof of their affection. Mme. de Restaud is very fond of me too. I know she is. A father sees his children as God sees all of us; he looks into the very depths of their hearts; he knows their intentions; and both of them are so loving. Oh! if I only had good sons-in-law, I should be too happy, and I dare say there is no perfect happiness here below. If I might live with them—simply hear their voices, know that they are there, see them go and come as I used to do at home when they were still with me; why, my heart bounds at the thought—— Were they nicely dressed?”

“Yes,” said Eugène. “But, M. Goriot, how is it that your daughters have such fine houses, while you live in such a den as this?”

“Dear me, why should I want anything better?” he replied, with seeming carelessness. “I can’t quite explain to you how it is; I am not used to stringing words together properly, but it all lies there——” he said, tapping his heart.

“My real life is in my two girls, you see; and so long as they are happy and smartly dressed, and have soft carpets under their feet, what does it matter what clothes I wear or where I lie down of a night? I shall never feel cold so long as they are warm; I shall never feel dull if they are laughing. I have no troubles but theirs. When you, too, are a father, and you hear your children’s little voices, you will say to yourself, ‘That has all come from me.’ You will feel that those little ones are akin to every drop in your veins, that they are the very flower of your life (and what else are they?);

you will cleave so closely to them that you seem to feel every movement that they make. Everywhere I hear their voices sounding in my ears. If they are sad, the look in their eyes freezes my blood. Some day you will find out that there is far more happiness in another's happiness than in your own. It is something that I cannot explain, something within that sends a glow of warmth all through you. In short, I live my life three times over. Shall I tell you something funny? Well, then, since I have been a father, I have come to understand God. He is everywhere in the world, because the whole world comes from Him. And it is just the same with my children, monsieur. Only, I love my daughters better than God loves the world, for the world is not so beautiful as God Himself is, but my children are more beautiful than I am. Their lives are so bound up with mine that I felt somehow that you would see them this evening! Great heaven! If any man would make my little Delphine as happy as a wife is when she is loved, I would black his boots and run on his errands. That miserable M. de Marsay is a cur; I know all about him from her maid. A longing to wring his neck comes over me now and then. He does not love her! does not love a pearl of a woman, with a voice like a nightingale and shaped like a model. Where can her eyes have been when she married that great lump of an Alsatian? They ought both of them to have married young men, good-looking and good-tempered—but, after all, they had their own way."

Father Goriot was sublime. Eugène had never yet seen his face light up as it did now with the passionate fervor of a father's love. It is worthy of remark that strong feeling has a very subtle and pervasive power; the roughest nature, in the endeavor to express a deep and sincere affection, communicates to others the influence that has put resonance into the voice, and eloquence into every gesture, wrought a change in the very features of the speaker; for under the inspiration of passion the stupidest human being attains to the highest

eloquence of ideas, if not of language, and seems to move in some sphere of light. In the old man's tones and gesture there was something just then of the same spell that a great actor exerts over his audience. But does not the poet in us find expression in our affections?

"Well," said Eugène, "perhaps you will not be sorry to hear that she is pretty sure to break with de Marsay before long. That sprig of fashion has left her for the Princesse Galathionne. For my own part, I fell in love with Mme. Delphine this evening."

"Stuff!" said Father Goriot.

"I did, indeed; and she did not regard me with aversion. For a whole hour we talked of love, and I am to go to call on her on Saturday, the day after to-morrow."

"Oh! how I should love you, if she should like you. You are kind-hearted; you would never make her miserable. If you were to forsake her, I would cut your throat at once. A woman does not love twice, you see! Good heavens! what nonsense I am talking, M. Eugène! It is cold; you ought not to stay here. *Mon Dieu!* so you have heard her speak? What message did she give you for me?"

"None at all," said Eugène to himself; aloud he answered, "She told me to tell you that your daughter sends you a good kiss."

"Good-night, neighbor! Sleep well, and pleasant dreams to you! I have mine already made for me by that message from her. May God grant you all your desires! You have come in like a good angel on me to-night, and brought with you the air that my daughter breathes."

"Poor old fellow!" said Eugène as he lay down. "It is enough to melt a heart of stone. His daughter no more thought of him than of the Grand Turk."

Ever after this conference Goriot looked upon his neighbor as a friend, a confidant such as he had never hoped to find;

and there was established between the two the only relationship that could attach this old man to another man. The passions never miscalculate. Father Goriot felt that this friendship brought him closer to his daughter Delphine; he thought that he should find a warmer welcome for himself if the Baroness should care for Eugène. Moreover, he had confided one of his troubles to the younger man. Mme. de Nucingen, for whose happiness he prayed a thousand times daily, had never known the joys of love. Eugène was certainly (to make use of his own expression) one of the nicest young men that he had ever seen, and some prophetic instinct seemed to tell him that Eugène was to give her the happiness which had not been hers. These were the beginnings of a friendship that grew up between the old man and his neighbor; but for this friendship the catastrophe of the drama must have remained a mystery.

The affection with which Father Goriot regarded Eugène, by whom he seated himself at breakfast, the change in Goriot's face, which, as a rule, looked as expressionless as a plaster cast, and a few words that passed between the two, surprised the other lodgers. Vautrin, who saw Eugène for the first time since their interview, seemed as if he would fain read the student's very soul. During the night Eugène had had some time in which to scan the vast field that lay before him; and now, as he remembered yesterday's proposal, the thought of Mlle. Taillefer's dowry came, of course, to his mind, and he could not help thinking of Victorine as the most exemplary youth may think of an heiress. It chanced that their eyes met. The poor girl did not fail to see that Eugène looked very handsome in his new clothes. So much was said in the glance thus exchanged, that Eugène could not doubt but that he was associated in her mind with the vague hopes that lie dormant in a girl's heart and gather round the first attractive new-comer. "Eight hundred thousand francs!" a voice cried in his ears, but suddenly he took

refuge in the memories of yesterday evening, thinking that his extemporized passion for Mme. de Nucingen was a talisman that would preserve him from this temptation.

“They gave Rossini’s ‘Barber of Seville’ at the Italiens yesterday evening,” he remarked. “I never heard such delicious music. Good gracious! how lucky people are to have a box at the Italiens!”

Father Goriot drank in every word that Eugène let fall, and watched him as a dog watches his master’s slightest movement.

“You men are like fighting-cocks,” said Mme. Vauquer; “you do what you like.”

“How did you get back?” inquired Vautrin.

“I walked,” answered Eugène.

“For my own part,” remarked the tempter, “I do not care about doing things by halves. If I want to enjoy myself that way, I should prefer to go in my carriage, sit in my own box, and do the thing comfortably. Everything or nothing; that is my motto.”

“And a good one too,” commented Mme. Vauquer.

“Perhaps you will see Mme. de Nucingen to-day,” said Eugène, addressing Goriot in an undertone. “She will welcome you with open arms, I am sure; she would want to ask you for all sorts of little details about me. I have found out that she would do anything in the world to be known by my cousin Mme. de Beauséant; don’t forget to tell her that I love her too well not to think of trying to arrange this.”

Rastignac went at once to the *École de droit*. He had no mind to stay a moment longer than was necessary in that odious house. He wasted his time that day; he had fallen a victim to that fever of the brain that accompanies the too vivid hopes of youth. Vautrin’s arguments had set him meditating on social life, and he was deep in these reflections when he happened on his friend Bianchon in the *Jardin du Luxembourg*.

“What makes you look so solemn?” said the medical student, putting an arm through Eugène’s as they went towards the Palais.

“I am tormented by temptations.”

“What kind? There is a cure for temptation.”

“What?”

“Yielding to it.”

“You laugh, but you don’t know what it is all about. Have you read Rousseau?”

“Yes.”

“Do you remember that he asks the reader somewhere what he would do if he could make a fortune by killing an old mandarin somewhere in China by mere force of wishing it, and without stirring from Paris?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then?”

“Pshaw! I am at my thirty-third mandarin.”

“Seriously, though. Look here, suppose you were sure that you could do it, and had only to give a nod. Would you do it?”

“Is he well stricken in years, this mandarin of yours? Pshaw! after all, young or old, paralytic, or well and sound, my word for it—— Well, then. Hang it, no!”

“You are a good fellow, Bianchon. But suppose you loved a woman well enough to lose your soul in hell for her, and that she wanted money, lots of money for dresses and a carriage, and all her whims, in fact?”

“Why, here you are taking away my reason, and want me to reason!”

“Well, then, Bianchon, I am mad; bring me to my senses. I have two sisters as beautiful and innocent as angels, and I want them to be happy. How am I to find two hundred thousand francs a piece for them in the next five years? Now and then in life, you see, you must play for heavy stakes, and it is no use wasting your luck on low play.”

“But you are only stating the problem that lies before every one at the outset of his life, and you want to cut the Gordian knot with a sword. If that is the way of it, dear boy, you must be an Alexander, or to the hulks you go. For my own part, I am quite contented with the little lot I mean to make for myself somewhere in the country, when I mean to step into my father’s shoes and plod along. A man’s affections are just as fully satisfied by the smallest circle as they can be by a vast circumference. Napoleon himself could only dine once, and he could not have more mistresses than a house-student at the Capuchins. Happiness, old man, depends on what lies between the sole of your foot and the crown of your head; and whether it costs a million or a hundred louis, the actual amount of pleasure that you receive rests entirely with you, and is just exactly the same in any case. I am for letting that Chinaman live.”

“Thank you, Bianchon; you have done me good. We will always be friends.”

“I say,” remarked the medical student, as they came to the end of a broad walk in the Jardin des Plantes, “I saw the Michonneau and Poiret a few minutes ago on a bench chatting with a gentleman whom I used to see in last year’s troubles hanging about the Chamber of Deputies; he seems to me, in fact, to be a detective dressed up like a decent retired tradesman. Let us keep an eye on that couple; I will tell you why some time. Good-by; it is nearly four o’clock, and I must be in to answer to my name.”

When Eugène reached the lodging-house, he found Father Goriot waiting for him.

“Here!” cried the old man, “here is a letter from her. Pretty handwriting, eh?”

Eugène broke the seal and read—

“Sir:—I have heard from my father that you are fond of Italian music. I shall be delighted if you will do me the

pleasure of accepting a seat in my box. La Fodor and Pellegrini will sing on Saturday, so I am sure that you will not refuse me. M. de Nucingen and I shall be pleased if you will dine with us ; we shall be quite by ourselves. If you will come and be my escort, my husband will be glad to be relieved from his conjugal duties. Do not answer, but simply come. Yours sincerely,

“ D. DE N.”

“ Let me see it,” said Father Goriot, when Eugène had read the letter. “ You are going, aren’t you ? ” he added, when he had smelt the writing-paper. “ How nice it smells ! Her fingers have touched it, that is certain.”

“ A woman does not fling herself at a man’s head in this way,” the student was thinking. “ She wants to use me to bring back de Marsay ; nothing but pique makes a woman do a thing like this.”

“ Well,” said Father Goriot, “ what are you thinking about ? ”

Eugène did not know the fever of vanity that possessed some women in those days ; how should he imagine that to open a door in the Faubourg Saint-Germain a banker’s wife would go to almost any length. For the coterie of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was a charmed circle, and the women who moved in it were at that time the queens of society ; and among the greatest of these “ Ladies of the Little Castle,” as they were called, were Mme. de Beauséant and her friends the Duchesse de Langeais and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. Rastignac was alone in his ignorance of the frantic efforts made by women who lived in the Chaussée-d’Antin to enter this seventh heaven and shine among the brightest constellations of their sex. But his cautious disposition stood him in good stead, and kept his judgment cool, and the not altogether enviable power of imposing instead of accepting conditions.

“Yes, I am going,” he replied.

So it was curiosity that drew him to Mme. de Nucingen ; while, if she had treated him disdainfully, passion, perhaps, might have brought him to her feet. Still he waited almost impatiently for to-morrow, and the hour when he could go to her. There is almost as much charm for a young man in a first flirtation as there is in first love, The certainty of success is a source of happiness to which men do not confess, and all the charm of certain women lies in this. The desire of conquest springs no less from the easiness than from the difficulty of triumph, and every passion is excited or sustained by one or other of these two motives which divide the empire of love. Perhaps this division is one result of the great question of temperaments ; which, after all, dominates social life. The melancholic temperament may stand in need of the tonic of coquetry, while those of nervous or sanguine complexion withdraw if they meet with a too stubborn resistance. In other words, the lymphatic temperament is essentially despondent and the rhapsodic is bilious.

Eugène lingered over his toilet with an enjoyment of all its little details that is grateful to a young man’s self-love, though he will not own to it for fear of being laughed at. He thought, as he arranged his hair, that a pretty woman’s glances would wander through the dark curls. He indulged in childish tricks like any young girl dressing for a dance, and gazed complacently at his graceful figure while he smoothed out the creases of his coat.

“There are worse figures, that is certain,” he said to himself.

Then he went downstairs, just as the rest of the household were sitting down to dinner, and took with good-humor the boisterous applause excited by his elegant appearance. The amazement with which any attention to dress is regarded in a lodging-house is a very characteristic trait. No one can put on a new coat but every one else must say his say about it.

“Clk! clk! clk!” cried Bianchon, making the sound with his tongue against the roof of his mouth, like a driver urging on a horse.

“He holds himself like a duke and a peer of France,” said Mme. Vauquer.

“Are you going a-courting?” inquired Mlle. Michonneau.

“Cock-a-doodle-doo?” cried the artist.

“My compliments to my lady, your wife,” from the employé at the Muséum.

“Your wife; have you a wife?” interposed the redoubtable Poiret.

“Yes, in compartments, water-tight and floats, guaranteed fast color, all prices from twenty-five to forty sous, neat check patterns in the latest fashion and best taste, will wash, half-linen, half-cotton, half-wool; a certain cure for toothache and other complaints under the patronage of the Royal College of Physicians! children like it! a remedy for headache, indigestion, and all other diseases affecting the throat, eyes, and ears!” cried Vautrin, with the comical imitation of the volubility of a quack at a fair. “And how much shall we say for this marvel, gentlemen? Twopence? No. Nothing of the sort. All that is left in stock after supplying the Great Mogul. All the crowned heads of Europe, including the Gr-r-r-rand Duke of Baden, have been anxious to get a sight of it. Walk up! walk up! gentlemen! Pay at the desk as you go in! Strike up the music there! Brooum, la, la, trinn! la, la, boum! boum! Mister Clarionet, there you are out of tune!” he added gruffly; “I will rap your knuckles for you!”

“Goodness! what an amusing man!” said Mme. Vauquer to Mme. Couture; “I should never feel dull with him in the house.”

This burlesque of Vautrin’s was the signal for an outburst of merriment, and under cover of jokes and laughter Eugène

caught a glance from Mlle. Taillefer ; she had leaned over to say a few words in Mme. Couture's ear.

“The cab is at the door,” announced Sylvie.

“But where is he going to dine ?” asked Bianchon.

“With Madame la Baronne de Nucingen.”

“M. Goriot's daughter,” said the law student.

At this, all eyes turned to the old vermicelli-maker ; he was gazing at Eugène with something like envy in his eyes.

Rastignac reached the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, one of those many-windowed houses with a mean-looking portico and slender columns, which are considered the thing in Paris ; a typical banker's house, decorated in the most ostentatious fashion ; the walls lined with stucco, the landings of marble mosaic. Mme. de Nucingen was sitting in a little drawing-room ; the room was painted in the Italian fashion, and decorated like a restaurant. The Baroness seemed depressed. The effort that she made to hide her feelings aroused Eugène's interest ; it was plain that she was not playing a part. He had expected a little flutter of excitement at his coming, and he found her dispirited and sad. The disappointment piqued his vanity.

“My claim to your confidence is very small, madame,” he said, after rallying her on her abstracted mood ; “but if I am in the way, please tell me so frankly ; I count on your good faith.”

“No, stay with me,” she said ; “I shall be all alone if you go. Nucingen is dining in town, and I do not want to be alone ; I want to be taken out of myself.”

“But what is the matter ?”

“You are the very last person whom I should tell,” she exclaimed.

“Then I am connected in some way with this secret. I wonder what it is.”

“Perhaps. Yet, no,” she went on ; “it is a domestic quarrel, which ought to be buried in the depths of the heart.





*"AM I TO YOUR TASTE?"*



I am very unhappy; did I not tell you so the day before yesterday? Golden chains are the heaviest of all fetters."

When a woman tells a young man that she is very unhappy, and when the young man is clever, and well-dressed, and has fifteen hundred francs lying idle in his pocket, he is sure to think as Eugène said, and he becomes a coxcomb.

"What can you have left to wish for?" he answered. "You are young, beautiful, beloved, and rich."

"Do not let us talk of my affairs," she said, shaking her head mournfully. "We will dine together *tête-à-tête*, and afterwards we will go to hear the most exquisite music. Am I to your taste?" she went on, rising and displaying her gown of white cashmere, covered with Persian designs in the most superb taste.

"I wish that you were altogether mine," said Eugène; "you are charming."

"You would have a forlorn piece of property," she said, smiling bitterly. "There is nothing about me that betrays my wretchedness; and yet, in spite of appearances, I am in despair. I cannot sleep; my troubles have broken my night's rest; I shall grow ugly."

"Oh! that is impossible," cried the law student; "but I am curious to know what these troubles can be that a devoted love cannot efface."

"Ah! if I were to tell you about them, you would shun me," she said. "Your love for me as yet is only the conventional gallantry that men use to masquerade in; and, if you really loved me, you would be driven to despair. I must keep silent, you see. Let us talk of something else for pity's sake," she added. "Let me show you my rooms."

"No; let us stay here," answered Eugène; he sat down on the sofa before the fire, and boldly took Mme. de Nucingen's hand in his. She surrendered it to him; he even felt the pressure of her fingers in one of the spasmodic clutches that betray terrible agitation.

“Listen,” said Rastignac; “if you are in trouble, you ought to tell me about it. I want to prove to you that I love you for yourself alone. You must speak to me frankly about your troubles, so that I can put an end to them, even if I have to kill half-a-dozen men; or I shall go, never to return.”

“Very well,” she cried, putting her hand to her forehead in an agony of despair, “I will put you to the proof, and this very moment. Yes,” she said to herself, “I have no other resource left.”

She rang the bell.

“Are the horses put in for the master?” she asked of the servant.

“Yes, madame.”

“I shall take his carriage myself. He can have mine and my horses. Serve dinner at seven o’clock.”

“Now, come with me,” she said to Eugène, who thought as he sat in the banker’s carriage beside Mme. de Nucingen that he must surely be dreaming.

“To the Palais-Royal,” she said to the coachman; “stop near the Théâtre-Français.”

She seemed to be too troubled and excited to answer the innumerable questions that Eugène put to her. He was at a loss what to think of her mute resistance, her obstinate silence.

“Another moment and she will escape me,” he said to himself.

When the carriage stopped at last, the Baroness gave the law student a glance that silenced his wild words, for he was almost beside himself.

“Is it true that you love me?” she asked.

“Yes,” he answered, and in his manner and tone there was no trace of the uneasiness that he felt.

“You will not think ill of me, will you, whatever I may ask of you?”

“No.”

“Are you ready to do my bidding?”

“Blindly.”

“Have you ever been to a gaming-house?” she asked in a tremulous voice.

“Never.”

“Ah! now I can breathe. You will have luck. Here is my purse,” she said. “Take it! there are a hundred francs in it, all that such a fortunate woman as I can call her own. Go up into one of the gaming-houses—I do not know where they are, but there are some near the Palais-Royal. Try your luck with the hundred francs at a game they call roulette; lose it all, or bring me back six thousand francs. I will tell you about my troubles when you come back.”

“Devil take me, I’m sure, if I have a glimmer of a notion of what I am about, but I will obey you,” he added, with inward exultation, as he thought, “She has gone too far to draw back—she can refuse me nothing now!”

Eugène took the dainty little purse, inquired the way of a second-hand clothes-dealer, and hurried to number 9, which happened to be the nearest gaming-house. He mounted the staircase, surrendered his hat, and asked the way to the roulette-table, whither the attendant took him, not a little to the astonishment of the regular comers. All eyes were fixed on Eugène as he asked, without bashfulness, where he was to deposit his stakes.

“If you put a louis on one only of those thirty-six numbers, and it turns up, you will win thirty-six louis,” said a respectable-looking, white-haired old man in answer to his inquiry.

Eugène staked the whole of his money on the number 21 (his own age). There was a cry of surprise; before he knew what he had done, he had won.

“Take your money off, sir,” said the old white-haired gentleman; “you don’t often win twice running by that system of playing.”

Eugène took the rake that the old man handed to him, and drew in his three thousand six hundred francs, and, still perfectly ignorant of what he was about, staked again on the red. The bystanders watched him enviously as they saw him continue to play. The disc turned, and again he won; the banker threw him three thousand six hundred francs once more.

“You have seven thousand two hundred francs of your own,” the old gentleman said in his ear. “Take my advice and go away with your winnings; red has turned up eight times already. If you are charitable, you will show your gratitude for sound counsel by giving a trifle to an old préfet of Napoleon’s who is down on his luck and without the means to stake anew.”

Rastignac’s head was swimming; he saw ten of his louis pass into the white-haired man’s possession, and went downstairs with his seven thousand francs; he was still ignorant of the game, and stupefied by his luck.

“So that is over; and now where will you take me?” he asked, as soon as the door was closed, and he showed the seven thousand francs to Mme. de Nucingen.

Delphine flung her arms about him, but there was no passion in that wild embrace.

“You have saved me!” she cried, and tears of joy flowed fast.

“I will tell you everything, my friend. For you will be my friend, will you not? I am rich, you think, very rich; I have everything I want, or I seem as if I had everything. Very well, you must know that M. de Nucingen does not allow me the control of a single penny; he pays all the bills for the house expenses; he pays for my carriages and opera box; he does not give me enough to pay for my dress, and he reduces me to poverty in secret on purpose. I am too proud to beg from him. I should be the vilest of women if I could take his money at the price at which he offers it. Do

you ask how I, with seven hundred thousand francs of my own, could let myself be robbed? It is because I was proud, and scorned to speak. We are so young, so artless when our married life begins! I never could bring myself to ask my husband for money; the words would have made my lips bleed, I did not dare to ask; I spent my savings first, and then the money that my poor father gave me, then I ran into debt. Marriage for me is a hideous farce; I cannot talk about it; let it suffice to say that Nucingen and I have separate rooms, and that I would fling myself out of the window sooner than consent to any other manner of life. I suffered agonies when I had to confess to my girlish extravagance, my debts for jewelry and trifles (for our poor father had never refused us anything, and spoiled us), but at last I found courage to tell him about them. After all, I had a fortune of my own. Nucingen flew into a rage; he said that I should be the ruin of him, and used frightful language; I wished myself a hundred feet down in the earth. He had my dowry, so he paid my debts, but he stipulated at the same time that my expenses in the future must not exceed a certain fixed sum, and I gave way for the sake of peace. And then," she went on, "I wanted to gratify the self-love of some one whom you know. He may have deceived me, but I should do him the justice to say that there was nothing petty in his character. But, after all, he threw me over disgracefully. If, at a woman's utmost need, *somebody* heaps gold upon her, he ought never to forsake her; that love should last for ever! But you, at one-and-twenty, you, the soul of honor, with the unsullied conscience of youth, will ask me how a woman can bring herself to accept money in such a way. *Mon Dieu!* is it not natural to share everything with the one to whom we owe our happiness? When all has been given, why should we pause and hesitate over a part? Money is as nothing between us until the moment when the sentiment that bound us together ceases to exist. Were we not bound to each other

for life? Who that believes in love foresees such an end of love? You swear to love us eternally; how, then, can our interests be separate?

“You do not know how I suffered to-day when Nucingen refused to give me six thousand francs; he spends as much as that every month on his mistress, an opera dancer! I thought of killing myself. The wildest thoughts came into my head. There have been moments in my life when I have envied my servants, and would have changed places with my maid. It was madness to think of going to our father, Anastasie and I have bled him dry; our poor father would have sold himself if he could have raised six thousand francs that way. I should have driven him frantic to no purpose. You have saved me from shame and death; I was beside myself with anguish. Ah! monsieur, I owed you this explanation after my mad ravings. When you left me just now, as soon as you were out of sight, I longed to escape, to run away—where, I did not know. Half the women in Paris lead such lives as mine; they live in apparent luxury, and in their souls are tormented by anxiety. I know of poor creatures even more miserable than I; there are women who are driven to ask their tradespeople to make out false bills, women who rob their husbands. Some men believe that an India shawl worth a hundred louis only cost five hundred francs, others that a shawl costing five hundred francs is worth a hundred louis. There are women, too, with narrow incomes, who scrape and save and starve their children to pay for a dress. I am innocent of these base meannesses. But this is the last extremity of my torture. Some women will sell themselves to their husbands, and so obtain their way, but I, at any rate, am free. If I chose, Nucingen would cover me with gold, but I would rather weep on the breast of a man whom I can respect. Ah! to-night, M. de Marsay will no longer have a right to think of me as a woman whom he has paid.” She tried to conceal her tears from him, hiding her face in her

hands; Eugène drew them away and looked at her; she seemed to him sublime at that moment.

“It is hideous, is it not,” she cried, “to speak in a breath of money and affection? You cannot love me after this,” she added.

The incongruity between the ideas of honor which make women so great and the errors in conduct which are forced upon them by the constitution of society had thrown Eugène’s thoughts into confusion; he uttered soothing and consoling words, and wondered at the beautiful woman before him, and at the artless imprudence of her cry of pain.

“You will not remember this against me?” she asked; “promise me that you will not.”

“Ah! madame, I am incapable of doing so,” he said. She took his hand and held it to her heart, a movement full of grace that expressed her deep gratitude.

“I am free and happy once more, thanks to you,” she said. “Oh! I have felt lately as if I were in the grasp of an iron hand. But after this I mean to live simply and to spend nothing. You will think me just as pretty, will you not, my friend? Keep this,” she went on, as she took only six of the bank-notes. “In conscience I owe you a thousand crowns, for I really ought to go halves with you.”

Eugène’s maiden conscience resisted; but when the Baroness said, “I am bound to look on you as an accomplice or as an enemy,” he took the money.

“It shall be a last stake in reserve,” he said, “in case of misfortune.”

“That was what I was dreading to hear,” she cried, turning pale. “Oh, if you would that I should be anything to you, swear to me that you will never re-enter a gaming-house. Great heaven! that I should corrupt you! I should die of sorrow!”

They had reached the Rue Saint-Lazare by this time. The contrast between the ostentation of wealth in the house and

the wretched condition of its mistress dazed the student; and Vautrin's cynical words began to ring in his ears.

"Seat yourself there," said the Baroness, pointing to a low chair beside the fire. "I have a difficult letter to write," she added. "Tell me what to say."

"Say nothing," Eugène answered her. "Put the bills in an envelope, direct it, and send it by your maid."

"Why, you are a love of a man," she said. "Ah! see what it is to have been well brought up. That is the Beau-séant through and through," she went on, smiling at him.

"She is charming," thought Eugène, more and more in love. He looked round him at the room; there was an ostentatious character about the luxury, a meretricious taste in the splendor.

"Do you like it?" she asked, as she rang for her maid.

"Thérèse, take this to M. de Marsay, and give it into his hands yourself. If he is not at home, bring the letter back to me."

Thérèse went, but not before she had given Eugène a spiteful glance.

Dinner was announced. Rastignac gave his arm to Mme. de Nucingen, she led the way into a pretty dining-room, and again he saw the luxury of the table which he had admired in his cousin's house.

"Come and dine with me on opera evenings, and we will go to the Italiens afterwards," she said.

"I should soon grow used to the pleasant life if it could last, but I am a poor student, and I have my way to make."

"Oh! you will succeed," she said, laughing. "You will see. All that you wish will come to pass. I did not expect to be so happy."

It is the wont of women to prove the impossible by the possible, and to annihilate facts by presentiments. When Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac took their places in her box at the Bouffons, her face wore a look of happiness that

made her so lovely that every one indulged in those small slanders against which women are defenseless ; for the scandal that is uttered lightly is often seriously believed. Those who know Paris believe nothing that is said, and say nothing of what is done there.

Eugène took the Baroness' hand in his, and by some light pressure of the fingers, or a closer grasp of the hand, they found a language in which to express the sensations which the music gave them. It was an evening of intoxicating delight for both ; and when it ended, and they went out together, Mme. de Nucingen insisted on taking Eugène with her as far as the Pont Neuf, he disputing with her the whole of the way for a single kiss after all those that she had showered upon him so passionately at the Palais-Royal ; Eugène reproached her with inconsistency.

“That was gratitude,” she said, “for devotion that I did not dare to hope for, but now it would be a promise.”

“And will you give me no promise, ingrate ?”

He grew vexed. Then, with one of those impatient gestures that fill a lover with ecstasy, she gave him her hand to kiss, and he took it with a discontented air that delighted her.

“I shall see you at the ball on Monday,” she said.

As Eugène went home in the moonlight, he fell to serious reflections. He was satisfied, and yet dissatisfied. He was pleased with an adventure which would probably give him his desire, for in the end one of the prettiest and best-dressed women in Paris would be his ; but, as a set-off, he saw his hopes of fortune brought to nothing ; and, as soon as he realized this fact, the vague thoughts of yesterday evening began to take a more decided shape in his mind. A check is sure to reveal to us the strength of our hopes. The more Eugène learned of the pleasures of life in Paris, the more impatient he felt of poverty and obscurity. He crumpled the bank-note in his pocket, and found any quantity of plausible excuses for appropriating it.

He reached the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève at last, and from the stairhead he saw a light in Goriot's room; the old man had lighted a candle, and set the door ajar, lest the student should pass him by, and go to his room without "telling him all about his daughter," to use his own expression. Eugène, accordingly, told him everything that transpired and without reserve.

"Then they think that I am ruined!" cried Father Goriot, in an agony of jealousy and desperation. "Why, I have still thirteen hundred livres a year! *Mon Dieu!* Poor little girl! why did she not come to me? I would have sold my *rentes*; she should have had some of the principal, and I would have bought a life-annuity with the rest. My good neighbor, why did *you* not come to tell me of her difficulty? How had you the heart to go and risk her poor little hundred francs at play? This is heart-breaking work. You see what it is to have sons-in-law. Oh! if I had hold of them, I would wring their necks. *Mon Dieu! crying!* Did you say she was crying?"

"With her head on my waistcoat," said Eugène.

"Oh! give it to me," said Father Goriot. "What! my daughter's tears have fallen there—my darling Delphine, who never used to cry when she was a little girl! Oh! I will buy you another; do not wear it again; let me have it. By the terms of her marriage-contract she ought to have the use of her property. To-morrow morning I will go and see Derville; he is an attorney. I will demand that her money should be invested in her own name. I know the law. I am an old wolf; I will show my teeth."

"Here, father; this is a bank-note for a thousand francs that she wanted me to keep out of our winnings. Keep them for her, in the pocket of the waistcoat."

Goriot looked hard at Eugène, reached out and took the law-student's hand, and Eugène felt a tear fall on it.

"You will succeed," the old man said. "God is just, you see. I know an honest man when I see him, and I can tell

you, there are not many men like you. I am to have another dear child in you, am I? There, go to sleep; you can sleep, you are not yet a father. She was crying! and I have to be told about it!—and I was quietly eating my dinner, like an idiot, all the time—I, who would sell my soul to save one tear to either of them.”

“An honest man!” said Eugène to himself as he lay down. “Upon my word, I think I will be an honest man all my life; it is so pleasant to obey the voice of conscience.” Perhaps none but believers in God do good in secret; and Eugène believed in a God.

The next day Rastignac went at the appointed time to Mme. de Beauséant, who took him with her to the Duchesse de Carigliano’s ball. The Duchesse received Eugène most graciously. Mme. de Nucingen was there. Delphine’s dress seemed to suggest that she wished for the admiration of others, so that she might shine the more in Eugène’s eyes; she was eagerly expecting a glance from him, hiding, as she thought, this eagerness from all beholders. This moment is full of charm for the one who can guess all that passes in a woman’s mind. Who has not refrained from giving his opinion, to prolong her suspense, concealing his pleasure from a desire to tantalize, seeking a confession of love in her uneasiness, enjoying the fears that he can dissipate by a smile? In the course of the evening the law student suddenly comprehended his position; he saw that, as the cousin of Mme. de Beauséant, he was a personage in this world. He was already credited with the conquest of Mme. de Nucingen, and for this reason was a conspicuous figure; he caught the envious glances of other young men, and experienced the earliest pleasures of coxcombry. People wondered at his luck, and scraps of these conversations came to his ears as he went from room to room; all the women prophesied his success; and Delphine, in her dread of losing him, promised that this evening she would not

refuse the kiss that all his entreaties could scarcely win yesterday.

Rastignac received several invitations. His cousin presented him to other women who were present; women who could claim to be of the highest fashion; whose houses were looked upon as pleasant; and this was the loftiest and most fashionable society in Paris into which he was launched. So this evening had all the charm of a brilliant *début*; it was an evening that he was to remember even in old age, as a woman looks back on her first ball and the memories of her girlish triumphs.

The next morning at breakfast, he related the story of his success for the benefit of Father Goriot and the lodgers. Vautrin began to smile in a diabolical fashion.

“And do you suppose,” cried that cold-blooded logician, “that a young man of fashion can live here in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, in the Maison Vauquer—an exceedingly respectable boarding-house in every way, I grant you, but an establishment that, none the less, falls short of being fashionable? The house is comfortable, it is lordly in its abundance; it is proud to be the temporary abode of a Rastignac; but, after all, it is in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and luxury would be out of place here, where we only aim at the purely *patriarchalorama*. If you mean to cut a figure in Paris, my young friend,” Vautrin continued, with half-paternal jocularly, “you must have three horses, a tilbury for the mornings, and a closed carriage for the evenings; you should spend altogether about nine thousand francs on your stables. You would show yourself unworthy of your destiny if you spent no more than three thousand francs with your tailor, six hundred in perfumery, a hundred crowns to your shoemaker, and a hundred more to your hatter. As for your laundress, there goes another thousand francs; a young man of fashion must of necessity make a great point of his linen; if your linen comes up to the required standard, people often do not

look any farther. Love and the church demand a fair altar-cloth. That is fourteen thousand francs. I am saying nothing of losses at play, bets, and presents; it is impossible to allow less than two thousand francs for pocket money. I have led that sort of life, and I know all about these expenses. Add the cost of necessaries next; three hundred louis for provender, a thousand francs for a place to roost in. Well, my boy, for all these little wants of ours we had need to have twenty-five thousand francs every year in our purse, or we shall find ourselves in the kennel, and people laughing at us, and our career is cut short, good-by to success, and good-by to your mistress. I am forgetting your valet and your groom! Is Christophe going to carry your *billets-doux* for you? And do you mean to employ the stationery you use at present? Suicidal policy! Hearken to the wisdom of your elders!" he went on, his bass voice growing louder at each syllable. "Either take up your quarters in a garret, live virtuously, and wed your work, or set about the thing in a different way."

Vautrin winked and leered in the direction of Mlle. Taillefer to enforce his remarks by a look which recalled the late tempting proposals by which he had sought to corrupt the student's mind.

Several days went by, and Rastignac lived in a whirl of gaiety. He dined almost every day with Mme. de Nucingen, and went wherever she went, only returning to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève in the small hours. He rose at mid-day, and dressed to go into the Bois with Delphine if the day was fine, squandering in this way time that was worth far more than he knew. He turned as eagerly to learn the lessons of luxury, and was as quick to feel its fascination as the flowers of the date palm to receive the fertilizing pollen. He played high, lost and won large sums of money, and at last became accustomed to the extravagant life that young men lead in Paris. He sent fifteen hundred francs out of his first winnings to his mother and sisters, sending handsome presents as well

as the money, He had given out that he meant to leave the Maison Vauquer ; but January came and went, and he was still there, still unprepared to go.

One rule holds good of most young men—whether rich or poor. They never have money for the necessaries of life, but they always have money to spare for their caprices—an anomaly which finds its explanation in their youth and in the almost frantic eagerness with which youth grasps at pleasure. They are reckless with anything obtained on credit, while everything for which they must pay in ready money is made to last as long as possible ; if they cannot have all that they want, they make up for it, it would seem, by squandering what they have. To state the matter simply—a student is far more careful of his hat than of his coat, because the latter being a comparatively costly article of dress, it is in the nature of things that a tailor should be a creditor ; but it is otherwise with the latter ; the sums of money spent with him are so modest that he is the most independent and unmanageable of his tribe, and it is almost impossible to bring him to terms. The young man in the balcony of a theatre who displays a gorgeous waistcoat for the benefit of the fair owners of opera glasses has very probably no socks in his wardrobe, for the hosier is another of the genus of weevils that nibble at the purse. This was Rastignac's condition. His purse was always empty for Mme. Vauquer, always full at the demand of vanity ; there was a periodical ebb and flow in his fortunes, which was seldom favorable to the payment of just debts. If he was to leave that unsavory and mean abode, where from time to time his pretensions met with humiliation, the first step was to pay his hostess for a month's board and lodging, and the second to purchase furniture worthy of the new lodgings he must take in his quality of dandy, a course ~~that~~ remained impossible. Rastignac, out of his winnings at cards, could pay his jeweler exorbitant prices for gold watches and chains, and, then to meet the exigencies of play,

would carry them to the pawnbroker, that discreet and forbidding-looking friend of youth ; but when it was a question of paying for board or lodging, or for the necessary implements for the cultivation of his Elysian fields, his imagination and pluck alike deserted him. There was no inspiration to be found in vulgar necessity, in debts contracted for past requirements. Like most of those who trust to their luck, he put off till the last moment the payment of debts that among the bourgeoisie are regarded as sacred engagements, acting on the plan of Mirabeau, who never settled his baker's bill until it underwent a formidable transformation into a bill of exchange.

It was about this time, when Rastignac was down on his luck and fell into debt, that it became clear to the law-student's mind that he must have some more certain source of income if he meant to live as he had been doing. But while he groaned over the thorny problems of his precarious situation, he felt that he could not bring himself to renounce the pleasures of this extravagant life, and decided that he must continue it at all costs. His dreams of obtaining a fortune appeared more and more chimerical, and the real obstacles grew more formidable. His initiation into the secrets of the Nucingen household had revealed to him that if he were to attempt to use this love affair as a means of mending his fortunes, he must swallow down all sense of decency, and renounce all the generous ideas which redeem the sins of youth. He had chosen this life of apparent splendor, but secretly gnawed by the canker-worm of remorse, a life of fleeting pleasure dearly paid for by persistent pain ; like " *Le Distrain* " of La Bruyère, he had descended so far as to make his bed in a ditch ; but (also like " *Le Distrain* ") he himself was uncontaminated as yet by the mire that stained his garments.

" So we have killed our mandarin, have we ? " said Bianchon one day as they left the dinner table.

" Not yet, " he answered, " but he is at the last gasp. "

The medical student took this for a joke, but it was not a jest. Eugène had dined in the house that night for the first time in a long while, and had looked thoughtful during the meal. He had taken his place beside Mlle. Taillefer, and stayed through the dessert, giving his neighbor an expressive glance from time to time. A few of the boarders discussed the walnuts at the table, and others walked about the room, still taking part in a conversation which had begun among them. People usually went when they chose ; the amount of time that they lingered being determined by the amount of interest that the conversation possessed for them, or by the difficulty of the process of digestion. In winter-time the room was seldom empty before eight o'clock, when the four women had it all to themselves, and made up for the silence previously imposed upon them by the preponderating masculine element. This evening Vautrin had noticed Eugène's abstractedness, and stayed in the room, though he had seemed to be in a hurry to finish his dinner and go. All through the talk afterwards he had kept out of sight of the law student, who quite believed that Vautrin had left the room. He now took up his position cunningly in the sitting-room instead of going when the last boarders went. He had fathomed the young man's thoughts, and felt that a crisis was at hand. Rastignac was, in fact, in a dilemma, which many another young man under similar circumstances must have most readily understood.

Mme. de Nucingen might love him, or might merely be playing with him, but in either case Rastignac had been made to experience all the alternations of hope and despair of genuine passion, and all the diplomatic arts of a Parisienne had been employed on him. After compromising herself by continually appearing in public with Mme. de Beauséant's cousin she still hesitated, and would not give him the lover's privileges which he appeared to enjoy. For a whole month she had so wrought on his senses, that at last she had made an

impression on his heart. If in the earliest days the student had fancied himself to be the master, Mme. de Nucingen had since become the stronger of the two, for she had skillfully roused and played upon every instinct, good or bad, in the two or three men comprised in a young student in Paris. This was not the result of deep design on her part, nor was she playing a part, for women are in a manner true to themselves even through their grossest deceit, because their actions are prompted by a natural impulse. It may have been that Delphine, who had allowed this young man to gain such an ascendancy over her, conscious that she had been too demonstrative, was obeying a sentiment of dignity, and either repented of her concessions, or it pleased her to suspend them. It is so natural to a Parisienne, even when passion has almost mastered her, to hesitate and pause before taking the plunge ; to probe the heart of him to whom she intrusts her future. And once already Mme. de Nucingen's hopes had been betrayed, and her loyalty to a selfish young lover had been despised. She had good reason to be suspicious. Or it may have been that something in Eugène's manner (for his rapid success was making a coxcomb of him) had warned her that the grotesque nature of their position had lowered her somewhat in his eyes. She doubtless wished to assert her dignity ; he was young, and she would be great in his eyes ; for the lover who had forsaken her had so underestimated her that she was determined that Eugène should not think her an easy conquest, and for this very reason—he knew that de Marsay had been his predecessor. Finally, after the degradation of submission to the pleasure of a heartless young rake, it was so sweet for her to wander in the flower-strewn realms of love, that it was not wonderful that she should wish to dwell a while on the prospect, to tremble with the vibrations of love, to feel the freshness of the breath of its dawn. The true lover was suffering for the sins of the false. This inconsistency is unfortunately only to be expected so long as men do not know

how many flowers are mown down in a young woman's soul by the first stroke of treachery.

Whatever her reasons may have been, Delphine was playing with Rastignac, and took pleasure in playing with him, doubtless because she felt sure of his love, and confident that she could put an end to the torture as soon as it was her royal pleasure to do so. Eugène's self-love was engaged; he could not suffer his first passage of love to end in a defeat, and persisted in his suit, like a sportsman determined to bring down at least one partridge to celebrate his first Feast of Saint Hubert. The pressure of anxiety, his wounded self-love, his despair, real or feigned, drew him nearer and nearer to this woman. All Paris credited him with this conquest, and yet he was conscious that he had made no progress since the day when he saw Mme. de Nucingen for the first time. He did not know as yet that a woman's coquetry is sometimes more delightful than the pleasure of secure possession of her love, and was possessed with helpless rage. If, at this time, while she denied herself to love, Eugène gathered the springtide spoils of his life, the fruit, somewhat sharp and green, and dearly bought, was no less delicious to the taste. There were moments when he had not a *sou* in his pockets, and at such times he thought in spite of his conscience of Vautrin's offer and the possibility of fortune by a marriage with Mlle. Taillefer. Poverty would clamor so loudly that more than once he was on the point of yielding to the cunning temptations of the terrible sphinx, whose glance had so often exerted a strange spell over him. His dilemma, in short, at this time proved most perplexing, and he felt greatly depressed in spirit.

Poiret and Mlle. Michonneau went up to their rooms; and Rastignac, thinking that he was alone with the women in the dining-room, sat between Mme. Vauquer and Mme. Couture, who was nodding over the woolen cuffs that she was knitting by the stove, and looked at Mlle. Taillefer so tenderly that she lowered her eyes.

“Can you be in trouble, M. Eugène?” Victorine said after a pause.

“Who has not his troubles?” answered Rastignac. “If we men were sure of being loved, sure of a devotion which would be our reward for the sacrifices which we are always ready to make, then perhaps we should have no troubles.”

For answer Mlle. Taillefer only gave him a glance, but it was impossible to mistake its meaning.

“You, for instance, mademoiselle; you feel sure of your heart to-day, but are you sure that it will never change?”

A smile flitted over the poor girl’s lips; it seemed as if a ray of light from her soul had lighted up her face. Eugène was dismayed at the sudden explosion of feeling caused by his words.

“Ah! but suppose,” he said, “that you should be rich and happy to-morrow, suppose that a vast fortune dropped down from the clouds for you, would you still love the man whom you loved in your days of poverty?”

A charming movement of the head was her only answer to the question propounded.

“Even if he were very poor?”

Again the same mute answer.

“What nonsense you are talking, you two?” exclaimed Mme. Vauquer.

“Never mind,” answered Eugène; “we understand each other.”

“So there is to be an engagement of marriage between M. le Chevalier Eugène de Rastignac and Mlle. Victorine Taillefer, is there!” The words were uttered in Vautrin’s deep voice, and Vautrin appeared at the door as he spoke.

“Oh! how you startled me!” Mme. Couture and Mme. Vauquer exclaimed together.

“I might make a worse choice,” said Rastignac, laughing. Vautrin’s voice had thrown him into the most painful agitation that he had yet known.

“No bad jokes, gentlemen!” said Mme. Couture. “My dear, let us go upstairs.”

Mme. Vauquer followed the two ladies, meaning to pass the evening in their room, an arrangement that economized fire and candlelight. Eugène and Vautrin were left alone.

“I felt sure you would come round to it,” said the elder man with the coolness that nothing seemed to shake. “But stay a moment. I have as much delicacy as anybody else. Don’t make up your mind on the spur of the moment; you are a little thrown off your balance just now. You are in debt, and I want you to come over to my way of thinking after sober reflection, and not in a fit of passion or desperation. Perhaps you want a thousand crowns. There, you can have them if you like.”

The tempter took out a pocket-book, and drew thence three bank-notes, which he fluttered before the student’s eyes. Eugène was in a most painful dilemma. He had debts, debts of honor. He owed a hundred louis to the Marquis d’Ajuda and to the Comte de Trailles; he had not the money, and for this reason had not dared to go to Mme. de Restaud’s house, where he was expected that evening. It was one of those informal gatherings where tea and little cakes are handed round, but where it is possible to lose six thousand francs at whist in the course of a night.

“You must see,” said Eugène, struggling to hide a convulsive tremor, “that after what has passed between us, I cannot possibly lay myself under any obligation to you.”

“Quite right; I should be sorry to hear you speak otherwise,” answered the tempter. “You are a fine young fellow, honorable, brave as a lion, and as gentle as a young girl. You would be a fine haul for the devil! I like youngsters of your sort. Get rid of one or two more prejudices, and you will see the world as it is. Make a little scene now and then, and act a virtuous part in it, and a man with a head on his shoulders can do exactly as he likes amid deafening applause

from the fools in the gallery. Ah! a few days yet, and you will be with us; and if you would only be tutored by me, I would put you in the way of achieving all your ambitions. You should no sooner form a wish than it should be realized to the full; you should have all your desires—honors, wealth, or women. Civilization should flow with milk and honey for you. You should be our pet and favorite, our Benjamin. We would all work ourselves to death for you with pleasure; every obstacle should be removed from your path. You have a few prejudices left; so you think that I am a scoundrel, do you? Well, M. de Turenne, quite as honorable a man as you take yourself to be, had some little private transactions with bandits, and did not feel that his honor was tarnished. You would rather not lay under any obligation to me, eh? You need not draw back on that account,” Vautrin went on, and a smile stole over his lips. “Take those bits of paper and write across this,” he added, producing a piece of stamped paper, “*Accepted the sum of three thousand five hundred francs due this day twelvemonth*, and fill in the date. The rate of interest is stiff enough to silence any scruples on your part; it gives you the right to call me a Jew. You can call quits with me on the score of gratitude. I am quite willing that you should despise me to-day, because I am sure that you will have a kindlier feeling towards me later on. You will find out fathomless depths in my nature, enormous and concentrated forces that weaklings call vices, but you will never find me base or ungrateful. In short, I am neither a pawn nor a bishop, but a castle, a tower of strength, my boy.”

“What manner of man are you?” cried Eugène. “Were you created to torment me?”

“Why, no; I am a good-natured fellow, who is willing to do a dirty piece of work to put you high and dry above the mire for the rest of your days. Do you ask the reason of this devotion? All right; I will tell you that some of these days. A word or two in your ear will explain it. I have begun by

shocking you, by showing you the way to ring the changes, and giving you a sight of the mechanism of the social machine ; but your first fright will go off like a conscript's terror on the battlefield. You will grow used to regarding men as common soldiers who have made up their minds to lose their lives for some self-constituted king. Times have altered strangely. Once you could say to a bravo, ' Here are a hundred crowns ; go and kill Monsieur So-and-so for me,' and you could sup quietly after turning some one off into the dark for the least thing in the world. But nowadays I propose to put you in the way of a handsome fortune : you have only to nod your head, it won't compromise you in any way, and you hesitate. 'Tis an effeminate age.'

Eugène accepted the draft, and received the bank-notes in exchange for it.

" Well, well. Come, now, let us talk rationally," Vautrin continued. " I mean to leave this country in a few months' time for America, and set about planting tobacco. I will send you the cigars of friendship. If I make money at it, I will help you in your career. If I have no children—which will probably be the case, for I have no anxiety to raise slips of myself here—you shall inherit my fortune. That is what you may call standing by a man ; but I myself have a liking for you. I have a mania, too, for devoting myself to some one else. I have done it before. You see, my boy, I live in a loftier sphere than other men do ; I look on all actions as means to an end, and the end is all that I look at. What is a man's life to me ? Not *that*," he said, and he snapped his thumb-nail against his teeth. " A man, in short, is everything to me, or just nothing at all. Less than nothing if his name happens to be Poiret ; you can crush him like a bug, he is flat and he is offensive. But a man is a god when he is like you ; he is not a machine covered with a skin, but a theatre in which the greatest sentiments are displayed—great thoughts and feelings—and for these, and these only, I live. A senti-

ment—what is that but the whole world in a thought? Look at Father Goriot. For him, his two girls are the whole universe; they are the clue by which he finds his way through creation. Well, for my own part, and I have fathomed the depths of life, there is only one real sentiment—comradeship between man and man. Pierre and Jaffier, that is my passion. I know “*Venice Preserved*” by heart. Have you met many men plucky enough when a comrade says, ‘Let us bury a dead body!’ to go and do it without a word or plaguing him by taking a high moral tone? I have done it myself. I should not talk like this to just everybody, but you are not like an ordinary man; one can talk to you, you can understand things. You will not dabble about much longer among the tadpoles in these swamps. Well, then, it is all settled. You will marry. Both of us carry our point. Mine is made of iron, and will never soften, he! he!”

Vautrin went out. He would not wait to hear the student’s repudiation, he wished to put Eugène at his ease. He seemed to understand the secret springs of the faint resistance still made by the younger man; the struggles in which men seek to preserve their self-respect by justifying their blameworthy actions to themselves.

“He may do as he likes; I shall not marry Mlle. Taillefer, that is certain,” said Eugène to himself.

He regarded this man with abhorrence, and yet the very cynicism of Vautrin’s ideas, and the audacious way in which he used other men for his own ends, raised him in the student’s eyes; but the thought of a compact threw Eugène into a fever of apprehension, and not until he had recovered somewhat did he dress, call for a cab, and go to Mme. de Restaud’s.

For some days the Countess had paid more and more attention to a young man whose every step seemed a triumphal progress in the great world; it seemed to her that he might be a formidable power before long. He paid Messieurs de Trailles and d’Ajuda, played at whist for part of the evening,

and made good his losses. Most men who have their way to make are more or less fatalists, and Eugène was superstitious; he chose to consider that his luck was heaven's reward for his perseverance in the right way. As soon as possible on the following morning he asked Vautrin whether the bill that he had given was still in the other's possession; and on receiving a reply in the affirmative, he repaid the three thousand francs with a not unnatural relief.

"Everything is going on well," said Vautrin.

"But I am not your accomplice," said Eugène.

"I know, I know," Vautrin broke in. "You are still acting like a child. You are making mountains out of molehills at the outset."

Two days later, Poiret and Mlle. Michonneau were sitting together on a bench in the sun. They had chosen a little frequented alley in the Jardin des Plantes, and a gentleman was chatting with them, the same person, as a matter of fact, about whom the medical student had, not without good reason, his own suspicions.

"Mademoiselle," this M. Gondureau was saying, "I do not see any cause for your scruples. His excellency monseigneur the minister of police——"

"Ah!" echoed Poiret, "His excellency monseigneur the minister of police!"

"Yes, his excellency is taking a personal interest in the matter," said Gondureau.

Who would think it probable that Poiret, a retired clerk, doubtless possessed of some notions of civic virtue, though there might be nothing else in his head—who would think it likely that such a man would continue to lend an ear to this supposed independent gentleman of the Rue de Buffon, when the latter dropped the mask of a decent citizen by that word "police," and gave a glimpse of the features of a detective from the Rue de Jérusalem? And yet nothing was more natural. Perhaps the following remarks from the hitherto

unpublished records made by certain observers will throw a light on the particular species to which Poiret belonged in the great family of fools. There is a race of quill-drivers, confined in the columns of the budget between the first degree of latitude (a kind of administrative Greenland where the salaries begin at twelve hundred francs) to the third degree, a more temperate zone, where incomes grow from three to six thousand francs, a climate where the *bonus* flourishes like a half-hardy annual in spite of some difficulties of culture. A characteristic trait that best reveals the feeble narrow-mindedness of these inhabitants of petty officialdom is a kind of involuntary, mechanical, and instinctive reverence for the Grand Lama of every ministry, known to the rank and file only by his signature (an illegible scrawl) and by his title—"His excellency monseigneur le minister," five words which produce as much effect as the "Bond of Cain" of the Caliph of Bagdad, five words which in the eyes of this low order of intelligence represent a sacred power from which there is no appeal. The minister is administratively infallible for the clerks in the employ of the government, as the pope is infallible for good Catholics. Something of his peculiar radiance invests everything he does or says, or that is said or done in his name; the robe of office covers everything and legalizes everything done by his orders; does not his very title—his excellency—vouch for the purity of his intentions and the righteousness of his will, and serve as a sort of passport and introduction to ideas that otherwise would not be entertained for a moment? Pronounce the words "his excellency," and these poor folk will forthwith proceed to do what they would not do for their own interests. Passive obedience is as well known in a government department as in the army itself; and the administrative system silences consciences, annihilates the individual, and ends (give it time enough) by fashioning a man into a vise or a thumbscrew, and he becomes part of the machinery of government. Wherefore, M. Gondureau, who seemed to know

something of human nature, recognized Poiret at once as one of these dupes of officialdom, and brought out for his benefit, at the proper moment, the *deus ex machinâ*, the magical words "his excellency," so as to dazzle Poiret just as he himself unmasked his batteries, for he took Poiret and the Michonneau for the male and female of the same species.

"If his excellency himself, his excellency the minister—— Ah! that is quite another thing," said Poiret.

"You seem to be guided by this gentleman's opinion, and you hear what he says," said the man of independent means, addressing Mlle. Michonneau. "Very well, his excellency is at this moment absolutely certain that the so-called Vautrin, who lodges at the Maison Vauquer, is a convict who escaped from penal servitude at Toulon, where he is known by the nickname *Trompe-la-Mort*" (Death's defier).

"*Trompe-la-Mort*?" said Poiret. "Dear me, he is very lucky if he deserves that nickname."

"Well, yes," said the detective. "They call him so because he has been so lucky as not to lose his life in the very risky businesses that he has carried through. He is a dangerous man, you see! He has qualities that are out of the common; the thing he is wanted for, in fact, was a matter which gained him no end of credit with his own set——"

"Then he is a man of honor?" asked Poiret.

"Yes, according to his notions. He agreed to take another man's crime upon himself—a forgery committed by a very handsome young fellow that he had taken a great fancy to, a young Italian, a bit of a gambler, who has since gone into the army, where his conduct has been unexceptionable."

"But if his excellency the minister of police is certain that M. Vautrin is this *Trompe-la-Mort*, why should he want me?" asked Mlle. Michonneau.

"Oh, yes," said Poiret, "if the minister, as you have been so obliging as to tell us, really knows for a certainty that——"

“Certainty is not the word; he only suspects. You will soon understand how things are. Jacques Collin, nicknamed *Trompe-la-Mort*, is in the confidence of every convict in the three prisons; he is their man of business and their banker. He makes a very good thing out of managing their affairs, which want a *man of mark* to see about them.”

“Ha! ha! do you see the pun, mademoiselle?” asked Poiret. “This gentleman calls him a *man of mark* because he is a *marked man*—branded, you know.”

“This so-called Vautrin,” said the detective, “receives the money belonging to my lords the convicts, invests it for them, and holds it at the disposal of those who escape, or hands it over to their families if they leave a will, or to their mistresses when they draw upon him for their benefit.”

“Their mistresses! You mean their wives,” remarked Poiret.

“No, sir. A convict’s wife is usually an illegitimate connection. We call them concubines.”

“Then they all live in a state of concubinage?”

“Naturally.”

“Why, these are abominations that his excellency ought not to allow. Since you have the honor of seeing his excellency, you, who seem to have philanthropic ideas, ought really to enlighten him as to their immoral conduct—they are setting a shocking example to the rest of society.”

“But the government does not hold them up as models of all the virtues, my dear sir.”

“Of course not, sir; but still——”

“Just let the gentleman say what he has to say, dearie,” said Mlle. Michonneau.

“You see how it is, mademoiselle,” Gondureau continued. “The government may have the strongest reasons for getting this illicit hoard into its hands; it mounts up to something considerable, by all that we can make out. *Trompe-la-Mort* not only holds very large sums for his friends the convicts,

but he has other amounts which are paid over to him by the Society of the Ten Thousand——”

“Ten Thousand Thieves!” cried Poiret at this, in the utmost alarm.

“No. The Society of the Ten Thousand is not an association of petty offenders, but of people who set about their work on a large scale—they won’t touch a matter unless there are ten thousand francs in it. It is composed of the most distinguished of the men who are sent straight to the assize courts when they come up for trial. They know the Code too well to risk their necks when they are nabbed. Collin is their confidential agent and legal adviser. By means of the large sums of money at his disposal he has established a sort of detective system of his own; it is widespread, and mysterious in its workings. We have had spies all about him for a twelvemonth, and yet we could not manage to fathom his games. His capital and his cleverness are at the service of vice and crime; this money furnishes the necessary funds for a regular army of blackguards in his pay who wage incessant war against society. If we can catch Trompe-la-Mort, and take possession of his funds, we should strike at the root of this evil. So this job is a kind of government affair—a state secret—and likely to redound to the honor of those who bring the thing to a successful conclusion. You, sir, for instance, might very well be taken into a government department again; they might make you secretary to a commissary of police; you could accept that post without prejudice to your retiring pension.”

Mlle. Michonneau interposed at this point with, “What is there to hinder Trompe-la-Mort from making off with the money?”

“Oh!” said the detective, “a man is told off to follow him everywhere he goes, with orders to kill him if he were to rob the convicts. Then it is not quite as easy to make off with a lot of money as it is to run away with a young lady of family.

Besides, Collin is not the sort of fellow to play such a trick ; he would be disgraced, according to his notions."

"You are quite right, sir," said Poiret, "utterly disgraced he would be."

"But none of all this explains why you do not come and take him without more ado," remarked Mlle. Michonneau.

"Very well, mademoiselle, I will explain—but," he added in her ear, "keep your companion quiet, or I shall never have done. The old boy ought to pay people handsomely for listening to him. Trompe-la-Mort, when he came back here," he went on aloud, "slipped into the skin of an honest man ; he turned up disguised as a decent Parisian citizen, and took up his quarters in an unpretending lodging-house. He is cunning, that he is ! You won't catch him napping. Then M. Vautrin is a man of consequence, who transacts a good deal of business."

"Naturally," said Poiret to himself.

"And suppose that the minister were to make a mistake and get hold of the real Vautrin, he would put every one's back up among the business men in Paris, and public opinion would be against him. M. le préfet de police is on slippery ground ; he has enemies. They would take advantage of any mistake. There would be a fine outcry and fuss made by the Opposition, and he would be sent packing. We must set about this just as we did about the Cogniard affair, the sham Comte de Sainte-Hélène ; if he had been the real Comte de Sainte-Hélène, we should have been in the wrong box. We want to be quite sure what we are about."

"Yes, but what you want is a pretty woman," said Mlle. Michonneau briskly.

"Trompe-la-Mort would not let a woman come near him," said the detective. "I will tell you a secret—he does not like them."

"Still, I do not see what I can do, supposing that I did agree to identify him for two thousand francs."

“Nothing simpler,” said the stranger. “I will send you a little bottle containing a dose that will send a rush of blood to the head; it will do him no harm whatever, but he will fall down as if he were in a fit. The drug can be put into wine or coffee; either will do equally well. You carry your man to bed at once, and undress him to see that he is not dying. As soon as you are alone, you give him a slap on the shoulder, and, *presto!* the letters will appear.”

“Why, that is just nothing at all,” said Poiret, very complacently.

“Well, do you agree?” said Gondureau, addressing the old maid.

“But, my dear sir, suppose there are no letters at all,” said Mlle. Michonneau; “am I to have the two thousand francs all the same?”

“No.”

“What will you give me, then?”

“Five hundred francs.”

“It is quite a thing to do for so little! It lies on your conscience just the same, and I must quiet my conscience, sir.”

“I assure you,” said Poiret, “that mademoiselle has a great deal of conscience, and not only so, she is a very amiable person, and very intelligent.”

“Well, now,” Mlle. Michonneau went on, “make it three thousand francs if he is Trompe-la-Mort, and nothing at all if he is an ordinary man.”

“Done!” said Gondureau, “but on condition that the thing is settled to-morrow.”

“Not quite so soon, my dear sir; I must consult my confessor first.”

“You are a sly one,” said the detective as he rose to his feet. “Good-by till to-morrow, then. And if you should want to see me in a hurry, go to the Petite Rue Sainte-Anne at the bottom of the Cour de la Sainte-Chapelle. There is

only one door under the archway. Ask there for M. Gondureau."

Bianchon, on his way back from Cuvier's lecture, overheard the sufficiently striking nickname of *Trompe-la-Mort*, and caught the celebrated chief detective's "*Done!*"

"Why didn't you close with him? It would be three hundred francs a year," said Poiret to Mlle. Michonneau.

"Why didn't I?" she asked. "Why, it wants thinking over. Suppose that M. Vautrin is this *Trompe-la-Mort*, perhaps we might do better for ourselves with him. Still, on the other hand, if you ask him for money, it would put him on his guard, and he is just the man to clear out without paying, and that would be an abominable sell."

"And suppose you did warn him," Poiret went on, "didn't that gentleman say that he was closely watched? You would spoil everything."

"Anyhow," thought Mlle. Michonneau, "I can't abide him. He says nothing but disagreeable things to me."

"But you can do better than that," Poiret resumed. "As that gentleman said (and he seemed to me to be a very good sort of man, besides being very well got up), it is an act of obedience to the laws to rid society of a criminal, however virtuous he may be. Once a thief, always a thief. Suppose he were to take it into his head to murder us all? The deuce! We should be guilty of manslaughter, and be the first to fall victims into the bargain!"

Mlle. Michonneau's musings did not permit her to listen very closely to the remarks that fell one by one from Poiret's lips like water dripping from a leaky tap. When once this elderly babbler began to talk, he would go on like clockwork unless Mlle. Michonneau stopped him. He started on some subject or other, and wandered on through parenthesis after parenthesis till he came to regions as remote as possible from his premises without coming to any conclusions by the way.

By the time they reached the *Maison Vauquer* he had tacked

together a whole string of examples and quotations more or less irrelevant to the subject in hand, which led him to give a full account of his own deposition in the case of the Sieur Ragoulleau *versus* Dame Morin, when he had been summoned as a witness for the defense.

As they entered the dining-room, Eugène de Rastignac was talking apart with Mlle. Taillefer; the conversation appeared to be of such thrilling interest that the pair never noticed the two older lodgers as they passed through the room. None of this was thrown away on Mlle. Michonneau.

“I knew how it would end,” remarked that lady, addressing Poiret. “They have been making eyes at each other in a heart-rending way for a week past.”

“Yes,” he answered. “So she was found guilty.”

“Who?”

“Mme. Morin.”

“I am talking about Mlle. Victorine,” said Mlle. Michonneau, as she entered Poiret’s room with an absent air, “and you answer, ‘Mme. Morin.’ Who may Mme. Morin be?”

“What can Mlle. Victorine be guilty of?” demanded Poiret.

“Guilty of falling in love with M. Eugène de Rastignac, and going farther and farther without knowing exactly where she is going, poor innocent!”

That morning Mme. de Nucingen had driven Eugène to despair. In his own mind he had completely surrendered himself to Vautrin, and deliberately shut his eyes to the motive for the friendship which that extraordinary man professed for him, nor would he look to the consequences of such an alliance. Nothing short of a miracle could extricate him now out of the gulf into which he had walked an hour ago, when he exchanged vows in the softest whispers with Mlle. Taillefer. To Victorine it seemed as if she heard an angel’s voice, that heaven was opening above her; the Maison Vauquer took





*VAUTRIN CAME IN IN HIGH SPIRITS.*



strange and wonderful hues, like a stage fairy palace. She loved and she was beloved ; at any rate, she believed that she was loved ; and what woman would not likewise have believed after seeing Rastignac's face and listening to the tones of his voice during that hour snatched under the argus eyes of the Maison Vauquer ? He had trampled on his conscience ; he knew that he was doing wrong, and did it deliberately ; he had said to himself that a woman's happiness should atone for this venial sin. The energy of desperation had lent new beauty to his face ; the lurid fire that burned in his heart shone from his eyes. Luckily for him, the miracle took place. Vautrin came in in high spirits, and at once read the hearts of these two young creatures whom he had brought together by the combinations of his infernal genius, but his deep voice broke in upon their bliss.

*"A charming girl is my Fanchette  
In her simplicity,"*

he sang mockingly.

Victorine fled. Her heart was more full than it had ever been, but it was full of joy, and not of sorrow. Poor child ! A pressure of the hand, the light touch of Rastignac's hair against her cheek, a word whispered in her ear so closely that she felt the student's warm breath on her, the pressure of a trembling arm about her waist, a kiss upon her throat—such had been her betrothal. The near neighborhood of the stout Sylvie, who might invade that glorified room at any moment, only made these first tokens of love more ardent, more eloquent, more entrancing than the noblest deeds done for love's sake in the most famous romances. This *plain-song* of love, to use the pretty expression of our forefathers, seemed almost criminal to the devout young girl who went to confession every fortnight. In that one hour she had poured out more of the treasures of her soul than she could give in later days of wealth and happiness, when her whole self followed the gift.

“The thing is arranged,” Vautrin said to Eugène, who remained. “Our two dandies have fallen out. Everything was done in proper form. It is a matter of opinion. Our pigeon has insulted my hawk. They will meet to-morrow in the redoubt at Clignancourt. By half-past eight in the morning Mlle. Taillefer, calmly dipping her bread and butter in her coffee-cup, will be sole heiress of her father’s fortune and affections. A funny way of putting it, isn’t it? Taillefer’s youngster is an expert swordsman, and quite cocksure about it, but he will be bled; I have just invented a thrust for his benefit, a way of raising your sword-point and driving it at the forehead. I must show you that thrust; it is an uncommonly handy thing to know.”

Rastignac heard him in dazed bewilderment; he could not find a word in reply. Just then Goriot came in, and Bianchon and a few of the boarders likewise appeared.

“That is just as I intended,” Vautrin said. “You know quite well what you are about. Good, my little eaglet! You are born to command, you are strong, you stand firm on your feet, you are game! I respect you.”

He made as though he would take Eugène’s hand, but Rastignac hastily withdrew it, sank into a chair, and turned ghastly pale; it seemed to him that there was a sea of blood before his eyes.

“Oh! so we have still a few dubious tatters of the swaddling-clothes of virtue about us!” murmured Vautrin. “But Papa Doliban has three millions; I know the amount of his fortune. Once have her dowry in your hands, and your character will be as white as the bride’s white dress, even in your own eyes.”

Rastignac hesitated no longer. He made up his mind that he would go that evening to warn the Taillefers, father and son. But just as Vautrin left him, Father Goriot came up and said in his ear, “You look melancholy, my boy; I will cheer you up. Come with me.”

The old vermicelli-dealer lighted his dip at one of the lamps as he spoke. Eugène went with him, his curiosity had been aroused.

“Let us go up to your room,” the worthy soul remarked, when he had asked Sylvie for the law-student’s key. “This morning,” he resumed, “you thought that *she* did not care about you, did you not, eh? She would have nothing to say to you, and you went away out of humor and out of heart. Stuff and rubbish! She wanted you to go because she was expecting *me*! Now do you understand? We were to complete the arrangements for taking some chambers for you, a jewel of a place, you are to move into it in three days’ time. Don’t split upon me. She wants it to be a surprise; but I couldn’t bear to keep the secret from you. You will be in the Rue d’Artois, only a step or two from the Rue Saint-Lazare, and you are to be housed like a prince! Any one might have thought we were furnishing the house for a bride. Oh! we have done a lot of things in the last month, and you knew nothing about it. My attorney has appeared on the scene, and my daughter is to have thirty-six thousand francs a year, the interest on her money, and I shall insist on having her eight hundred thousand francs invested in sound securities, landed property that won’t run away.”

Eugène was dumb. He folded his arms and paced up and down his cheerless, untidy room. Father Goriot waited till the student’s back was turned, and seized the opportunity to go to the chimney-piece and set upon it a little red morocco case with Rastignac’s arms stamped in gold on the leather.

“My dear boy,” said the kind soul, “I have been up to the eyes in this business. You see, there was plenty of selfishness on my part; I have an interested motive in helping you to change lodgings. You will not refuse me if I ask you something; will you, eh?”

“What is it?”

“There is a room on the fifth floor, up above your rooms,

that is to let along with them ; that is where I am going to live, isn't that so ? I am getting old ; I am too far from my girls. I shall not be in the way, but I shall be there, that is all. You will come and talk to me about her every evening. It will not put you about, will it ? I shall have gone to bed before you come in, but I shall hear you come up, and I shall say to myself, 'He has just seen my little Delphine. He has been to a dance with her, and she is happy, thanks to him.' If I were ill, it would do my heart good to hear you moving about below, to know when you leave the house and when you come in. It is only a step to the Champs-Élysées, where they go every day, so I shall be sure of seeing them, whereas now I am sometimes too late. And then—perhaps she may come to see you ! I shall hear her, I shall see her in her soft quilted pelisse tripping about as daintily as a kitten. In this one month she has become my little girl again, so light-hearted and gay. Her soul is recovering, and her happiness is owing to you. Oh ! I would do impossibilities for you. Only just now she said to me, 'I am very happy, papa !' When they say 'father' stiffly, it sends a chill through me ; but when they call me 'papa,' it is as if they were little girls again, and it brings all the old memories back. I feel most their father then ; I even believe that they belong to me, and to no one else."

The good man wiped his eyes, he was crying.

"It is a long while since I have heard them talk like that, a long, long time since she took my arm as she did to-day. Yes, indeed, it must be quite ten years since I walked side by side with one of my girls. How pleasant it was to keep step with her, to feel the touch of her gown, the warmth of her arm ! Well, I took Delphine everywhere this morning ; I went shopping with her, and I brought her home again. Oh ! you must let me live near you. You may want some one to do you a service some of these days, and I shall be on the spot to do it. Oh ! if only that great dolt of an Alsatian

would die, if his gout would have the sense to attack his stomach, how happy my poor child would be! You would be my son-in-law; you would be her husband in the eyes of the world. Bah! she has known no happiness, that excuses everything. Our Father in heaven is surely on the side of fathers on earth who love their children. How fond of you she is!" he said, raising his head after a pause. "All the time we were going about together she chatted away about you. 'He is nice-looking, papa; isn't he? He is kind-hearted! Does he talk to you about me?' . Pshaw! she said enough about you to fill whole volumes; between the Rue d'Artois and the Passage des Panoramas she poured her heart out into mine. I did not feel old once during that delightful morning; I felt as light as a feather. I told her how you had given that bank-note to me; it moved my darling to tears. But what can this be on your chimney-piece!" said Father Goriot at last. Rastignac had showed no sign, and he was dying of impatience.

Eugène stared at his neighbor in dumb and dazed bewilderment. He thought of Vautrin, of that duel to be fought tomorrow morning, and of this realization of his dearest hopes, and the violent contrast between the two sets of ideas gave him all the sensations of nightmare. He went to the chimney-piece, saw the little square case, opened it, and found a watch of Bréguet's make wrapped in paper, on which these words were written:

"I want you to think of me every hour, *because*——

"DELPHINE."

That last word doubtless contained an allusion to some scene that had taken place between them. Eugène felt touched. Inside the gold watch-case his arms had been wrought in enamel. The chain, the key, the workmanship, and design of the trinket were all such as he had imagined,

for he had long coveted such a possession. Father Goriot was radiant. Of course he had promised to tell his daughter every little detail of the scene and of the effect produced upon Eugène by her present; he shared in the pleasure and excitement of the young people, and seemed to be not the least happy of the three. He loved Rastignac already for his own as well as for his daughter's sake.

“You must go and see her; she is expecting you this evening. That great lout of an Alsatian is going to have supper with his opera-dancer. Aha! he looked very foolish when my attorney let him know where he was. He says he idolizes my daughter, does he? He had better let her alone, or I will kill him. To think that my Delphine is his”—he heaved a sigh—“it is enough to make me murder him, but it would not be manslaughter to kill that animal; he is a pig with a calf's brains. You will take me with you, will you not?”

“Yes, dear Father Goriot; you know very well how fond I am of you——”

“Yes, I do know very well. You are not ashamed of me, are you! Not you! Let me embrace you,” and he flung his arms round the student's neck.

“You will make her very happy; promise me that you will! You will go to her this evening, will you not?”

“Oh! yes. I must go out; I have some urgent business on hand.”

“Can I be of any use?”

“My word, yes! Will you go to old Taillefer's while I go to Mme. de Nucingen. Ask him to make an appointment with me some time this evening; it is a matter of life and death.”

“Really, young man!” cried Father Goriot, with a change of countenance; “are you really paying court to his daughter, as those simpletons were saying down below?—God's thunder! you have no notion what a *tap à la Goriot* is

like, and if you are playing a double game, I shall put a stop to it by one blow of the fist—— Oh! the thing is impossible!”

“I swear to you that I love but one woman in the world,” said the student. “I only knew it a moment ago.”

“Oh! what happiness!” cried Goriot.

“But young Taillefer has been called out; the duel comes off to-morrow morning, and I have heard it said that he may lose his life in it.”

“But what business is it of yours?” said Goriot.

“Why, I ought to tell him so, that he may prevent his son from putting in an appearance——”

Just at that moment Vautrin’s voice broke in upon them; he was standing at the threshold of his door and singing—

*“Oh! Richard, oh my king!  
All the world abandons thee!  
Broum! broum! broum! broum! broum!”*

*“The same old story everywhere,  
A roving heart and a—— tra la la.”*

“Gentlemen!” shouted Christophe, “the soup is ready, and every one is waiting for you.”

“Here,” Vautrin called down to him, “come and take a bottle of my Bordeaux.”

“Do you think your watch is pretty?” asked Goriot. “She has good taste, hasn’t she, eh?”

Vautrin, Father Goriot, and Rastignac came downstairs in company, and, all three of them being late, were obliged to sit together.

Eugène was as distant as possible in his manner to Vautrin during dinner; but the other, so charming in Mme. Vauquer’s opinion, had never been so witty. His lively sallies and sparkling talk put the whole table in good-humor. His assurance and great coolness filled Eugène with the utmost consternation.

“Why, what has come to you to-day?” inquired Mme. Vauquer. “You are as merry as a skylark.”

“I am always in spirits after I have made a good bargain.”

“Bargain?” asked Eugène.

“Well, yes, bargain. I have just delivered a lot of goods, and I shall be paid a handsome commission on them. Mlle. Michonneau,” he went on, seeing that the elderly spinster was scrutinizing him intently, “have you any objection to some feature in my face, that you are making those lynx-eyes at me? Just let me know, and I will have it changed to oblige you—— We shall not fall out about it, Poiret, I daresay?” he added, winking at the superannuated clerk.

“Bless my soul, you ought to stand as model for a burlesque Hercules,” said the young painter.

“I will, upon my word! if Mlle. Michonneau will consent to sit as the Venus of Père-Lachaise,” replied Vautrin.

“There’s Poiret,” suggested Bianchon.

“Oh! Poiret shall pose as Poiret. He can be a garden god!” cried Vautrin; “his name means a pear——”

“A sleepy pear!” Bianchon put in. “You will come in between the pear and the cheese.”

“What stuff you are all talking!” said Mme. Vauquer; “you would do better to treat us to your Bordeaux; I see a glimpse of a bottle there. It would keep us all in a good-humor, and it is good for the stomach besides.”

“Gentlemen,” said Vautrin, “the lady president calls us to order. Mme. Couture and Mlle. Victorine will take your jokes in good part, but respect the innocence of the aged Goriot. I propose a glass or two of Bordeauxrama, rendered twice illustrious by the name of Laffitte, no political allusions intended. Come, you Turk!” he added, looking at Christophe, who did not offer to stir. “Christophe! Here! What, you don’t answer to your own name? Bring us some liquor, Turk!”

“Here it is, sir,” said Christophe, holding out the bottle.

Vautrin filled Eugène's glass and Goriot's likewise, then he deliberately poured out a few drops into his own glass, and sipped it while his two neighbors drank their wine. All at once he made a grimace.

"Corked!" he cried. "The devil! You can drink the rest of this, Christophe, and go and find another bottle; take from the right-hand side, you know. There are sixteen of us; take down eight bottles."

"If you are going to stand treat," said the painter, "I will pay for a hundred chestnuts."

"Oh! oh!"

"Booououh!"

"Prrrr!"

These exclamations came from all parts of the table like squibs from a set firework.

"Come, now, Mamma Vauquer, a couple of bottles of champagne," called Vautrin.

"Eh, what! just like you! Why not ask for the whole house at once? A couple of bottles of champagne; that means twelve francs! I shall never see the money back again, I know! But if M. Eugène has a mind to pay for it, I have some currant cordial."

"That currant cordial of hers is as bad as a black draught," muttered the medical student.

"Shut up, Bianchon," exclaimed Rastignac; "the very mention of black draught makes me feel—— Yes, champagne, by all means; I will pay for it," he added.

"Sylvie," called Mme. Vauquer, "bring in some biscuits and the little cakes."

"Those little cakes are moldy graybeards," said Vautrin. "But trot out the biscuits."

The Bordeaux wine circulated; the dinner table became a livelier scene than ever, and the fun grew fast and furious. Imitations of the cries of various animals mingled with the loud laughter; the Muséum official having taken it into his

head to mimic a cat-call rather like the caterwauling of the animal in question, eight voices simultaneously struck up with the following variations :

“ Scissors to grind ! ”

“ Chick-weed for singing bir-ds ! ”

“ Gingersnaps, ladies ! ”

“ China to mend ! ”

“ Boat ahoy ! ”

“ Sticks to beat your wives or your clothes ! ”

“ Old clo' ! ”

“ Cherry ripe, ripe, oh ! ”

But the palm was awarded to Bianchon for the nasal accent with which he rendered the cry of “ Umbrellas to me-end ! ”

A few seconds later, and there was a head-splitting racket in the room, a storm of tomfoolery, a sort of cats' concert, with Vautrin as conductor of the orchestra, the latter keeping an eye the while on Eugène and Father Goriot. The wine seemed to have gone to their heads already. They leaned back in their chairs, looking at the general confusion with an air of gravity, and drank but little ; both of them were absorbed in the thought of what lay before them to do that evening, and yet neither of them felt able to rise and go. Vautrin gave a side glance at them from time to time, and watched the change that came over their faces, choosing the moment when their eyes drooped and seemed about to close to bend over Rastignac and to say in his ear :

“ My little lad, you are not quite shrewd enough to outwit Papa Vautrin yet, and he is too fond of you to let you make a mess of your affairs. When I have made up my mind to do a thing, no one short of Providence can put me off. Aha ! we were for going round to warn old Taillefer, telling tales out of school ! The oven is hot, the dough is kneaded, the bread is ready for the oven ; to-morrow we will eat it up and whisk away the crumbs ; and we are not going to spoil the baking ?—— No, no, it is all as good as done ! We

may suffer from a few conscientious scruples, but they will be digested along with the bread. While we are having our forty winks, Colonel Count Franchessini will clear the way to Michel Taillefer's inheritance with the point of his sword. Victorine will come in for her brother's money, a snug fifteen thousand francs a year. I have made inquiries already, and I know that her late mother's property amounts to more than three hundred thousand——”

Eugène heard all this, and could not answer a word; his tongue seemed to be glued to the roof of his mouth, an irresistible drowsiness was creeping over him. He still saw the table and the faces round it, but it was through a bright mist. Soon the noise began to subside, one by one the boarders went. At last, when their numbers had so dwindled that the party consisted of Mme. Vauquer, Mme. Couture, Mlle. Victorine, Vautrin, and Father Goriot, Rastignac watched as though in a dream how Mme. Vauquer busied herself by collecting the bottles, and drained the remainder of the wine out of each to fill others.

“Oh! how uproarious they are! what a thing it is to be young!” said the widow.

These were the last words that Eugène heard and understood.

“There is no one like M. Vautrin for a bit of fun like this,” said Sylvie. “There, just hark at Christophe, he is snoring like a top.”

“Good-by, mamma,” said Vautrin; “I am going to a theatre on the Boulevard to see M. Marty in ‘Le Mont Sauvage,’ a fine play taken from ‘Le Solitaire’—— If you like, I will take you and these two ladies——”

“Thank you; I must decline,” said Mme. Couture.

“What! my good lady!” cried Mme. Vauquer, “decline to see a play founded on the ‘Le Solitaire,’ a work by Atala de Chateaubriand. We were so fond of that book that we cried over it like Magdalens under the *line trees* last summer, and

then it is an improving work that might edify your young lady."

"We are forbidden to go to the play," answered Victorine.

"Just look, those two yonder have dropped off where they sit," said Vautrin, shaking the heads of the two sleepers in a comical way.

He altered the sleeping student's position, settled his head more comfortably on the back of his chair, kissed him warmly on the forehead, and began to sing—

*"Sleep, little darlings;  
I watch while you slumber."*

"I am afraid he may be ill," said Victorine.

"Then stop and take care of him," returned Vautrin. "'Tis your duty as a meek and obedient wife," he whispered in her ear. "The young fellow worships you, and you will be his little wife—there's your fortune for you. In short," he added aloud, "they lived happily ever afterwards, were much looked up to in all the countryside, and had a numerous family. That is how all the romances end. Now, mamma," he went on, as he turned to Mme. Vauquer and put his arm round her waist, "put on your bonnet, your best flowered silk, and the countess' scarf, while I go out to call a cab—all my ownself."

And he started out, singing as he went—

*"Oh! sun! divine sun!  
Ripening the pumpkins every one."*

"My goodness! Well, I'm sure! Mme. Couture, I could live happily in a garret with a man like that! There now," she added, looking round for the old vermicelli-maker, "there is that Father Goriot half-seas over. *He* never thought of taking me anywhere, the old skinflint. But he will measure

his length somewhere. My word! it is disgraceful to lose his senses like that, at his age! You will be telling me that he couldn't lose what he hadn't got—Sylvie! just take him up to his room!”

Sylvie took him by the arm, supported him upstairs, and flung him, just as he was, like a package, across the bed.

“Poor young fellow!” said Mme. Couture, putting back Eugène's hair that had fallen over his eyes; “he is like a young girl, he does not know what dissipation is?”

“Well, I can tell you this, I know,” said Mme. Vauquer, “I have taken lodgers these thirty years, and a good many have passed through my hands, as the saying is, but I have never seen a nicer nor a more aristocratic-looking young man than M. Eugène. How handsome he looks sleeping! Just let his head rest on your shoulder, Mme. Couture. Pshaw! he falls over towards Mlle. Victorine. There's a special providence for young things. A little more, and he would have broken his head against the knob of the chair. They'd make a pretty pair, those two would!”

“Hush! my good neighbor,” cried Mme. Couture, “you are saying such things——”

“Pooh!” put in Mme. Vauquer, “he does not hear. Here, Sylvie! come and help me to dress. I shall put on my best stays.”

“What! your best stays just after dinner, madame?” said Sylvie. “No, you can get some one else to lace you. I am not going to be your murderer. It's a rash thing to do, and might cost you your life.”

“I don't care, I must do honor to M. Vautrin.”

“Are you so fond of your heirs as all that?”

“Come, Sylvie, don't argue,” said the widow, as she left the room.

“At her age, too!” said the cook to Victorine, pointing to her mistress as she spoke.

Mme. Couture and her ward were left in the dining-room,

and Eugène slept on on Victorine's shoulder. The sound of Christophe's snoring echoed through the silent house; Eugène's quiet breathing seemed all the quieter by force of contrast, he was sleeping as peacefully as a child. Victorine was very happy; she was free to perform one of those acts of charity which form an innocent outlet for all the overflowing sentiments of a woman's nature; he was so close to her that she could feel the throbbing of his heart; there was a look of almost maternal protection and a conscious pride in Victorine's face. Among the countless thoughts that crowded up in her young innocent heart, there was a wild flutter of joy at this close contact.

"Poor, dear child!" said Mme. Couture, squeezing her hand.

The old lady looked at the girl. Victorine's innocent, pathetic face, so radiant with the new happiness that had befallen her, called to mind some naïve work of mediæval art, when the painter neglected the accessories, reserving all the magic of his brush for the quiet, austere outlines and ivory tints of the face, which seems to have caught something of the golden glory of heaven.

"After all, he only took two glasses, mamma," said Victorine, as she lovingly passed her fingers through Eugène's hair.

"Indeed, if he had been a dissipated young man, child, he would have carried his wine like the rest of them. His drowsiness does him credit."

There was a sound of wheels outside in the street.

"There is M. Vautrin, mamma," said the girl. "Just take M. Eugène. I would rather not have that man see me like this; there are some ways of looking at you that seem to sully your soul and make you feel as though you had nothing on."

"Oh, no, you are wrong!" said Mme. Couture. "M. Vautrin is a worthy man; he reminds me a little of my late

husband, poor dear M. Couture, rough but kind-hearted; his bark is worse than his bite."

Vautrin came in while she was speaking; he did not make a sound, but looked for a while at the picture of the two young faces—the lamplight falling full upon them seemed to caress them.

"Well," he remarked, folding his arms, "here is a picture! It would have suggested some pleasing pages to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (good soul), who wrote 'Paul et Virginie.' Youth is very charming, Mme. Couture! Sleep on, poor boy," he added, looking at Eugène, "luck sometimes comes while we are sleeping. There is something touching and attractive to me about this young man, madame," he continued; "I know that his nature is in harmony with his face. Just look, the head of a cherub on an angel's shoulder! He deserves to be loved. If I were a woman I would die (no—not such a fool), I would live for him." He bent lower and spoke in the widow's ear. "When I see those two together, madame, I cannot help thinking that Providence meant them for each other; He works by secret ways, and tries the reins and the heart," he said in a loud voice. "And when I see you, my children, thus united by a like purity and by all human affections, I say to myself that it is quite impossible that the future should separate you. God is just." He turned to Victorine. "It seems to me," he said, "that I have seen the line of success in your hand. Let me look at it, Mlle. Victorine; I am well up in palmistry, and I have told fortunes many a time. Come, now, don't be frightened. Ah! what do I see? Upon my word, you will be one of the richest heiresses in Paris before very long. You will heap riches on the man who loves you. Your father will want you to go and live with him. You will marry a young and handsome man with a title, and he will idolize you."

The heavy footsteps of the coquettish widow, who was coming down the stairs, interrupted Vautrin's fortune-telling.

“Here is Mamma Vauquer, fair as a starr-r-r, dressed within an inch of her life. Aren't we a trifle pinched for room?” he inquired, with his arm round the lady; “we are screwed up very tightly about the bust, mamma! If we are much agitated, there may be an explosion; but I will pick up the fragments with all the care of an antiquary.”

“There is a man who can talk the language of French gallantry!” said the widow, bending to speak in Mme. Couture's ear.

“Good-by, little ones!” said Vautrin, turning to Eugène and Victorine. “Bless you both!” and he laid a hand on either head. “Take my word for it, young lady, an honest man's prayers are worth something; they should bring you happiness, for God hears them.”

“Good-by, dear,” said Madame Vauquer to her lodger. “Do you think that M. Vautrin means to run away with me?” she added, lowering her voice.

“Lack-a-day!” said the widow.

“Oh! mamma dear, suppose it should really happen as that kind M. Vautrin said!” said Victorine with a sigh, as she looked at her hands. The two women were alone together.

“Why, it wouldn't take much to bring it to pass,” said the elder lady; “just a fall from his horse, and your monster of a brother——”

“Oh! mamma.”

“Good Lord! Well, perhaps it is a sin to wish bad luck to an enemy,” the widow remarked. “I will do penance for it. Still, I would strew flowers on his grave with the greatest pleasure, and that is the truth. Black-hearted, that he is! The coward couldn't speak up for his own mother, and cheats you out of your share by deceit and trickery. My cousin had a pretty fortune of her own, but, unluckily for you, nothing was said in the marriage contract about anything that she might come in for.”

“It would be very hard if my good-fortune is to cost some

one else his life," said Victorine. "If I cannot be happy unless my brother is to be taken out of the world, I would rather stay here all my life."

"*Mon Dieu!* it is just as that good M. Vautrin says, and he is full of piety, you see," Mme. Couture remarked. "I am very glad to find that he is not an unbeliever like the rest of them that talk of the Almighty with less respect than they do of the devil. Well, as he was saying, who can know the ways by which it may please Providence to lead us?"

With Sylvie's help the two women at last succeeded in getting Eugène up to his room; they laid him on the bed, and the cook unfastened his clothes to make him more comfortable. Before they left the room, Victorine snatched an opportunity when her guardian's back was turned, and pressed a kiss on Eugène's forehead, feeling all the joy that this stolen pleasure could give her. Then she looked round the room, and gathering up, as it were, into one single thought, all the untold bliss of that day, she made a picture of her memories, and dwelt upon it until she slept, the happiest creature in Paris.

That evening's merrymaking, in the course of which Vautrin had given the drugged wine to Eugène and Father Goriot, was his own ruin. Bianchon, flustered with wine, forgot to open the subject of *Trompe-la-Mort* with Mlle. Michonneau. The mere mention of the name would have set Vautrin on his guard; for Vautrin, or, to give him his real name, Jacques Collin, was in fact the notorious escaped convict.

But it was the joke about the Venus of Père-Lachaise that finally decided his fate. Mlle. Michonneau had very nearly made up her mind to warn the convict and to throw herself on his generosity, with the idea of making a better bargain for herself by helping him to escape that night; but as it was, she went out escorted by Poiret in search of the famous chief of detectives in the Petite Rue Saint-Anne, still thinking

that it was the district superintendent—one Gondureau—with whom she had to do. The head of the department received his visitors courteously. There was a little talk, and the details were definitely arranged. Mlle. Michonneau asked for the draught that she was to administer in order to set about her investigation. But the great man's evident satisfaction set Mlle. Michonneau thinking; and she began to see that this business involved something more than the mere capture of a runaway convict. She racked her brains while he looked in a drawer in his desk for the little phial, and it dawned upon her that in consequence of the treacherous revelations made by the prisoners the police were hoping to lay their hands on a considerable sum of money. But on hinting her suspicions to the old fox of the Petite Rue Saint-Anne, that officer began to smile, and tried to put her off the scent.

“A delusion,” he said. “Collin's *sorbonne* is the most dangerous that has yet been found among the dangerous classes. That is all, and the rascals are quite aware of it. They rally round him; he is the backbone of the federation, its Bonaparte, in short; he is very popular with them all. The rogue will never leave his *chump* in the Place de Grève.”

As Mlle. Michonneau seemed mystified, Gondureau explained the two slang words for her benefit. *Sorbonne* and *chump* are two forcible expressions borrowed from thieves' Latin, thieves, of all people, being compelled to consider the human head in its two aspects. A *sorbonne* is the head of a living man, his faculty of thinking—his council; a *chump* is a contemptuous epithet that implies how little a human head is worth after the axe has done its work.

“Collin is playing us off,” he continued. “When we come across a man like a bar of steel tempered in the English fashion, there is always one resource left—we can kill him if he takes it into his head to make the least resistance. We are reckoning on several methods of killing Collin to-morrow morning. It saves a trial, and society is rid of him without

all the expense of guarding and feeding him. What with getting up the case, summoning witnesses, paying their expenses, and carrying out the sentence, it costs a lot to go through all the proper formalities before you can get quit of one of these good-for-nothings, over and above the three thousand francs that you are going to have. There is a saving in time as well. One good thrust of the bayonet into Trompe-la-Mort's paunch will prevent scores of crimes, and save fifty scoundrels from following his example; they will be very careful to keep themselves out of the police courts. That is doing the work of the police thoroughly, and true philanthropists will tell you that it is better to prevent crime than to punish it."

"And you do a service to our country," said Poiret.

"Really, you are talking in a very sensible manner to-night, that you are," said the head of the department. "Yes, of course, we are serving our country, and we are very hardly used too. We do society very great services that are not recognized. In fact, a superior man must rise above vulgar prejudices, and a Christian must resign himself to the mishaps that doing right entails, when right is done in an out-of-the-way style. Paris is Paris, you see! That is the explanation of my life. I have the honor to wish you a good-evening, mademoiselle. I shall bring my men to the Jardin du Roi in the morning. Send Christophe to the Rue du Buffon, tell him to ask for M. Gondureau in the house where you saw me before. Your servant, sir. If you should ever have anything stolen from you, come to me, and I will do my best to get it back for you."

"Well, now," Poiret remarked to Mlle. Michonneau, "there are idiots who are scared out of their wits by the word police. That was a very pleasant-spoken gentleman, and what he wants you to do is as easy as saying 'Good-day.'"

The next day was destined to be one of the most extraor-

dinary in the annals of the Maison Vauquer. Hitherto the most startling occurrence in its tranquil existence had been the portentous, meteor-like apparition of the sham Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil. But the catastrophes of this great day were to cast all previous events into the shade, and supply an inexhaustible topic of conversation for Mme. Vauquer and her boarders so long as she lived.

In the first place, Goriot and Eugène de Rastignac both slept until close upon eleven o'clock. Mme. Vauquer, who came home about midnight from the Gaîté lay abed till half-past ten. Christophe, after a prolonged slumber (he had finished Vautrin's first bottle of wine), was behindhand with his work, but Poiret and Mlle. Michonneau uttered no complaint, though breakfast was delayed. As for Victorine and Mme. Couture, they also lay late. Vautrin went out before eight o'clock, and only came back just as breakfast was ready. Nobody protested, therefore, when Sylvie and Christophe went up at a quarter-past eleven, knocked at all the doors, and announced that breakfast was waiting. While Sylvie and the man were upstairs, Mlle. Michonneau, who came down first, poured the contents of the phial into the silver cup belonging to Vautrin—it was standing with the others in the bain-marie that kept the cream hot for the morning coffee. The spinster had reckoned on this custom of the house to do her stroke of business. The seven lodgers were at last collected together, not without some difficulty. Just as Eugène came downstairs, stretching himself and yawning, a commissionaire handed him a letter from Mme. de Nucingen. It ran thus:

“I feel neither false vanity nor anger where you are concerned, my friend. Till two o'clock this morning I waited for you. Oh, that waiting for one whom you love! No one that had passed through that torture could inflict it on another. I know now that you could have never loved before. What can have happened? Anxiety has taken hold of me. I

would have come myself to find out what had happened, if I had not feared to betray the secrets of my heart? How can I walk or drive out at this time of day? Would it not be ruin? I have felt to the full how wretched it is to be a woman. Send a word to reassure me, and explain how it is that you have not come after what my father told you. I shall be angry, but I will forgive you. One word, for pity's sake. You will come to me very soon, will you not? If you are busy, a word will be enough. Say, 'I will hasten to you,' or else 'I am ill.' But if you were ill my father would have come immediately to tell me so. What can have happened?——"

"Yes, indeed, what has happened?" exclaimed Eugène, and, hurrying down to the dining-room, he crumpled up the letter without reading any more. "What time is it?"

"Half-past eleven," said Vautrin, dropping a lump of sugar into his coffee.

The escaped convict cast a glance at Eugène, a cold and fascinating glance; men gifted with this magnetic power can quell furious lunatics in a madhouse by such a glance, it is said. Eugène shook in every limb. There was the sound of wheels in the street, and in another moment a man with a scared face rushed into the room. It was one of M. Taillefer's servants; Mme. Couture recognized the livery at once.

"Mademoiselle," he cried, "your father is asking for you—something terrible has happened! M. Frédéric has had a sword thrust in the forehead in a duel, and the doctors have given him up. You will scarcely be in time to say good-by to him! he is unconscious."

"Poor young fellow!" exclaimed Vautrin. "How can people brawl when they have a certain income of thirty thousand livres? Young people have bad manners, and that is a fact."

"Sir!" cried Eugène.

“Well, what then, you big baby!” said Vautrin, swallowing down his coffee imperturbably, an operation which Mlle. Michonneau watched with such close attention that she had no emotion to spare for the dreadful news that had struck the others dumb with amazement. “Are there not duels every morning in Paris?” added Vautrin, with the utmost calmness and deliberation.

“I will go with you, Victorine,” said Mme. Couture, and the two women hurried away at once without either hats or shawls. But before she went, Victorine, with her eyes full of tears, gave Eugène a glance that said—“How little I thought that our happiness should cost me tears!”

“Dear me, you are a prophet, M. Vautrin,” said Mme. Vauquer.

“I am all sorts of things,” said Vautrin.

“Queer, isn’t it?” said Mme. Vauquer, stringing together a succession of commonplaces suited to the occasion. “Death takes us off without asking us about it. The young often go before the old. It is a lucky thing for us women that we are not liable to fight duels, but we have other complaints that men don’t suffer from. We bear children, and it takes a long time to get over it. What a windfall for Victorine! Her father will have to acknowledge her now!”

“There!” said Vautrin, looking at Eugène, “yesterday she had not a penny; this morning she has several millions to her fortune.”

“I say, M. Eugène!” cried Mme. Vauquer, “you have landed on your feet!”

At this exclamation, Father Goriot looked at the student, and saw the crumpled letter still in his hand.

“You have not read it through! What does this mean? Are you going to be like the rest of them?” he asked.

“Madame, I shall never marry Mlle. Victorine,” said Eugène, turning to Mme. Vauquer with an expression of terror and loathing that surprised the onlookers at this scene.

Father Goriot caught the student's hand and grasped it warmly. He could have kissed it.

"Oh, ho!" said Vautrin, "the Italians have a good proverb—*Col tempo*."

"Is there any answer?" said Mme. de Nucingen's messenger, addressing Eugène.

"Say that I will come directly."

The man went. Eugène was in a state of such violent excitement that he could not be prudent.

"What is to be done?" he exclaimed aloud. "There are no proofs!"

Vautrin began to smile. Though the drug he had taken was doing its work, the convict was so vigorous that he rose to his feet, gave Rastignac a look, and said in hollow tones, "Luck comes to us while we sleep, young man," and fell stiff and stark, as if he were struck dead.

"So there is a Divine justice!" said Eugène.

"Well, if ever! What has come to that poor dear M. Vautrin?"

"A stroke!" cried Mlle. Michonneau.

"Here, Sylvie! girl, run for the doctor," called the widow. "Oh, M. Rastignac, just go for M. Bianchon, and be as quick as you can; Sylvie might not be in time to catch our doctor, M. Grimpel."

Rastignac was glad of an excuse to leave that den of horrors, his departure for the doctor was nothing less than a hurried flight.

"Here, Christophe, go round to the chemist's and ask for something that's good for the apoplexy."

Christophe likewise went.

"Father Goriot, just help us to get him upstairs."

Vautrin was taken up among them, carried carefully up the narrow staircase, and laid upon his bed.

"I can do no good here, so I shall go to see my daughter," said M. Goriot.

“Selfish old thing!” cried Mme. Vauquer. “Yes, go; I wish you may die like a dog.”

“Just go and see if you can find some ether,” said Mlle. Michonneau to Mme. Vauquer; the former, with some help from Poiret, had unfastened the sick man’s clothes.

Mme. Vauquer went down to her room, and left Mlle. Michonneau mistress of the situation.

“Now! just pull down his shirt and turn him over, quick! You might be of some use in sparing my modesty,” she said to Poiret, “instead of standing there like a stock.”

Vautrin was turned over; Mlle. Michonneau gave his shoulder a sharp slap, and the two portentous letters appeared, white against the red.

“There, you have earned your three thousand francs very easily,” exclaimed Poiret, supporting Vautrin while Mlle. Michonneau slipped on the shirt again. “Oh! how heavy he is,” he added, as he laid the convict down.

“Hush! Suppose there is a strong box here!” said the old maid briskly; her glances seemed to pierce the walls, she scrutinized every article of the furniture with greedy eyes. “Could we find some excuse for opening that desk?”

“It mightn’t be quite right,” responded Poiret to this.

“Where is the harm? It is money stolen from all sorts of people, so it doesn’t belong to any one now. But we haven’t time, there is the Vauquer.”

“Here is the ether,” said that lady. “I must say that this is an eventful day. Lord! that man can’t have had a stroke; he is as white as curds.”

“White as curds?” echoed Poiret.

“And his pulse is steady,” said the widow, laying her hand on his breast.

“Steady?” said the astonished Poiret.

“He is all right.”

“Do you think so?” asked Poiret.

“Lord! Yes, he looks as if he were sleeping. Sylvie has

gone for a doctor. I say, Mlle. Michonneau, he is sniffing the ether. Pooh! it is only a spasm. His pulse is good. He is as strong as a Turk. Just look, mademoiselle, what a fur tippet he has on his chest; that is the sort of man to live till he is a hundred. His wig holds on tightly, however. Dear me! it is glued on, and his own hair is red; that is why he wears a wig. They always say that red-haired people are either the worst or the best. Is he one of the good ones, I wonder!"

"Good to hang," said Poiret.

"Round a pretty woman's neck, you mean," said Mlle. Michonneau, hastily. "Just go away, M. Poiret. It is a woman's duty to nurse you men when you are ill. Besides, for all the good you are doing, you may as well take yourself off," she added. "Mme. Vauquer and I will take great care of dear M. Vautrin."

Poiret went out on tiptoe without a murmur, like a dog kicked out of the room by his master.

Rastignac had gone out for the sake of physical exertion; he wanted to breathe the air, he felt stifled. Yesterday evening he had meant to prevent the murder arranged for half-past eight that morning. What had happened? What ought he to do now? He trembled to think that he himself might be implicated. Vautrin's coolness still further dismayed him.

"Yet, how if Vautrin should die without saying a word?" Rastignac asked himself.

He hurried along the alleys of the Luxembourg Gardens as if the hounds of justice were after him, and he already heard the baying of the pack.

"Well," shouted Bianchon, "have you seen the *Pilote*?"

The *Pilote* was a Radical sheet, edited by M. Tissot. It came out several hours later than the morning papers, and was meant for the benefit of country subscribers; for it brought the morning's news into provincial districts twenty-four hours sooner than the ordinary local journals.

“There is a wonderful history in it,” said the house student of the Hôpital Cochin. “Young Taillefer called out Count Franchessini, of the Old Guard, and the Count put a couple of inches of steel into his forehead. And here is little Victorine one of the richest heiresses in Paris! If we had known that, eh? What a game of chance death is! They said Victorine was sweet on you; was there any truth in it?”

“Shut up, Bianchon; I shall never marry her. I am in love with a charming woman, and she is in love with me, so——”

“You said that as if you were screwing yourself up to be faithful to her. I should like to see the woman worth the sacrifice of Master Taillefer’s money!”

“Are all the devils of hell at my heels,” cried Rastignac.

“What is the matter with you? Are you mad? Give us your hand,” said Bianchon, “and let me feel your pulse. You are feverish.”

“Just go to Mother Vauquer’s,” said Rastignac; “that scoundrel Vautrin has dropped down like one dead.”

“Aha!” said Bianchon, leaving Rastignac to his reflections, “you confirm my suspicions, and now I mean to make sure for myself.”

The law-student’s long walk was a memorable one for him. He made in some way a survey of his conscience. After a close scrutiny, after hesitation and self-examination, his honor at any rate came out scathless from this sharp and terrible ordeal, like a bar of iron tested in the English fashion. He remembered Father Goriot’s confidences of the evening before; he recollected the rooms taken for him in the Rue d’Artois, so that he might be near Delphine; and then he thought of his letter, and read it again and kissed it.

“Such a love is my anchor of safety,” he said to himself. “How the old man’s heart must have been wrung! He says nothing about all that he has been through; but who could not guess? Well, then, I will be like a son to

him ; his life shall be made happy. If she cares for me, she will often come to spend the day with him. That grand Comtesse de Restaud is a heartless thing ; she would turn her father into her hall porter. Dear Delphine ! she is kinder to the old man ; she is worthy to be loved. Ah ! this evening I shall be very happy ! ”

He took out his watch and admired it.

“ I have had nothing but success ! If two people mean to love each other for ever, they may help each other, and I can take this. Besides, I shall succeed, and I will repay her a hundredfold. There is nothing criminal in this *liaison* ; nothing that could cause the most austere moralist to frown. How many respectable people contract similar unions ! We deceive nobody ; it is deception that makes a position humiliating. If you lie, you lower yourself at once. She and her husband have lived apart for a long while. Besides, how if I called upon that Alsatian to resign a wife whom he cannot make happy ? ”

Rastignac’s battle with himself went on for a long while ; and though the scruples of youth inevitably gained the day, an irresistible curiosity led him, about half-past four, to return to the Maison Vauquer through the gathering dusk.

Bianchon had given Vautrin an emetic, reserving the contents of the stomach for chemical analysis at the hospital. Mlle. Michonneau’s officious alacrity had still further strengthened his suspicions of her. Vautrin, moreover, had recovered so quickly that it was impossible not to suspect some plot against the leader of all frolics at the lodging-house. Vautrin was standing in front of the stove in the dining-room when Rastignac came in. All the lodgers were assembled sooner than usual by the news of young Taillefer’s duel. They were anxious to hear any detail about the affair, and to talk over the probable change in Victorine’s prospects. Father Goriot alone was absent, but the rest were chatting. No sooner did Eugène come into the room, than his eyes met the inscrutable

gaze of Vautrin. It was the same look that had read his thoughts before—the look that had such power to waken evil thoughts in his heart. He shuddered.

“Well, dear boy,” said the escaped convict, “I am likely to cheat death for a good while yet. According to these ladies, I have had a stroke that would have felled an ox, and come off with flying colors.”

“A bull you might say,” cried the widow.

“You really might be sorry to see me still alive,” said Vautrin in Rastignac’s ear, thinking that he guessed the student’s thoughts. “You must be mighty sure of yourself.”

“Mlle. Michonneau was talking the day before yesterday about a gentleman nicknamed *Trompe-la-Mort*,” said Bianchon; “and, upon my word, that name would do very well for you.”

Vautrin seemed thunderstruck. He turned pale, and staggered back. He turned his magnetic glance, like a ray of vivid light, on Mlle. Michonneau; the old maid shrank and trembled under the influence of that strong will, and collapsed into a chair. The mask of good-nature had dropped from the convict’s face; from the unmistakable ferocity of that sinister look, Poiret felt that the old maid was in danger, and hastily stepped between them. None of the lodgers understood this scene in the least, they looked on in mute amazement. There was a pause. Just then there was a sound of tramping feet outside; there were soldiers there, it seemed, for there was a ring of several rifles on the pavement of the street. Collin was mechanically looking round the walls for a way of escape, when four men entered by way of the sitting-room.

“In the name of the king and the law!” said an officer, but the words were almost lost in a murmur of astonishment.

Silence fell on the room. The lodgers made way for three of the men, who had each a hand on a cocked pistol in a side pocket. Two policemen, who followed the detectives, kept

the entrance to the sitting-room, and two more appeared in the doorway that gave access to the staircase. A sound of footsteps came from the garden, and again the rifles of several soldiers rang on the cobble-stones under the window. All chance of salvation by flight was cut off for Trompe-la-Mort, to whom all eyes instinctively turned. The chief walked straight up to him, and commenced operations by giving him a sharp blow on the head, so that the wig fell off, and Collin's face was revealed in all its ugliness. There was a terrible suggestion of strength mingled with cunning in the short, brick-red crop of hair, the whole head was in harmony with his powerful frame, and at that moment the fires of hell seemed to gleam from his eyes. In that flash the real Vautrin shone forth, revealed at once before them all; they understood his past, his present, and future, his pitiless doctrines, his actions, the religion of his own good pleasure, the majesty with which his cynicism and contempt for mankind invested him, the physical strength of an organization proof against all trials. The blood flew to his face, and his eyes glared like the eyes of a wildcat. He started back with savage energy and a fierce growl which drew exclamations of alarm from the lodgers. At that leonine start the police caught at their pistols under cover of the general clamor. Collin saw the gleaming muzzles of the weapons, saw his danger, and instantly gave proof of a power of the highest order. There was something horrible and majestic in the spectacle of the sudden transformation in his face; he could only be compared to a caldron full of the steam that can send mountains flying, a terrific force dispelled in a moment by a drop of cold water. The drop of water that cooled his wrathful fury was a reflection that flashed across his brain like lightning. He began to smile, and looked down at his wig.

“You are not in the politest of humors to-day,” he remarked to the chief, and he held out his hands to the policemen with a jerk of his head.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “put on the bracelets or the handcuffs. I call on those present to witness that I make no resistance.”

A murmur of admiration ran through the room at the sudden outpouring like fire and lava flood from this human volcano, and its equally sudden cessation.

“There’s a sell for you, master crusher,” the convict added, looking at the famous director of police.

“Come, strip!” said he of the Petite Rue Saint-Anne, contemptuously.

“Why?” asked Collin. “There are ladies present; I deny nothing, and surrender.”

He paused, and looked round the room like an orator who is about to overwhelm his audience.

“Take this down, Daddy Lachapelle,” he went on, addressing a little, white-haired old man who had seated himself at the end of the table; and, after drawing a printed form from a portfolio, was proceeding to draw up a document. “I acknowledge myself to be Jacques Collin, otherwise known as Trompe-la-Mort, condemned to twenty years’ penal servitude, and I have just proved that I have come fairly by my nickname. If I had as much as raised my hand,” he went on, addressing the other lodgers, “those three sneaking wretches yonder would have drawn claret on Mamma Vauquer’s domestic hearth. The rogues have laid their heads together to set a trap for me.”

Mme. Vauquer felt sick and faint at these words.

“Good Lord!” she cried, “this does give one a turn; and me at the Gaîté with him only last night!” she said to Sylvie.

“Summon your philosophy, mamma,” Collin resumed. “Is it a misfortune to have sat in my box at the Gaîté yesterday evening? After all, are you better than we are? The brand upon our shoulders is less shameful than the brand set on your hearts, you flabby members of a society rotten to the

core. Not the best man among you could stand up to me." His eyes rested upon Rastignac, to whom he spoke with a pleasant smile that seemed strangely at variance with the savage expression in his eyes. "Our little bargain still holds good, dear boy; you can accept any time you like! Do you understand?" And he sang—

*"A charming girl is my Fanchette  
In her simplicity."*

"Don't you trouble yourself," he went on; "I can get in my money. They are too much afraid of me to swindle me."

The convicts' prison, its language and customs, its sudden sharp transitions from the humorous to the horrible, its appalling grandeur, its triviality and its dark depths, were all revealed in turn by the speaker's discourse; he seemed to be no longer a man, but the type and mouthpiece of a degenerate race, a brutal, supple, clear-headed race of savages. In one moment Collin became the poet of an inferno, wherein all thoughts and passions that move human nature (save repentance) find a place. He looked about him like a fallen archangel who is for war to the end. Rastignac lowered his eyes, and acknowledged this kinship claimed by crime as an expiation of his own evil thoughts.

"Who betrayed me?" said Collin, and his terrible eyes traveled round the room. Suddenly they rested on Mlle. Michonneau.

"It was you, old cat!" he said. "That sham stroke of apoplexy was your doing, lynx-eyes!— Two words from me, and your throat would be cut in less than a week, but I forgive you, I am a Christian. You did not sell me either. But who did?— Aha! you may rummage upstairs," he shouted, hearing the police officers opening his cupboards and taking possession of his effects. "The nest is empty, the birds flew away yesterday, and you will be none the wiser.

My ledgers are here," he said, tapping his forehead. "Now I know who sold me! It could only be that blackguard Fil-de-Soie. That is who it was, old catchpoll, eh?" he said, turning to the chief. "It was timed so neatly to get the bank-notes up above there. There is nothing left for you—spies! As for Fil-de-Soie, he will be under the daisies in less than a fortnight, even if you were to tell off the whole force to protect him. How much did you give the Michonneau?" he asked of the police officers. "A thousand crowns? Oh you Ninon in decay, Pompadour in tatters, Venus of the graveyard, I was worth more than that! If you had given me warning, you should have had six thousand francs. Ah! you had no suspicion of that, old trafficker in flesh and blood, or I should have had the preference. Yes, I would have given six thousand francs to save myself an inconvenient journey and some loss of money," he said, as they fastened the handcuffs on his wrists. "These folks will amuse themselves by dragging out this business till the end of time to keep me idle! If they were to send me straight to jail, I should soon be back at my old tricks in spite of the duffers at the Quai des Orfèvres. Down yonder they would all turn themselves inside out to help their general—their good Trompe-la-Mort—to get clear away. Is there a single one among you that can say as I can, that he has ten thousand brothers ready to do anything for him?" he asked proudly. "There is some good there," he said, tapping his heart; "I have never betrayed any one! Look you here, you slut," he said to the old maid, "they are all afraid of me, do you see? but the sight of you turns them sick. Rake in your gains."

He was silent for a moment, and looked round at the lodgers' faces.

"What dolts you are, all of you! Have you never seen a convict before? A convict of Collin's stamp, whom you see before you, is a man less weak-kneed than others; he lifts up his voice against the colossal fraud of the social contract,

as Jean Jacques did, whose pupil he is proud to declare himself. In short, I stand here single-handed against a government and a whole subsidized machinery of tribunals and police, and I am a match for them all."

"Ye gods!" cried the painter, "what a magnificent sketch one might make of him!"

"Look here, you gentlemen-in-waiting to his highness the gibbet, master of ceremonies to the widow" (a nickname full of sombre poetry, given by prisoners to the guillotine), "be a good-fellow, and tell me if it really was Fil-de-Soie who sold me. I don't want him to suffer for some one else, that would not be fair."

But before the chief had time to answer, the rest of the party returned from making their investigations upstairs. Everything had been opened and inventoried. A few words passed between them and the chief, and the official preliminaries were complete.

"Gentlemen," said Collin, addressing the lodgers, "they will take me away directly. You have all made my stay among you very agreeable, and I shall look back upon it with gratitude. Receive my adieux, and permit me to send you figs from Provence."

He advanced a step or two, and then turned to look once more at Rastignac.

"Good-by, Eugène," he said, in a sad and gentle tone, a strange transition from his previous rough and stern manner. "If you should be hard up, I have left you a devoted friend," and, in spite of his shackles, he managed to assume a posture of defense, called, "One! two!" like a fencing-master, and lunged. "If anything goes wrong, apply in that quarter. Man and money, all at your service."

The speaker's strange manner was sufficiently burlesque, so that no one but Rastignac knew that there was a serious meaning underlying the pantomime.

As soon as the police, soldiers, and detectives had left the

house, Sylvie, who was rubbing her mistress' temples with vinegar, looked round at the bewildered lodgers.

"Well," said she, "he was a man, he was, for all that."

Her words broke the spell. Every one had been too much excited, too much moved by very various feelings to speak. But now the lodgers began to look at each other, and then all eyes were turned at once on Mlle. Michonneau, a thin, shriveled, dead-alive, mummy-like figure crouching by the stove; her eyes were downcast, as if she feared that the green eyeshade could not shut out the expression of those faces from her. This figure and the feeling of repulsion she had so long excited were explained all at once. A smothered murmur filled the room; it was so unanimous that it seemed as if the same feeling of loathing had pitched all the voices in one key. Mlle. Michonneau heard it, and did not stir. It was Bianchon who was the first to move; he bent over his neighbor, and said in a low voice, "If that creature is going to stop here, and have dinner with us, I shall clear out."

In the twinkling of an eye it was clear that every one in the room, save Poiret, was of the medical student's opinion, so that the latter, strong in the support of the majority, went up to that elderly person.

"You are more intimate with Mlle. Michonneau than the rest of us," he said; "speak to her, make her understand that she must go, and go at once," showing by his manner a most determined spirit.

"At once!" echoed Poiret in amazement.

Then he went across to the crouching figure, and spoke a few words in her ear.

"I have paid beforehand for the quarter; I have as much right to be here as any one else," she said, with a viperous look at the boarders.

"Never mind that! we will club together and pay you the money back," said Rastignac.

"Monsieur is taking Collin's part," she said, with a ques-

tioning, malignant glance at the law student ; “ it is not difficult to guess why.”

Eugène started forward at the words, as if he meant to spring upon her and wring her neck. That glance, and the depths of treachery that it revealed, had been a hideous enlightenment.

“ Let her alone ! ” cried the boarders.

Rastignac folded his arms, and was silent.

“ Let us have no more of Mlle. Judas,” said the painter, turning to Mme. Vauquer. “ If you don’t show the Michonneau the door, madame, we shall all leave your shop, and wherever we go we shall say that there are only convicts and spies left there. If you do the other thing, we will hold our tongues about the business ; for when all is said and done, it might happen in the best society until they brand them on the forehead, when they send them to the hulks. They ought not to let convicts go about Paris disguised like decent citizens, so as to carry on their antics like a set of rascally humbugs, which they are.”

At this Mme. Vauquer recovered miraculously. She sat up and folded her arms ; her eyes were wide open now, and there was no sign of tears in them.

“ Why, do you really mean to be the ruin of my establishment, my dear sir ? There is M. Vautrin—— Goodness,” she cried, interrupting herself, “ I can’t help calling him by the name he passed himself off by for an honest man ! There is one room to let already, and you want me to turn out two more lodgers in the middle of the season, when no one is moving——”

“ Gentlemen, let us take our hats and go and dine at Flicoteaux’s in the Place Sorbonne,” cried Bianchon.

Mme. Vauquer glanced round, and saw in a moment on which side her interest lay. She waddled across to Mlle. Michonneau.

“ Come, now,” she said ; “ you would not be the ruin of

my establishment, would you, eh? There's a dear, kind soul. You see what a pass these gentlemen have brought me to; just go up to your room for this evening."

"Never a bit of it!" cried the boarders. "She must go, and go this minute!"

"But the poor lady has had no dinner," said Poiret, with piteous entreaty.

"She can go and dine where she likes," shouted several voices.

"Turn her out, the spy!"

"Turn them both out! Spies!"

"Gentlemen," cried Poiret, his head swelling with the courage that love gives to the ovine male, "respect the weaker sex."

"Spies are of no sex!" said the painter.

"A precious sexorama!"

"Turn her into the streetorama!"

"Gentlemen, this is not manners! If you turn people out of the house, it ought not to be done so unceremoniously and with no notice at all. We have paid our money, and we are not going," said Poiret, putting on his cap, and taking a chair beside Mlle. Michonneau, with whom Mme. Vauquer was remonstrating.

"Naughty boy!" said the painter, with a comical look; "run away, naughty little boy!"

"Look here," said Bianchon; "if you do not go, all the rest of us will," and the boarders, to a man, made for the sitting-room door.

"Oh! mademoiselle, what is to be done?" cried Mme. Vauquer. "I am a ruined woman. You can't stay here; they will go farther, do something violent."

Mlle. Michonneau rose to her feet.

"She is going! She is not going! She is going! No, she isn't."

These alternate exclamations, and a suggestion of hostile

intentions, borne out by the behavior of the insurgents, compelled Mlle. Michonneau to take her departure. She made some stipulations, speaking in a low voice in her hostess' ear, and then—"I shall go to Mme. Buneaud's," she said, with a threatening look.

"Go where you please, mademoiselle," said Mme. Vauquer, who regarded this choice of an opposition establishment as an atrocious insult. "Go and lodge with the Buneaud; the wine would give a cat the colic, and the food is cheap and nasty."

The boarders stood aside in two rows to let her pass; not a word was spoken. Poiret looked so wistfully after Mlle. Michonneau, and so artlessly revealed that he was in two minds whether to go or stay, that the boarders, in their joy at being quit of Mlle. Michonneau, burst out laughing at the sight of him.

"Hist!—st!—st! Poiret," shouted the painter. "Hallo! I say, Poiret, hallo!" The employé from the Muséum began to sing—

*"Partant pour la Syrie,  
Le jeune et beau Dunois——"*

"Get along with you; you must be dying to go, *trahit sua quemque voluptas!*" said Bianchon.

"Every one to his taste—free rendering from Virgil," said the tutor.

Mlle. Michonneau made a movement as if to take Poiret's arm, with an appealing glance that he could not resist. The two went out together, the old maid leaning upon him, and there was a burst of applause, followed by peals of laughter.

"Bravo, Poiret!"

"Who would have thought it of old Poiret!"

"Apollo Poiret!"

"Mars Poiret!"

"Intrepid Poiret!"

A messenger came in at that moment with a letter for Mme. Vauquer, who read it through, and collapsed in her chair.

“The house might as well be burnt down at once,” cried she, “if there are to be any more of these thunderbolts! Young Taillefer died at three o’clock this afternoon. It serves me right for wishing well to those ladies at that poor young man’s expense. Mme. Couture and Victorine want me to send their things, because they are going to live with her father. M. Taillefer allows his daughter to keep old Mme. Couture with her as lady companion. Four rooms to let! and five lodgers gone!——”

She sat up, and seemed about to burst into tears.

“Bad luck has come to lodge here, I think,” she cried.

Once more there came a sound of wheels from the street outside.

“What! another windfall for somebody!” was Sylvie’s comment.

But it was Goriot who came in, looking so radiant, so flushed with happiness, that he seemed to have grown young again.

“Goriot in a cab!” cried the boarders; “the world is coming to an end.”

The good soul made straight for Eugène, who was standing rapt in thought in a corner, and laid a hand on the young man’s arm.

“Come,” he said, with gladness in his eyes.

“Then you haven’t heard the news?” said Eugène. “Vautrin was an escaped convict; they have just arrested him; and young Taillefer is dead.”

“Very well, but what business is it of ours?” replied Father Goriot. “I am going to dine with my daughter *in your house*, do you understand? She is expecting you. Come!”

He carried off Rastignac with him by main force, and they departed in as great a hurry as a pair of eloping lovers.

“Now, let us have dinner,” cried the painter, and every one drew his chair to the table.

“Well, I never?” said the portly Sylvie. “Nothing goes right to-day! The haricot mutton has caught! Bah! you will have to eat it, burnt as it is, more’s the pity!”

Mme. Vauquer was so dispirited that she could not say a word as she looked round the table and saw only ten people where eighteen should be; but every one tried to comfort and cheer her. At first the dinner contingent, as was natural, talked about Vautrin and the day’s events; but the conversation wound round to such topics of interest as duels, jails, justice, prison life, and alterations that ought to be made in the laws. They soon wandered miles away from Jacques Collin and Victorine and her brother. There might be only ten of them, but they made noise enough for twenty; indeed, there seemed to be more of them than usual; that was the only difference between yesterday and to-day. Indifference to the fate of others is a matter of course in this selfish world, which, on the morrow of a tragedy, seeks among the events of Paris for a fresh sensation for its daily renewed appetite, and this indifference soon gained the upper hand. Mme. Vauquer herself grew calmer under the soothing influence of hope, and the mouthpiece of hope was the portly Sylvie.

That day had gone by like a dream for Eugène, and the sense of unreality lasted into the evening; so that, in spite of his energetic character and clear-headedness, his ideas were a chaos as he sat beside Goriot in the cab. The old man’s voice was full of unwonted happiness, but Eugène had been shaken by so many emotions that the words sounded in his ears like words spoken in a dream.

“It was finished this morning! All three of us are going to dine there together, together! Do you understand? I have not dined with my Delphine, my little Delphine, these four years, and I shall have her for a whole evening! We have been at your lodging the whole time since morning.

I have been working like a porter in my shirt sleeves, helping to carry in the furniture. Aha! you don't know what pretty ways she has; at table she will look after me, 'Here, papa, just try this, it is nice.' And I shall not be able to eat. Oh, it is a long while since I have been with her in quiet every-day life as we shall have her."

"It really seems as if the world had been turned upside down."

"Upside down?" repeated Father Goriot. "Why, the world has never been so right-side up. I see none but smiling faces in the streets, people who shake hands cordially and embrace each other, people who all look as happy as if they were going to dine with their daughter, and gobble down a nice little dinner that she went with me to order of the chef at the *Café des Anglais*. But, pshaw! with her beside you gall and wormwood would be as sweet as honey."

"I feel as if I were coming back to life again," said Eugène.

"Why, hurry up there!" cried Father Goriot, letting down the window in front. "Get on faster; I will give you five francs if you get to the place I told you of in ten minutes' time."

With this prospect before him the cabman crossed Paris with miraculous celerity.

"How that fellow crawls!" said Father Goriot.

"But where are you taking me?" Eugène asked him.

"To your own house," said Goriot.

The cab stopped in the *Rue d'Artois*. Father Goriot stepped out first and flung ten francs to the man with the recklessness of a widower returning to bachelor ways.

"Come along upstairs," he said to Rastignac. They crossed a courtyard, and climbed up to the third floor of a new and handsome house. Here they stopped before a door; but before Goriot could ring, it was opened by Thérèse, M<sup>me</sup>. de Nucingen's maid. Eugène found himself in a charming

set of chambers ; an ante-room, a little drawing-room, a bedroom, and a study, looking out upon a garden. The furniture and the decoration of the little drawing-room were of the most daintily charming description, the room was full of soft light, and Delphine rose up from a low chair by the fire and stood before him. She set her fire-screen down on the chimney-piece, and spoke with tenderness in every tone of her voice.

“So we had to go in search of you, sir, you who are so slow to understand !”

Thérèse left the room. The student took Delphine in his arms and held her in a tight clasp, his eyes filled with tears of joy. This last contrast between his present surroundings and the scenes he had just witnessed was too much for Rastignac's overwrought nerves, after the day's strain and excitement that had wearied heart and brain ; he was almost overcome by it.

“I felt sure myself that he loved you,” murmured Father Goriot, while Eugène lay back bewildered on the sofa, utterly unable to speak a word or to reason out how and why the magic wand had been waved to bring about this final transformation scene.

“But you must see your rooms,” said Mme. de Nucingen. She took his hand and led him into a room carpeted and furnished like her own ; indeed, down to the smallest details, it was a reproduction in miniature of Delphine's own handsome apartment.

“There is no bed,” said Rastignac.

“No, monsieur,” she answered, reddening, and pressing his hand. Eugène, looking at her, understood, young though he yet was, how deeply modesty is implanted in the heart of a woman who loves.

“You are one of those beings whom we cannot choose but to adore for ever,” he said in her ear. “Yes, the deeper and truer love is, the more mysterious and closely veiled it should

be ; I can dare to say so, since we understand each other so well. No one shall learn our secret."

"Oh ! so I am nobody, I suppose," growled the father.

"You know quite well that 'we' means you."

"Ah ! that is what I wanted. You will not mind me, will you ? I shall go and come like a good fairy who makes himself felt everywhere without being seen, shall I not ? Eh, Delphinette, Ninette, Dedel—was it not a good idea of mine to say to you, 'There are some nice rooms to let in the Rue d'Artois ; let us furnish them for him ?' And she would not hear of it ! Ah ! your happiness has been all my doing. I am the author of your happiness and of your existence. Fathers must always be giving if they would be happy themselves ; always giving—they would not be fathers else."

"Was that how it happened ?" asked Eugène.

"Yes. She would not listen to me. She was afraid that people would talk, as if the rubbish that they say about you were to be compared with happiness ! Why, all women dream of doing what she has done——"

Father Goriot found himself without an audience, for Mme. de Nucingen had led Rastignac into the study ; he heard a kiss given and taken, low though the sound was.

The study was furnished as elegantly as the other rooms, and nothing was wanting there.

"Have we guessed your wishes rightly ?" she asked, as they returned to the drawing-room for dinner.

"Yes," he said, "only too well, alas ! For all this luxury so well carried out, this realization of pleasant dreams, the elegance that satisfies all the romantic fancies of youth, appeals to me so strongly that I cannot but feel that it is my rightful possession, but I cannot accept it from you, and I am too poor as yet to——"

"Ah ! ah ! you say me nay already," she said with arch imperiousness, and a charming little pout of the lips, a woman's way of laughing away scruples.

But Eugène had submitted so lately to that solemn self-questioning, and Vautrin's arrest had so plainly shown him the depths of the pit that lay ready to his feet, that the instincts of generosity and honor had been strengthened in him, and he could not allow himself to be coaxed into abandoning his high-minded determinations. Profound melancholy filled his mind.

“Do you really mean to refuse?” said Mme. de Nucingen. “And do you know what such a refusal means? That you are not sure of yourself, that you do not dare to bind yourself to me. Are you really afraid of betraying my affection? If you love me, if I—love you, why should you shrink back from such a slight obligation? If you but knew what a pleasure it has been to see after all the arrangements of this bachelor establishment, you would not hesitate any longer, you would ask me to forgive you for your hesitation. I had some money that belonged to you, and I have made good use of it, that is all. You mean this for magnanimity, but it is very little of you. You are asking me for far more than this—— Ah!” she cried (as Eugène's passionate glance was turned on her), “and you are making difficulties about the merest trifles. Oh, if you feel no love whatever for me, refuse, by all means. My fate hangs on a word from you. Speak! Father,” she said after a pause, “make him listen to reason. Can he imagine that I am less nice than he is on the point of honor?”

Father Goriot was looking on and listening to this pretty quarrel with a placid smile, as if he had found some balm for all the sorrows of life.

“Child that you are!” she cried again, catching Eugène's hand. “You are just beginning life; you find barriers at the outset that many a man finds insurmountable; a woman's hand opens the way, and you shrink back! Why, you are sure to succeed! You will have a brilliant future. Success is written on that broad forehead of yours, and will you not be able to repay me my loan of to-day? Did not a lady in

olden times arm her knight with sword and helmet and coat of mail, and find him a charger, so that he might fight for her in the tournament? Well, then, Eugène, these things that I offer you are the weapons of this age; every one who means to be something must have such tools as these. A pretty place your garret must be if it is like papa's room! See, dinner is waiting all this time. Do you want to make me unhappy? Why don't you answer?" she said, shaking his hand. "*Mon Dieu!* papa, make up his mind for him, or I will go away and never see him any more."

"I will make up your mind," said Goriot, coming down from the clouds. "Now, my dear M. Eugène, the next thing is to borrow money of the Jews, isn't it?"

"There is positively no help for it," said Eugène.

"All right, I will give you credit," said the other, drawing out a cheap leather pocket-book, much the worse for wear. "I have turned Jew myself; I have paid for everything; here are the invoices. You do not owe a penny for anything here. It did not come to very much—five thousand francs at most, and I am going to lend you the money myself. I am not a woman—you cannot refuse me. You shall give me a receipt on a scrap of paper, and you can return it some time or other."

Delphine and Eugène looked at each other in amazement, tears sprang to their eyes. Rastignac held out his hand and grasped Goriot's warmly.

"Well, what is all this about? Are you not my children?"

"Oh! my poor father," said Mme. de Nucingen, "how did you do it?"

"Ah! now you ask me. When I made up my mind to move him nearer to you, and saw you buying things as if they were wedding presents, I said to myself, 'She will never be able to pay for them.' The attorney says that those law proceedings will last quite six months before your husband can be made to disgorge your fortune. Well and good. I sold out my property in the funds that brought in thirteen hundred and

fifty livres a year, and bought a safe annuity of twelve hundred francs a year for fifteen thousand francs. Then I paid your tradesmen out of the rest of the capital. As for me, children, I have a room upstairs for which I pay fifty crowns a year; I can live like a prince on two francs a day, and still have something left over. I shall not have to spend anything much on clothes, for I never wear anything out. This fortnight past I have been laughing in my sleeve, thinking to myself, 'How happy they are going to be!' and—well, now, are you not happy?"

"Oh papa! papa!" cried Mme. de Nucingen, springing to her father, who took her on his knee. She covered him with kisses, her fair hair brushed his cheek, her tears fell on the withered face that had grown so bright and radiant.

"Dear father, what a father you are! No, there is not another father like you under the sun. If Eugène loved you before, what must he feel for you now?"

"Why, children! why, Delphinette!" cried Goriot, who had not felt his daughter's heart beat against his breast for ten years, "do you want me to die of joy? My poor heart will break! Come, Monsieur Eugène, we are quits already." And the old man strained her to his breast with such fierce and passionate force that she cried out.

"Oh! you are hurting me!" she said.

"I am hurting you!" He grew pale at the words. The pain expressed in his face seemed greater than it is given to humanity to know. The agony of this Christ of paternity can only be compared with the masterpieces of those princes of the palette who have left for us the record of their visions of an agony suffered for a whole world by the Saviour of men. Father Goriot pressed his lips very gently against the waist that his fingers had grasped too roughly.

"Oh! no, no," he cried. "I have not hurt you, have I?" and his smile seemed to repeat the question. "*You* have hurt me with that cry just now. The things cost rather

more than that," he said in her ear, with another gentle kiss, "but I had to deceive him about it, or he would have been angry."

Eugène sat dumb with amazement in the presence of this inexhaustible love; he gazed at Goriot, and his face betrayed the artless admiration which shapes the beliefs of youth.

"I will be worthy of all this," he cried.

"Oh! my Eugène, that is nobly said," and Mme. de Nucingen kissed the law student on the forehead.

"He gave up Mlle. Taillefer and her millions for you," said Father Goriot. "Yes, the little thing was in love with you, and now that her brother is dead she is as rich as Cræsus."

"Oh! why did you tell her?" cried Rastignac.

"Eugène," Delphine said in his ear, "I have one regret now this evening. Ah! how I will love you! and for ever!"

"This is the happiest day I have had since you two became acquainted!" cried Goriot. "God may send me any suffering, so long as I do not suffer through you, and I can still say, 'In this short month of February I had more happiness than other men have in their whole lives.' Look at me, Fifine!" he said to his daughter. "She is very beautiful, is she not? Tell me, now, have you seen many women with that pretty soft color—that little dimple of hers? No, I thought not. Ah, well, and but for me this lovely woman would never have been. And very soon happiness will make her a thousand times lovelier, happiness through you. I could give up my place in heaven to you, neighbor, if needs be, and go down to hell instead. Come, let us have dinner," he added, scarcely knowing what he said, "everything is ours."

"Poor dear father!"

He rose and went over to her, and took her face in his hands, and set a kiss on the plaits of hair. "If you only knew, little one, how happy you can make me—how little it takes to make me happy! Will you come and see me some-

times? I shall be just above, so it is only a step. Promise me, say that you will!"

"Yes, dear father."

"Say it again."

"Yes, I will, my kind father."

"Hush, hush! I should make you say it a hundred times over if I followed my own wishes. Let us have dinner."

The three behaved like children that evening, and Father Goriot's spirits were certainly not the least wild. He lay at his daughter's feet, kissed them, gazed into her eyes, rubbed his head against her dress; in short, no young lover could have been more extravagant or more tender.

"You see!" Delphine said with a look at Eugène, "so long as my father is with us, he monopolizes me. He will be rather in the way sometimes."

Eugène had himself already felt certain twinges of jealousy, and could not blame this speech that contained the germ of all ingratitude.

"And when will the rooms be ready?" asked Eugène, looking round. "We must all leave them this evening, I suppose."

"Yes, but to-morrow you must come and dine with me," she answered, with an eloquent glance. "It is our night at the Italiens."

"I shall go to the pit," said her father.

It was midnight. Mme. de Nucingen's carriage was waiting for her, and Father Goriot and the student walked back to the Maison Vauquer, talking of Delphine, and warming over their talk till there grew up a curious rivalry between the two violent passions. Eugène could not help seeing that the father's selfish love was deeper and more steadfast than his own. For this worshiper Delphine was always pure and fair, and her father's admiration drew its fervor from a whole past as well as a future of love.

They found Mme. Vauquer by the stove, with Sylvie and

Christophe to keep her company; the old landlady, sitting like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, was waiting for the two lodgers that yet remained to her, and bemoaning her lot with the sympathetic Sylvie. Tasso's lamentations as recorded in Byron's poem are undoubtedly eloquent, but for sheer force of truth they fall far short of the widow's cry from the depths.

"Only three cups of coffee in the morning, Sylvie! Oh, dear! to have your house emptied in this way is enough to break your heart. What is life, now my lodgers are gone? Nothing at all. Just think of it! It is just as if all the furniture had been taken out of the house, and your furniture is your life. How have I offended heaven to draw down all this trouble upon me? And haricot beans and potatoes laid in for twenty people! The police in my house, too! We shall have to live on potatoes now, and Christophe will have to go!"

The Savoyard, who was fast asleep, suddenly woke up at this, and said, "Madame?" questioningly.

"Poor fellow!" said Sylvie, "he is like a dog."

"In the dead season, too! Nobody is moving now. I would like to know where the lodgers are to drop down from. It drives me distracted. And that old witch of a Michonneau goes and takes Poiret with her! What can she have done to him to make him so fond of her? He runs about after her like a little dog."

"Lord!" said Sylvie, flinging up her head, "those old maids are up to all sorts of tricks."

"There's that poor M. Vautrin that they made out to be a convict," the widow went on. "Well, you know that is too much for me, Sylvie; I can't bring myself to believe it. Such a lively man as he was, and paid fifteen francs a month for his coffee of an evening, paid you every penny on the nail too."

"And open-handed he was!" said Christophe.

"There is some mistake," said Sylvie.

"Why, no there isn't! he said so himself!" said Mme.

Vauquer. "And to think that all these things have happened in my house, and in a quarter where you never see a cat go by. On my word as an honest woman, it's like a dream. For, look here, we saw Louis XVI. meet with his mishap; we saw the fall of the Emperor; and we saw him come back and fall again; there was nothing out of the way in all that, but lodging-houses are not liable to revolutions. You can do without a king, but you must eat all the same; and so long as a decent woman, a de Conflans born and bred, will give you all sorts of good things for dinner, nothing short of the end of the world ought to—but there, it is the end of the world, that is just what it is!"

"And to think that Mlle. Michonneau who made all this mischief is to have a thousand crowns a year for it, so I hear," cried Sylvie.

"Don't speak of her, she is a wicked woman!" said Mme. Vauquer. "She is going to the Buneaud, who charges less than cost. But the Buneaud is capable of anything; she must have done frightful things, robbed and murdered people in her time. *She* ought to be put in jail for life instead of that poor dear——"

Eugène and Goriot, reaching the Maison Vauquer, rang the door-bell at that moment.

"Ah! here are my two faithful lodgers," said the widow, sighing.

But the two faithful lodgers, who retained but shadowy recollections of the misfortunes of their lodging-house, announced to their hostess without more ado that they were about to remove to the Chaussée d'Antin.

"Sylvie!" cried the widow, "this is the last straw. Gentlemen, this will be the death of me! It has quite upset me! There's a weight on my chest! I am ten years older for this day! Upon my word, I shall go out of my senses! And what is to be done with the haricots? Oh, well, if I am to be left here all by myself, you shall

go to-morrow, Christophe. Good-night, gentlemen," and she went upstairs.

"What is the matter now?" Eugène inquired of Sylvie, in much astonishment.

"Lord! everybody is going about his business, and that has addled her wits. There! she is crying upstairs. It will do her good to snivel a bit. It's the first time she has cried since I've been with her."

By the morning, Mme. Vauquer, to use her own expression, had "made up her mind to it." True, she still wore a doleful countenance, as might be expected of a woman who had lost all her lodgers, and whose manner of life had been suddenly revolutionized, but she had all her wits about her. Her grief was genuine and profound; it was real pain of mind, for her purse had suffered, the routine of her existence had been broken. A lover's farewell glance at his lady-love's window is not more mournful than Mme. Vauquer's survey of the empty places round her table. Eugène administered comfort, telling the widow that Bianchon, whose term of residence at the hospital was about to expire, would doubtless take his (Rastignac's) place; that the official from the Muséum had often expressed a desire to have Mme. Couture's room; and that in a very few days her household would be on the old footing.

"God send it may, my dear sir! but bad luck has come to lodge here. There'll be a death in the house before ten days are out, you'll see," and she gave a lugubrious look around the dining-room. "Whose turn will it be, I wonder?"

"It is just as well that we are moving out," said Eugène to Father Goriot in a low voice.

"Madame," said Sylvie, running in with a scared face, "I have not seen Mistigris these three days."

"Ah! well, if my cat is dead, if *he* has gone and left us, then I——"

The poor woman could not finish her sentence; she clasped

her hands and hid her face on the back of her armchair, quite overcome by this dreadful portent.

By twelve o'clock, when the postman reaches that quarter, Eugène received a letter. The dainty envelope bore the Beauséant arms on the seal, and contained an invitation to the Vicomtesse's great ball, which had been talked of in Paris for a month. A little note for Eugène was slipped in with the card.

"I think, monsieur, that you will undertake with pleasure to interpret my sentiments to Mme. de Nucingen, so I am sending the card for which you asked me to you. I shall be delighted to make the acquaintance of Mme. de Restaud's sister. Pray introduce that charming lady to me, and do not let her monopolize all your affection, for you owe me not a little in return for mine.

"VICOMTESSE DE BEAUSÉANT."

"Well," said Eugène to himself, as he read the note a second time, "Mme. de Beauséant says pretty plainly that she does not want the Baron de Nucingen."

He went to Delphine at once in his joy. He had procured this pleasure for her, and doubtless he would receive the price of it. Mme. de Nucingen was dressing. Rastignac waited in her boudoir, enduring as best he might the natural impatience of an eager temperament for the reward desired and withheld for a year. Such sensations are only known once in a life. The first woman to whom a man is drawn, if she is really a woman—that is to say, if she appears to him amid the splendid accessories that form a necessary background to life in the world of Paris—will never have a rival.

Love in Paris is a thing distinct and apart; for in Paris neither men nor women are the dupes of the commonplaces by which people seek to throw a veil over their motives, or to parade a fine affectation of disinterestedness in their senti-

ments. In this country within a country, it is not merely required of a woman that she should satisfy the senses and the soul ; she knows perfectly well that she has still greater obligations to discharge, that she must fulfill the countless demands of a vanity that enters into every fibre of that living organism called society. Love, for her, is above all things, and by its very nature, a vainglorious, brazen-fronted, ostentatious, thriftless charlatan. If at the court of Louis XIV. there was not a woman but envied Mlle. de la Vallière the reckless devotion of passion that led the grand monarch to tear the priceless ruffles at his wrists in order to assist the entry of a Duc de Vermandois into the world—what can you expect of the rest of society? You must have youth and wealth and rank ; nay, you must, if possible, have more than these, for the more incense you bring with you to burn at the shrine of the god, the more favorably will he regard the worshiper. Love is a religion, and his cult must in the nature of things be more costly than those of all other deities ; love the spoiler stays for a moment, and then passes on ; like the urchin of the streets, his course may be traced by the ravages that he has made. The wealth of feeling and imagination is the poetry of the garret ; how should love exist there without that wealth?

If there are exceptions who do not subscribe to these Draconian laws of the Parisian code, they are solitary examples. Such souls live so far out of the main current that they are not borne away by the doctrines of society ; they dwell beside some clear spring of ever-flowing water, without seeking to leave the green shade ; happy to listen to the echoes of the infinite in everything around them and in their own souls, waiting in patience to take their flight for heaven, while they look with pity upon those of earth.

Rastignac, like most young men who have been early impressed by the circumstance of power and grandeur, meant to enter the lists fully armed ; the burning ambition of con-

quest possessed him already ; perhaps he was conscious of his powers, but as yet he knew neither the end to which his ambition was to be directed nor the means of attaining it. In default of the pure and sacred love that fills a life, ambition may become something very noble, subduing to itself every thought of personal interest, and setting as the end—the pre-eminent greatness, not of one man, but of a whole nation.

But the student had not yet reached the time of life when a man surveys the whole course of existence and judges it soberly. Hitherto he had scarcely so much as shaken off the spell of the fresh and gracious influences that envelop a childhood in the country, like green leaves and grass. He had hesitated on the brink of the Parisian Rubicon, and, in spite of the prickings of ambition, he still clung to a lingering tradition of an old ideal—the peaceful life of the noble in his château. But yesterday evening, at the sight of his rooms, those scruples had vanished. He had learned what it was to enjoy the material advantages of fortune, as he had already enjoyed the social advantages of birth ; he ceased to be a provincial from that moment, and slipped naturally and easily into a position which opened up the prospect of a brilliant future.

So, as he waited for Delphine, in the pretty boudoir, where he felt that he had a certain right to be, he felt himself so far away from the Rastignac who came back to Paris a year ago, that, turning some power of inner vision upon this latter, he asked himself whether that past self bore any resemblance to the Rastignac of that moment.

“Madame is in her room,” Thérèse came to tell him. The woman’s voice made him start.

He found Delphine lying back in her low chair by the fire-side, looking fresh and bright. The sight of her among the flowing draperies of muslin suggested some beautiful tropical flower, where the fruit is set amid the blossom.

“Well,” she said, with a tremor in her voice, “here you are.”

“Guess what I bring for you,” said Eugène, sitting down beside her. He took possession of her arm to kiss her hand.

Mme. de Nucingen gave a joyful start as she saw the card. She turned to Eugène; there were tears in her eyes as she flung her arms about his neck, and drew him towards her in a frenzy of gratified vanity.

“And I owe this happiness to you—to *thee*” (she whispered the more intimate word in his ear); “but Thérèse is in my dressing-room, let us be prudent. This happiness—yes, for I may call it so, when it comes to me through *you*—is surely more than a triumph for self-love? No one has been willing to introduce me into that set. Perhaps just now I may seem to you to be frivolous, petty, shallow, like a Parisienne, but remember, my friend, that I am ready to give up all for you; and that if I long more than ever for an entrance into the Faubourg Saint-Germain, it is because I shall meet you there.”

“Mme. de Beuséant’s note seems to say very plainly that she does not expect to see the *Baron* de Nucingen at her ball; don’t you think so?” said Eugène.

“Why, yes,” said the Baroness as she returned the letter. “Those women have a talent for insolence. But it is of no consequence, I shall go. My sister is sure to be there, and sure to be very beautifully dressed. Eugène,” she went on, lowering her voice, “she will go to dispel ugly suspicions. You do not know the things that people are saying about her! Only this morning Nucingen came to tell me that they had been discussing her at the club. Great heavens! on what does a woman’s character and the honor of a whole family depend! I feel that I am nearly touched and wounded in my poor sister. According to some people, M. de Trailles must have put his name to bills for a hundred thousand francs, nearly all of them are overdue, and proceedings are threat-

ened. In this predicament, it seems that my sister sold her diamonds to a Jew—the beautiful diamonds that belonged to her husband's mother, Mme. de Restaud the elder—you have seen her wearing them. In fact, nothing else has been talked about for the last two days. So I can see that Anastasie is sure to come to Mme. de Beauséant's ball in tissue of gold, and ablaze with diamonds, to draw all eyes upon her; and I will not be outshone. She has tried to eclipse me all her life; she has never been kind to me, and I have helped her so often, and always had money for her when she had none. But never mind other people now, to-day I mean to be perfectly happy."

At one o'clock that morning Eugène was still with Mme. de Nucingen. In the midst of their lovers' farewell, a farewell full of hope of bliss to come, she said in a troubled voice, "I am very fearful, superstitious. Give what name you like to my presentiments, but I am afraid that my happiness will be paid for by some horrible catastrophe."

"Child!" said Eugène.

"Ah! have we changed places, and am I the child to-night?" she asked laughingly.

Eugène went back to the Maison Vauquer, never doubting but that he should leave it for good on the morrow; and on the way he fell to dreaming the bright dreams of youth, when the cup of happiness has left its sweetness on the lips.

"Well?" cried Goriot, as Rastignac passed by his door.

"Yes," said Eugène; "I will tell you everything to-morrow."

"Everything, will you not?" cried the old man. "Go to bed. To-morrow our happy life will begin."

Next day, Goriot and Rastignac were ready to leave the lodging-house, and only awaited the good pleasure of a porter to move out of it; but towards noon there was a sound of wheels in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève, and a carriage stopped before the door of the Maison Vauquer. Mme. de

Nucingen alighted, and asked if her father was still in the house, and, receiving an affirmative reply from Sylvie, ran lightly upstairs.

It so happened that Eugène was at home all unknown to his neighbor. At breakfast-time he had asked Goriot to superintend the removal of his goods, saying that he would meet him in the Rue d'Artois at four o'clock; but Rastignac's name had been called early on the list at the École de droit, and he had gone back at once to the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Genève. No one had seen him come in, for Goriot had gone to find a porter, and the mistress of the house was likewise out. Eugène had thought to pay her himself, for it struck him that if he left this, Goriot in his zeal would probably pay for him. As it was, Eugène went up to his room to see that nothing had been forgotten, and blessed his foresight when he saw the blank bill bearing Vautrin's signature lying in the drawer where he had carelessly thrown it on the day when he had repaid the amount. There was no fire in the grate, so he was about to tear it into little pieces, when he heard a voice speaking in Goriot's room, and the speaker was Delphine! He made no more noise, and stood still to listen, thinking that she should have no secrets from him; but after the first few words, the conversation between the father and daughter was so strange and interesting that it absorbed all his attention.

"Ah! thank heaven that you thought of asking him to give an account of the money settled on me before I was utterly ruined, father. Is it safe to talk?" she added.

"Yes, there is no one in the house," said her father faintly.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Mme. de Nucingen.

"God forgive you! you have just dealt me a staggering blow, child!" said the old man. "You cannot know how much I love you, or you would not have burst in upon me like this, with such news, especially if all is not lost. Has

something so important happened that you must come here about it? In a few minutes we should have been in the Rue d'Artois."

"Eh! does one think what one is doing after a catastrophe? It has turned my head. Your attorney has found out the state of things now, but it was bound to come out sooner or later. We shall want your long business experience; and I came to you like a drowning man who catches at a branch. When M. Derville found that Nucingen was throwing all sorts of difficulties in his way, he threatened him with proceedings, and told him plainly that he would soon obtain an order from the president of the Tribunal. So Nucingen came to my room this morning, and asked if I meant to ruin us both. I told him that I knew nothing whatever about it, that I had a fortune, and ought to be put into possession of my fortune, and that my attorney was acting for me in the matter; I said again that I knew absolutely nothing about it, and could not possibly go into the subject with him. Wasn't that what you told me to tell him?"

"Yes, quite right," answered Goriot.

"Well, then," Delphine continued, "he told me all about his affairs. He had just invested all his capital and mine in business speculations; they have only just been started, and very large sums of money are locked up. If I were to compel him to refund my dowry now, he would be forced to file his petition; but if I will wait a year, he undertakes, on his honor, to double or treble my fortune, by investing it in building land, and I shall be mistress at last of the whole of my property. He was speaking the truth, father dear; he frightened me! He asked my pardon for his conduct; he has given me my liberty; I am free to act as I please on conditions that I leave him to carry on my business in my name. To prove his sincerity, he promised that M. Derville might inspect the accounts as often as I pleased, so that I might be assured that everything was being conducted properly. In

short, he put himself into my power, bound hand and foot. He wishes the present arrangements as to the expenses of housekeeping to continue for two more years, and entreated me not to exceed my allowance. He showed me plainly that it was all that he could do to keep up appearances; he has broken with his opera dancer; he will be compelled to practice the most strict economy (in secret) if he is to bide his time with unshaken credit. I scolded, I did all I could to drive him to desperation, so as to find out more. He showed me his ledgers—he broke down and cried at last. I never saw a man in such a state. He lost his head completely, talked of killing himself, and raved till I felt quite sorry for him.”

“Do you really believe that silly rubbish?”—cried her father. “It was all got up for your benefit! I have had to do with Germans in the way of business; honest and straightforward they are pretty sure to be, but when with their simplicity and frankness they are sharpers and humbugs as well, they are the worst rogues of all. Your husband is taking advantage of you. As soon as pressure is brought to bear on him he shams dead; he means to be more the master under your name than in his own. He will take advantage of the position to secure himself against the risks of business. He is as sharp as he is treacherous; he is a bad lot! No, no; I am not going to leave my girls behind me without a penny when I go to Père-Lachaise. I know something about business still. He has sunk his money in speculation, he says; very well, then there is something to show for it—bills, receipts, papers of some sort. Let him produce them, and come to an arrangement with you. We will choose the most promising of his speculations, take them over at our own risk, and have the securities transferred into your name; they shall represent the separate estate of Delphine Goriot, wife of the Baron de Nucingen. Does that fellow really take us for idiots? Does he imagine that I could stand the idea of your being without fortune, without bread, for forty-eight

hours? I would not stand it a day—no, not a night, not a couple of hours! If there had been any foundation for the idea, I should never get over it. What! I have worked hard for forty years, carried sacks on my back, and sweated and pinched and saved all my life for you, my darlings, for you who made the toil and every burden borne for you seem light; and now, my fortune, my whole life, is to vanish in smoke! I should die raving mad if I believed a word of it. By all that's holiest in heaven and earth, we will have this cleared up at once; go through the books, have the whole business looked thoroughly into! I will not sleep, nor rest, nor eat until I have satisfied myself that all your fortune is in existence. Your money is settled upon you, God be thanked! and, luckily, your attorney, Maître Derville, is an honest man. Good Lord! you shall have your snug little million, your fifty thousand francs a year, as long as you live, or I will raise a racket in Paris, I will so! If the Tribunals put upon us, I will appeal to the Chambers. If I knew that you were well and comfortably off as far as money is concerned, that thought would keep me easy in spite of bad health and troubles. Money? why, it is life! Money does everything. That great dolt of an Alsatian shall sing to another tune! Look here, Delphine, don't give way, don't make a concession of half a quarter of a farthing to that fathead, who has ground you down and made you miserable. If he can't do without you, we will give him a good cudgeling, and keep him in order. Great heavens! my brain is on fire; it is as if there were something red-hot inside my head. My Delphine lying on straw! You! my Fifine! Good gracious! Where are my gloves? Come, let us go at once; I mean to see everything with my own eyes—books, cash, and correspondence, the whole business. I shall have no peace until I know for certain that your fortune is secure!”

“Oh! father dear, be careful how you set about it! If there is the least hint of vengeance in the business, if you

show yourself openly hostile, it will be all over with me. He knows whom he has to deal with; he thinks it quite natural that if you put the idea into my head, I should be uneasy about my money; but I swear to you that he has it in his own hands, and that he had meant to keep it. He is just the man to abscond with all the money and leave us in the lurch, the scoundrel! He knows quite well that I will not dishonor the name I bear by bringing him into a court of law. His position is strong and weak at the same time. If we drive him to despair, I am lost."

"Why, then, the man is a rogue?"

"Well, yes, father," she said, flinging herself into a chair. "I wanted to keep it from you to spare your feelings," and she burst into tears; "I did not want you to know that you had married me to such a man as he is. He is just the same in private life—body and soul and conscience—the same through and through—hideous! I hate him; I despise him! Yes, after all that that despicable Nucingen has told me, I cannot respect him any longer. A man capable of mixing himself up in such affairs, and of talking about them to me as he did, without the slightest scruple—it is because I have read him through and through that I am afraid of him. He, my husband, frankly proposed to give me my liberty, and do you know what that means? It means that if things turn out badly for him, I am to play into his hands, and be his stalking-horse."

"But there is law to be had! There is a *Place de Grève* for sons-in-law of that sort," cried her father; "why, I would guillotine him myself if there was no headsman to do it."

"No, father, the law cannot touch him. Listen, this is what he says, stripped of all his circumlocutions—'Take your choice, you and no one else can be my accomplice; either everything is lost, you are ruined and have not a farthing, or you will let me carry this business through myself.' Is that

plain speaking? He *must* have my assistance. He is assured that his wife will deal fairly by him; he knows that I shall leave his money to him and be content with my own. It is an unholy and dishonest compact, and he holds out threats of ruin to compel me to consent to it. He is buying my conscience, and the price is liberty to be Eugène's wife in all but name. 'I connive at your errors, and you allow me to commit crimes and ruin poor families!' Is that sufficiently explicit? Do you know what he means by speculations? He buys up land in his own name, then he finds men of straw to run up houses upon it. These men make a bargain with a contractor to build the houses, paying them by bills at long dates; then in consideration of a small sum they leave my husband in possession of the houses, and finally slip through the fingers of the deluded contractors by going into bankruptcy. The name of the firm of Nucingen has been used to dazzle the poor contractors. I saw that. I noticed, too, that Nucingen had sent bills for large amounts to Amsterdam, London, Naples, and Vienna, in order to prove if necessary that large sums had been paid away by the firm. How could we get possession of those bills?"

Eugène heard a dull thud on the floor; Father Goriot must have fallen on his knees.

"Great heavens! what have I done to you? Bound my daughter to this scoundrel who does as he likes with her! Oh! my child, my child! forgive me!" eagerly cried the old man.

"Yes, if I am in the depths of despair, perhaps you are to blame," said Delphine. "We have so little sense when we marry! What do we know of the world, of business, or men, or life? Our fathers should think for us! Father dear, I am not blaming you in the least, forgive me for what I said. This is all my own fault. Nay, do not cry, papa," she said, kissing him.

"Do not you cry either, my little Delphine. Look up and

let me kiss away the tears. There! I shall find my wits and unravel this skein of your husband's winding."

"No, let me do that; I shall be able to manage him. He is fond of me, well and good; I shall use my influence to make him invest my money as soon as possible in landed property in my own name. Very likely I could get him to buy back Nucingen in Alsace in my name; that has always been a pet idea of his. Still, come to-morrow and go through the books, and look into the business. M. Derville knows little of mercantile matters. No, not to-morrow though. I do not want to be upset. Mme. de Beauséant's ball will be the day after to-morrow, and I must keep quiet, so as to look my best and freshest, and do honor to my dear Eugène!—Come, let us see his room."

But as she spoke a carriage stopped in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, and the sound of Mme. de Restaud's voice came from the staircase. "Is my father in?" she asked of Sylvie.

This accident was luckily timed for Eugène, whose one idea had been to throw himself down on the bed and pretend to be asleep.

"Oh, father, have you heard about Anastasie?" said Delphine, when she heard her sister speak. "It looks as though some strange things had happened in that family."

"What sort of things?" asked Goriot. "This is like to be the death of me. My poor head will not stand a double misfortune."

"Good-morning, father," said the Countess from the threshold. "Oh! Delphine, are you here?"

Mme. de Restaud seemed taken aback by her sister's presence.

"Good-morning, Nasie," said the Baroness. "What is there so extraordinary in my being here? I see our father every day."

"Since when?"

“If you came yourself you would know.”

“Don't tease, Delphine,” said the Countess fretfully. “I am very miserable, I am lost. Oh! my poor father, it is hopeless this time!”

“What is it, Nasie?” cried Goriot. “Tell us all about it, child! How white she is! Quick, do something, Delphine; be kind to her, and I will love you even better, if that were possible.”

“Poor Nasie!” said Mme. de Nucingen, drawing her sister to a chair. “We are the only two people in the world whose love is always sufficient to forgive you everything. Family affection is the surest, you see.”

The Countess inhaled the salts and revived.

“This will kill me!” said their father. “There,” he went on, stirring the smoldering fire, “come nearer, both of you. It is cold. What is it, Nasie? Be quick and tell me, this is enough to——”

“Well, then, my husband knows everything,” said the Countess. “Just imagine it; do you remember, father, that bill of Maxime's some time ago? Well, that was not the first. I had paid ever so many before that. About the beginning of January M. de Trailles seemed very much troubled. He said nothing to me; but it is so easy to read the hearts of those you love, a mere trifle is enough; and then you feel things instinctively. Indeed, he was more tender and affectionate than ever, and I was happier than I had ever been before. Poor Maxime! in himself he was really saying good-bye to me, so he has told me since; he meant to blow his brains out! At last I worried him so, and begged and implored so hard; for two hours I knelt at his knees and prayed and entreated, and at last he told me—that he owed a hundred thousand francs. Oh! papa! a hundred thousand francs! I was beside myself! You had not the money, I knew; I had eaten up all that you had——”

“No,” said Goriot; “I could not have gotten it for you

unless I had stolen it. But I would have done that for you, Nasie ! I will do it yet."

The words came from him like a sob, a hoarse sound like the death-rattle of a dying man ; it seemed indeed like the agony of death when the father's love was powerless. There was a pause, and neither of the sisters spoke. It must have been selfishness indeed that could hear unmoved that cry of anguish that, like a pebble thrown over a precipice, revealed the depths of his despair.

"I found the money, father, by selling what was not mine to sell," and the Countess burst into tears.

Delphine was touched ; she laid her head on her sister's shoulder, and cried too.

"Then it is all true," she said.

Anastasie bowed her head. Mme. de Nucingen flung her arms about her, kissed her tenderly, and held her sister to her heart.

"I shall always love you and never judge you, Nasie," she said.

"My angels!" murmured Goriot faintly. "Oh, why should it be trouble that draws you together?"

This warm and palpitating affection seemed to give the Countess courage.

"To save Maxime's life," she said, "to save all my own happiness, I went to the money-lender you know of, a man of iron forged in hell-fire ; nothing can melt him ; I took all the family diamonds that M. de Restaud is so proud of—his and mine too—and sold them to that M. Gobseck. *Sold them!* Do you understand? I saved Maxime, but I am lost. Restaud found it all out."

"How? Who told him? I will kill him," cried Goriot.

"Yesterday he sent to tell me to come to his room. I went—— 'Anastasie,' he said in a voice—oh! such a voice ; that was enough, it told me everything—'where are your diamonds?' 'In my room——' 'No,' he said, looking straight at

me, 'there they are on that chest of drawers——' and he lifted his handkerchief and showed me the casket. 'Do you know where they come from?' he said. I fell at his feet—— I cried; I besought him to tell me the death he wished to see me die."

"You said that!" cried Goriot. "By God in heaven, whoever lays a hand on either of you so long as I am alive may reckon on being roasted by slow fires! Yes, I will cut him in pieces like——"

Goriot stopped; the words died away in his throat.

"And then, dear, he asked something worse than death of me. Oh! heaven preserve all other women from hearing such words as I heard then!"

"I will murder that man," said Goriot quietly. "But he has only one life, and he deserves to die twice. And then, what next?" he added, looking at Anastasie.

"Then," the Countess resumed, "there was a pause, and he looked at me. 'Anastasie,' he said, 'I will bury this in silence; there shall be no separation; there are the children. I will not kill M. de Trailles. I might miss him if we fought, and as for other ways of getting rid of him, I should come into collision with the law. If I killed him in your arms, it would bring dishonor on *those* children. But if you do not want to see your children perish, nor their father nor me, you must first of all submit to two conditions. Answer me. Have I a child of my own?' I answered, 'Yes.' 'Which?' 'Ernest, our eldest boy.' 'Very well,' he said, 'and now swear to obey me in this particular from this time forward.' I swore. 'You will make over your property to me when I require you to do so.'"

"Do nothing of the kind!" cried Goriot. "Aha! M. de Restaud, you could not make your wife happy; she has looked for happiness and found it elsewhere, and you make her suffer for your own inaptitude? He will have to reckon with me. Make yourself easy, Nasie. Aha! he cares about his heir!

Good, very good. I will get hold of the boy; isn't he my grandson? What the blazes! I can surely go to see the brat! I will stow him away somewhere; I will take care of him, you may be quite easy. I will bring Restaud to terms, the monster! I shall say to him, 'A word or two with you! If you want your son back again, give my daughter her property, and leave her to do as she pleases.'"

"Father!"

"Yes. I am your father, Nasie, a father indeed! That rogue of a great lord had better not ill-treat my daughter. Thunder! What is it in my veins? There is the blood of a tiger in me; I could tear those two men to pieces! Oh! children, children! so this is what your lives are! Why, it is death!— What will become of you when I shall be here no longer? Fathers ought to live as long as their children. Ah! Lord God in heaven! how ill Thy world is ordered! Thou hast a Son, if what they tell us is true, and yet Thou leavest us to suffer so through our children. My darlings, my darlings! to think that trouble only should bring you to me, that I should only see you with tears on your faces! Ah! yes, yes, you love me, I see that you love me. Come to me and pour out your griefs to me; my heart is large enough to hold them all. Oh! you might rend my heart in pieces, and every fragment would make a father's heart. If only I could bear all your sorrows for you!— Ah! you were so happy when you were little and still with me——"

"We have never been happy since," said Delphine. "Where are the old days when we slid down the sacks in the great granary?"

"That is not all, father," said Anastasie in Goriot's ear. The old man gave a startled shudder. "The diamonds only sold for a hundred thousand francs. Maxime is hard pressed. There are twelve thousand francs still to pay. He has given me his word that he will be steady and give up play in future. His love is all that I have left in the world. I have paid such

a fearful price for it that I shall die if I lose him now. I have sacrificed my fortune, my honor, my peace of mind, and my children for him. Oh! do something, so that at the least Maxime may be at large and live undisgraced in the world, where he will assuredly make a career for himself. Something more than my happiness is at stake; the children have nothing, and if he is sent to Sainte-Pélagie all his prospects will be ruined."

"I haven't the money, Nasie. I have *nothing*—nothing left. This is the end of everything. Yes, the world is crumbling into ruin, I am sure. Fly! Save yourselves! Ah! I have still my silver buckles left and half-a-dozen silver spoons and forks, the first I ever had in my life. But I have nothing else except my life annuity, twelve hundred francs——"

"Then what has become of your money in the funds?"

"I sold out, and only kept a trifle for my wants. I wanted twelve thousand francs to furnish some rooms for Delphine."

"In your own house?" asked Mme. de Restaud, looking at her sister.

"What does it matter where they were?" asked Goriot.

"The money is spent now."

"I see how it is," said the Countess. "Rooms for M. de Rastignac. Poor Delphine, take warning by me!"

"M. de Rastignac is incapable of ruining the woman he loves, dear."

"Thanks! Delphine. I thought you would have been kinder to me in my troubles, but you never did love me."

"Yes, yes, she loves you, Nasie!" cried Goriot; "she was saying so only just now. We were talking about you, and she insisted that you were beautiful, and that she herself was only pretty!"

"Pretty!" said the Countess. "She is as hard as a marble statue."

"And if I am," cried Delphine, flushing up, "how have you treated me? You would not recognize me; you closed

the doors of every house against me ; you have never let an opportunity of mortifying me slip by. And when did I come, as you were always doing, to drain our poor father, a thousand francs at a time, till he is left as you see him now? That is all your doing, sister ! I myself have seen my father as often as I could. I have not turned him out of the house, and then come and fawned upon him when I wanted money. I did not so much as know that he had spent those twelve thousand francs on me. I am economical, as you know ; and when papa has made me presents, it has never been because I came and begged for them."

"You were better off than I. M. de Marsay was rich, as you have reason to know. You always were as slippery as gold. Good-by ; I have neither sister nor——"

"Oh ! hush, hush ! Nasie !" cried her father.

"Nobody else would repeat what everybody has ceased to believe. You are an unnatural sister !" cried Delphine.

"Oh, children, children ! hush ! hush ! or I will kill myself before your eyes."

"There, Nasie, I forgive you," said Mme. de Nucingen ; "you are very unhappy. But I am kinder than you are. How could you say *that* just when I was ready to do anything in the world to help you, even to be reconciled with my husband, which for my own sake I—— Oh ! it is just like you ; you have behaved cruelly to me all through these nine years."

"Children, children, kiss each other !" cried the father. "You are angels, both of you."

"No. Let me alone," cried the Countess, shaking off the hand that her father had laid on her arm. "She is more merciless than my husband. Any one might think she was a model of all the virtues herself !"

"I would rather have people think that I owed money to M. de Marsay than own that M. de Trailles had cost me more than two hundred thousand francs," retorted Mme. de Nucingen.

“*Delphine!*” cried the Countess, stepping towards her sister.

“I shall tell you the truth about yourself if you begin to slander me,” said the Baroness coldly.

“Delphine! you are a——”

Father Goriot sprang between them, grasped the Countess’ hand, and laid his own over her mouth.

“Good heavens, father! What have you been handling this morning?” said Anastasie.

“Ah! well, yes, I ought not to have touched you,” said the poor father, wiping his hands on his trousers, “but I have been packing up my things; I did not know that you were coming to see me.”

He was glad that he had drawn down her wrath upon himself.

“Ah!” he sighed, as he sat down, “you children have broken my heart between you. This is killing me. My head feels as if it were on fire. Be good to each other and love each other! This will be the death of me! Delphine! Nasie! come, be sensible; you are both in the wrong. Come, Dedel,” he added, looking through his tears at the Baroness, “she must have twelve thousand francs, you see; let us see if we can find them for her. Oh, my girls, do not look at each other like that!” and he sank on his knees beside Delphine.

“Ask her to forgive you—just to please me,” he said in her ear. “She is more miserable than you are. Come now, Dedel.”

“Poor Nasie!” said Delphine, alarmed at the wild extravagant grief in her father’s face, “I was in the wrong, kiss me——”

“Ah! that is like balm to my heart,” cried Father Goriot. “But how are we to find twelve thousand francs? I might offer myself as a substitute in the army——”

“Oh! father dear!” they both cried, flinging their arms about him. “No, no!”

“ God reward you for the thought. We are not worth it, are we, Nasie ? ” asked Delphine.

“ And besides, father dear, it would only be a drop in the bucket,” observed the Countess.

“ But is flesh and blood worth nothing ? ” cried the old man in his despair. “ I would give body and soul to save you, Nasie. I would do a murder for the man who would rescue you. I would do, as Vautrin did, go to the hulks, go——” he stopped as if struck by a thunderbolt, and put both hands to his head. “ Nothing left ! ” he cried, tearing his hair. “ If I only knew of a way to steal money, but it is so hard to do it, and then you can’t set to work by yourself, and it takes time to rob a bank. Yes, it is time I was dead ; there is nothing left me to do but to die. I am no good in the world ; I am no longer a father ! No. She has come to me in her extremity, and, wretch that I am, I have nothing to give her. Ah ! you put your money into a life annuity, old scoundrel ; and had you not daughters ? You did not love them. Die, die in a ditch, like the dog that you are ! Yes, I am worse than a dog ; a beast would not have done as I have done ! Oh ! my head—— it throbs as if it would burst.”

“ Papa ! ” cried both the young women at once, “ do, pray, be reasonable ! ” and they clung to him to prevent him from dashing his head against the wall. There was a sound of sobbing.

Eugène, greatly alarmed, took the bill that bore Vautrin’s signature, saw that the stamp would suffice for a larger sum, altered the figures, made it into a regular bill for twelve thousand francs, payable to Goriot’s order, and went to his neighbor’s room, determined to help him out of his present trouble by a great sacrifice on his own part.

“ Here is the money, madame,” he said, handing the piece of paper to her. “ I was asleep ; your conversation awoke me, and by this means I learned all that I owed to M. Goriot.

This bill can be discounted, and I shall meet it punctually at the due date."

The Countess stood motionless and speechless, but she held the bill in her fingers.

"Delphine," she said, with a white face, and her whole frame quivering with indignation, anger, and rage, "I forgave you everything; God is my witness that I forgave you, but I cannot forgive this! So this gentleman was there all the time, and you knew it! Your petty spite has led you to wreak your vengeance on me by betraying my secrets, my life, my children's lives, my shame, my honor! There, you are nothing to me any longer. I hate you. I will do all that I can to injure you. I will——"

Anger paralyzed her; the words died in her dry parched throat.

"Why, he is my son, my child; he is your brother, your preserver!" cried Goriot. "Kiss his hand, Nasie! Stay, I will embrace him myself," he said, straining Eugène to his breast in a frenzied clasp. "Oh my boy! I will be more than a father to you; I would be everything in the world to you; if I had God's power, I would fling worlds at your feet. Why don't you kiss him, Nasie? He is not a man, but an angel, an angel out of heaven."

"Never mind her, father; she is mad just now."

"Mad! am I? And what are you?" cried Mme. de Restaud.

"Children, children, I shall die if you go on like this," cried the old man, and he staggered and fell on the bed as if a bullet had struck him. "They are killing me between them," he said to himself.

The Countess fixed her eyes on Eugène, who stood stock-still; all his faculties were numbed by this violent scene.

"Sir?——" she said, doubt and inquiry in her face, tone, and bearing; she took no notice now of her father nor of Delphine, who was hastily unfastening his waistcoat.

“Madame,” said Eugène, answering the question before it was asked, “I will meet the bill, and keep silence about it.”

“You have killed our father, Nasie!” said Delphine, pointing to Goriot, who lay unconscious on the bed. The Countess fled.

“I freely forgive her,” said the old man, opening his eyes; “her position is horrible; it would turn an older head than hers. Comfort Nasie, and be nice to her, Delphine; promise it to your poor father before he dies,” he said, holding Delphine’s hand in a convulsive clasp.

“Oh! what ails you, father?” she cried in real alarm.

“Nothing, nothing,” said Goriot; “it will go off. There is something heavy pressing on my forehead, a little headache only—— Ah! poor Nasie, what a life lies before her!”

Just as he spoke, the Countess came back again and flung herself on her knees before him. “Forgive me!” she cried.

“Come,” said her father, “you are hurting me still more.”

“Monsieur,” the Countess said, turning to Rastignac, “misery made me unjust to you. You will be a brother to me, will you not?” and she held out her hand. Her eyes were full of tears as she spoke.

“Nasie,” cried Delphine, flinging her arms round her sister, “my little Nasie, let us forget and forgive.”

“No, no,” cried Nasie; “I shall never forget!”

“Dear angels,” cried Goriot, “it is as if a dark curtain over my eyes had been raised; your voices have called me back to life. Kiss each other once more. Well, now, Nasie, that bill will save you, won’t it?”

“I hope so. I say, papa, will you write your name on it?”

“There! how stupid of me to forget that! But I am not feeling at all well, Nasie, so you must not remember it against me. Send and let me know as soon as you are out of your strait. No, I will go to you. No, after all, I will not go; I

might meet your husband, and I should kill him on the spot. And as for signing away your property, I shall have a word to say about that. Quick, my child, and keep Maxime in order in future."

Eugène was too bewildered to speak.

"Poor Anastasie, she always had a violent temper," said Mme. de Nucingen, "but she has a good heart."

"She came back for the endorsement," said Eugène in Delphine's ear.

"Do you think so?"

"I only wish I could think otherwise. Do not trust her," he answered, raising his eyes as if he confided to heaven the thoughts that he did not venture to express.

"Yes, she is always acting a part to some extent."

"How do you feel now, dear Father Goriot?" asked Rastignac.

"I should like to go to sleep," he replied.

Eugène helped him to bed, and Delphine sat by the bedside, holding his hand until he fell asleep. Then she went.

"This evening at the Italiens," she said to Eugène, "and you can let me know how he is. To-morrow you will leave this place, monsieur. Let us go into your room. Oh! how frightful!" she cried on the threshold. "Why, you are even worse lodged than our father. Eugène, you have behaved well. I would love you more if that were possible; but, dear boy, if you are to succeed in life, you must not begin by flinging twelve thousand francs out of the windows like that. The Comte de Trailles is a confirmed gambler. My sister shuts her eyes to it. He would have made the twelve thousand francs in the same way that he wins and loses heaps of gold."

A groan from the next room brought them back to Goriot's bedside; to all appearance he was asleep, but the two lovers caught the words, "They are not happy!" Whether he was

awake or sleeping, the tone in which they were spoken went to his daughter's heart. She stole up to the pallet-bed on which her father lay, and kissed his forehead. He opened his eyes.

"Ah! Delphine!" he said.

"How are you now?" she asked.

"Quite comfortable. Do not worry about me; I shall get up presently. Don't stay with me, children; go, go and be happy."

Eugène went back with Delphine as far as her door; but he was not easy about Goriot, and would not stay to dinner, as she proposed. He wanted to be back at the *Maison Vauquer*. Father Goriot had left his room, and was just sitting down to dinner as he came in. Bianchon had placed himself where he could watch the old man carefully; and when the old vermicelli-maker took up his square of bread and smelt it to find out the quality of the flour, the medical student, studying him closely, saw that the action was purely mechanical, and shook his head.

"Just come and sit over here, hospitaller of Cochin," said Eugène.

Bianchon went the more willingly because his change of place brought him next to the old lodger.

"What is wrong with him?" asked Rastignac.

"It is all up with him, or I am much mistaken! Something very extraordinary must have taken place; he looks to me as if he were in imminent danger of serous apoplexy. The lower part of his face is composed enough, but the upper part is drawn and distorted. Then there is that peculiar look about the eyes that indicates an effusion of serum in the brain; they look as if they were covered with a film of fine dust, do you notice? I shall know more about it by to-morrow morning."

"Is there any cure for it?"

"None. It may be possible to stave death off for a time

if a way could be found of setting up a reaction in the lower extremities ; but if the symptoms do not abate by to-morrow evening, it will be all over with him, poor old fellow ! Do you know what has happened to bring this on ? There must have been some violent shock, and his mind has given way."

"Yes, there was," said Rastignac, remembering how the two daughters had struck blow on blow at their father's heart.

"But Delphine at any rate loves her father," he said to himself.

That evening at the opera Rastignac chose his words carefully, lest he should give Mme. de Nucingen needless alarm.

"Do not be anxious about him," she said, however, as soon as Eugène began, "our father has really a strong constitution, but this morning we gave him a shock. Our whole fortunes were in peril, so the thing was serious, you see. I could not live if your affection did not make me insensible to troubles that I should once have thought too hard to bear. At this moment I have but one fear left, but one misery to dread—to lose the love that has made me feel so glad to live. Everything else is as nothing to me compared with your love ; I care for nothing else, for you are all the world to me. If I feel glad to be rich, it is for your sake. To my shame be it said, I think of my lover before my father. Do you ask why ? I cannot tell you, but all my life is in you. My father gave me a heart, but you have taught it to beat. The whole world may condemn me ; what does it matter if I stand acquitted in your eyes, for you have no right to think ill of me for the faults which a tyrannous love has forced me to commit for you ! Do you think me an unnatural daughter ? Oh ! no, no one could help loving such a dear kind father as ours. But how could I hide the inevitable consequences of our miserable marriages from him ? Why did he allow us to marry when we did ? Was it not his duty to think for us and foresee for us ? To-day I know he suffers as much as we do, but how can it be helped ? And as for comforting him, we could

not comfort him in the least. Our resignation would give him more pain and hurt him far more than complaints and upbraidings. There are times in life when everything turns to bitterness."

Eugène was silent, the artless and sincere outpouring made an impression on him.

Parisian women are often false, intoxicated with vanity, selfish and self-absorbed, frivolous and shallow; yet of all women, when they love, they sacrifice their personal feelings to their passion; they rise but so much the higher for all the pettiness overcome in their nature, and become sublime. Then Eugène was struck by the profound discernment and insight displayed by this woman in judging of natural affection, when a privileged affection had separated and set her at a distance apart. Mme. de Nucingen was piqued by the silence.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"I am thinking about what you said just now. Hitherto I have always felt sure that I cared far more for you than you did for me."

She smiled, and would not give way to the happiness she felt, lest their talk should exceed the conventional limits of propriety. She had never heard the vibrating tones of a sincere and youthful love; a few more words, and she feared for her self-control.

"Eugène," she said, changing the conversation, "I wonder whether you know what has been happening? All Paris will go to Mme. de Beauséant's to-morrow. The Rochefides and the Marquis d'Ajuda have agreed to keep the matter a profound secret, but to-morrow the king will sign the marriage contract, and your poor cousin the Vicomtesse knows nothing of it as yet. She cannot put off her ball, and the Marquis will not be there. People are wondering what will happen?"

"The world laughs at baseness and connives at it. But this will kill Mme. de Beauséant."

"Oh, no," said Delphine, smiling, "you do not know

that kind of woman. Why, all Paris will be there, and so shall I; I ought to go there for your sake."

"Perhaps, after all, it is one of those absurd reports that people set in circulation here."

"We shall know the truth to-morrow."

Eugène did not return to the *Maison Vauquer*. He could not forego the pleasure of occupying his new rooms in the *Rue d'Artois*. Yesterday evening he had been obliged to leave Delphine soon after midnight, but that night it was Delphine who stayed with him until two o'clock in the morning. He rose late, and waited for *Mme. de Nucingen*, who came about noon to breakfast with him. Youth snatches eagerly at these rosy moments of happiness, and Eugène had almost forgotten *Goriot's* existence. The pretty things that surrounded him were growing familiar; this domestication in itself was one long festival for him, and *Mme. de Nucingen* was there to glorify it all by her presence. It was four o'clock before they thought of *Goriot*, and how he had looked forward to the new life in that house. Eugène said that the old man ought to be moved at once, lest he should grow too ill to move. He left Delphine, and hurried back to the lodging-house. Neither *Father Goriot* nor young *Bianchon* was in the dining-room with the others.

"Aha!" said the painter as Eugène came in, "*Father Goriot* has broken down at last. *Bianchon* is upstairs with him. One of his daughters—the *Comtesse de Restaurama*—came to see the old gentleman, and he would get up and go out, and made himself worse. Society is about to lose one of its brightest ornaments."

*Rastignac* sprang to the staircase.

"Hey! *Monsieur Eugène*!"

"*Monsieur Eugène*, the mistress is calling you," shouted *Sylvie*.

"It is this, sir," said the widow. "You and *M. Goriot* should by rights have moved out on the 15th of February.

That was three days ago ; to-day is the 18th, I ought really to be paid a month in advance ; but if you will engage to pay for both, I shall be quite satisfied."

"Why can't you trust him?"

"Trust him, indeed! If the old gentleman went off his head and died, those daughters of his would not pay me a farthing, and his things won't fetch ten francs. This morning he went out with all the spoons and forks he has left, I don't know why. He had got himself up to look quite young, and—Lord, forgive me—but I thought he had rouge on his cheeks ; he looked quite young again."

"I will be responsible," said Eugène, shuddering with horror, for he foresaw the end.

He climbed the stairs and reached Father Goriot's room. The old man was tossing on his bed. Bianchon was with him.

"Good-evening, father," said Eugène.

The old man turned his glassy eyes on him, smiled gently, and said—

"How is *she*?"

"She is quite well. But how are you?"

"There is nothing much the matter."

"Don't tire him," said Bianchon, drawing Eugène into a corner of the room.

"Well?" asked Rastignac.

"Nothing but a miracle can save him now. Serious congestion has set in ; I have put on mustard plasters, and luckily he can feel them, they are acting."

"Is it possible to move him?"

"Quite out of the question. He must stay where he is, and be kept as quiet as possible——"

"Dear Bianchon," said Eugène, "we will nurse him between us."

"I have had the head physician round from my hospital to see him."

“And what did he say?”

“He will give no opinion till to-morrow evening. He promised to look in again at the end of the day. Unluckily, the preposterous creature must needs go and do something foolish this morning; he will not say what it was. He is as obstinate as a mule. As soon as I begin to talk to him he pretends not to hear, and lies as if he were asleep instead of answering, or if he opens his eyes he begins to groan. Some time this morning he went out on foot in the streets, nobody knows where he went, and he took everything that he had of any value with him. He has been driving some confounded bargain, and it has been too much for his strength. One of his daughters has been here.”

“Was it the Countess?” asked Eugène. “A tall, dark-haired woman, with large bright eyes, slender figure, and little feet?”

“Yes.”

“Leave him to me for a bit,” said Rastignac. “I will make him confess; he will tell me all about it.”

“And meanwhile I will get my dinner. But try not to excite him; there is still some hope left.”

“All right.”

“How they will enjoy themselves to-morrow,” said Father Goriot when they were alone. “They are going to a grand ball.”

“What were you doing this morning, papa, to make yourself so poorly this evening that you have to stop in bed?”

“Nothing.”

“Did not Anastasie come to see you?” demanded Rastignac.

“Yes,” said Father Goriot.

“Well, then, don't keep anything from me. What more did she want of you?”

“Oh, she was very miserable,” he answered, gathering up all his strength to speak. “It was this way, my boy. Since

that affair of the diamonds, Nasie has not had a penny of her own. For this ball she had ordered a golden gown like a setting for a jewel. Her mantuamaker, a woman without a conscience, would not give her credit, so Nasie's waiting-woman advanced a thousand francs on account. Poor Nasie! reduced to such shifts! It cut me to the heart to think of it! But when Nasie's maid saw how things were between her master and mistress, she was afraid of losing her money, and came to an understanding with the dressmaker, and the woman refuses to send the ball-dress until the money is paid. The gown is ready, and the ball is to-morrow night; Nasie was in despair. She wanted to borrow my forks and spoons to pawn them. Her husband is determined that she shall go and wear the diamonds, so as to contradict the stories that are told all over Paris. How can she go to that heartless scoundrel and say, 'I owe a thousand francs to my dressmaker; pay her for me?' She cannot. I saw that myself. Delphine will be there too in a superb toilet, and Anastasie ought not to be outshone by her younger sister. And then—she was drowned in tears, poor girl! I felt so humbled yesterday when I had not the twelve thousand francs, that I would have given the rest of my miserable life to wipe out that wrong. You see, I could have borne anything once, but latterly this want of money has broken my heart. Oh! I did not do it by halves; I titivated myself up a bit, and went out and sold my spoons and forks and buckles for six hundred francs; then I went to old Daddy Gobseck and sold a year's interest in my annuity for four hundred francs down. Pshaw! I can live on dry bread, as I did when I was a young man; if I have done it before, I can do it again. My Nasie shall have one happy evening, at any rate. She shall be smart. The bank-note for a thousand francs is here under my pillow; it warms me to have it lying here under my head, for it is going to make my poor Nasie happy. She can turn that bad girl Victoire out of the house. A servant that cannot trust her

mistress, did any one ever hear the like! I shall be quite well to-morrow. Nasie is coming at ten o'clock. They must not think that I am ill, or they will not go to the ball; they will stop and take care of me. To-morrow Nasie will come and hold me in her arms as if I were one of her children; her kisses will make me well again. After all, I might have spent the thousand francs on physic; I would far rather give them to my little Nasie, who can charm all the pain away. At any rate, I am some comfort to her in her misery; and that makes up for my unkindness in buying an annuity. She is in the depths, and I cannot draw her out of them now. Oh! I will go into business again, I will buy wheat in Odessa; out there, wheat fetches a quarter of the price it sells for here. There is a law against the importation of grain, but the good folk who made the law forgot to prohibit the introduction of wheat products and food stuffs made from corn. Hey! hey!— That struck me this morning. There is a fine trade to be done in starch."

Eugene, watching the old man's face, thought that his friend was light-headed.

"Come," he said, "do not talk any more, you must take rest——" Just then Bianchon came up, and Eugène went down to dinner.

The two students sat up with him that night, relieving each other in turn. Bianchon brought up his medical books and studied; Eugène wrote letters home to his mother and sisters. Next morning Bianchon thought the symptoms more hopeful, but the patient's condition demanded continual attention, which the two students alone were willing to give—a task impossible to describe in the squeamish phraseology of the epoch. Leeches must be applied to the wasted body; the poultices, hot foot-baths, and other details of the treatment required the physical strength and devotion of the two young men. Mme. de Restaud did not come; but she sent a messenger for the money.

“I expected she would come herself; but it would have been a pity for her to come, she would have been anxious about me,” said the father, and to all appearance he was well content.

At seven o'clock that evening Thérèse came with a letter from Delphine.

“What are you doing, dear friend? I have been loved for a very little while, and am I neglected already? In the confidences of heart and heart, I have learned to know your soul—you are too noble not to be faithful for ever, for you know that love with all its infinite subtle changes of feelings is never the same. Once you said, as we were listening to the prayer in ‘*Mosè in Egitto*,’ ‘For some it is the monotony of a single note; for others, it is the infinite of sound.’ Remember that I am expecting you this evening to take me to Mme. de Beauséant’s ball. Every one knows now that the king signed M. d’Ajuda’s marriage-contract this morning, and the poor Vicomtesse knew nothing of it until two o'clock this afternoon. All Paris will flock to her house, of course, just as a crowd fills the Place de Grève to see an execution. It is horrible, is it not, to go out of curiosity to see if she will hide her anguish, and whether she will die courageously? I certainly should not go, my friend, if I had been at her house before; but, of course, she will not receive society any more after this, and all my efforts would be in vain. My position is a very unusual one, and, besides, I am going there partly on your account. I am waiting for you. If you are not beside me in less than two hours, I do not know whether I could forgive such treason.”

Rastignac took up a pen and wrote—

“I am waiting till the doctor comes to know if there is any hope of your father’s life. He is lying dangerously ill.

I will come and bring you the news, but I am afraid it may be a sentence of death. When I come you can decide whether you can go to the ball. Yours a thousand times."

At half-past eight the doctor arrived. He did not take a very hopeful view of the case, but thought that there was no immediate danger. Improvements and relapses might be expected, and the good man's life and reason hung in the balance.

"It would be better for him to die at once," the doctor said as he took leave.

Eugène left Goriot to Bianchon's care, and went to carry the sad news to Mme. de Nucingen. Family feeling lingered in her, and this must put an end for the present to her plans of amusement.

"Tell her to enjoy her evening as if nothing had happened," cried Goriot. He had been lying in a sort of stupor, but he suddenly sat upright as Eugène went out.

Eugène, half-heartbroken, entered Delphine's room. Her hair had been dressed; she wore her dancing slippers; she had only to put on her ball-dress; but when the artist is giving the finishing stroke to his creation, the last touches require more time than the whole ground-work of the picture.

"Why! you are not dressed!" she cried.

"Madame, your father——"

"My father again!" she exclaimed, breaking in upon him. "You need not teach me what is due to my father, I have known my father this long while. Not a word, Eugène. I will hear what you have to say when you are dressed. My carriage is waiting, take it, go round to your rooms and dress, Thérèse has put out everything in readiness for you. Come back as soon as you can; we will talk about my father on the way to Mme. de Beauséant's. We must go early; if we have to wait our turn in a row of carriages, we shall be lucky if we get there by eleven o'clock."

“Madame——”

“Quick! not a word!” she cried, darting into her dressing-room for a necklace.

“Do go, Monsieur Eugène, or you will vex madame,” said Thérèse, hurrying him away; and Eugène was too horror-stricken by this elegant parricide to resist.

He went to his rooms and dressed, sad, thoughtful, and dispirited. The world of Paris was like an ocean of mud for him just then; and it seemed that whoever set foot in that black mire must needs sink into it up to the chin.

“Their crimes are paltry,” said Eugène to himself. “Vautrin was greater.”

He had seen society in its three great phases—obedience, struggle, and revolt; the family, the world, and Vautrin; and he hesitated in his choice. Obedience was dull, revolt impossible, struggle hazardous. His thoughts wandered back to the home circle. He thought of the quiet uneventful life, the pure happiness of the days spent among those who loved him there. Those loving and beloved beings passed their lives in obedience to the natural laws of the hearth, and in that obedience found a deep and constant serenity, unvexed by torments such as these. Yet, for all his good impulses, he could not bring himself to make profession of the religion of pure souls to Delphine, nor to prescribe the duties of piety to her in the name of love. His education had begun to bear its fruits; he loved selfishly already. Besides, his tact had discovered to him the real nature of Delphine; he divined instinctively that she was capable of stepping over her father’s corpse to go to the ball; and within himself he felt that he had neither the strength of mind to play the part of mentor, nor the strength of character to vex her, nor the courage to leave her to go alone.

“She would never forgive me for putting her in the wrong over it,” he said to himself. Then he turned the doctor’s dictum over in his mind; he tried to believe that Goriot was

not so dangerously ill as he had imagined, and ended by collecting together a sufficient quantity of traitorous excuses for Delphine's conduct. She did not know how ill her father was; the kind old man himself would have made her go to the ball if she had gone to see him. So often it happens that this one or that stands condemned by the social laws that govern family relations; and yet there are peculiar circumstances in the case, differences of temperament, divergent interests, innumerable complications of family life that excuse the apparent offense.

Eugène did not wish to see too clearly; he was ready to sacrifice his conscience to his mistress. Within the last few days his whole life had undergone a change. Woman had entered into his world and thrown it into chaos, family claims dwindled away before her; she had appropriated all his being to her uses. Rastignac and Delphine found each other at a crisis in their lives when their union gave them the most poignant bliss. Their passion, so long proved, had only gained in strength by the gratified desire that often extinguishes passion. This woman was his, and Eugène recognized that not until then had he loved her; perhaps love is only gratitude for pleasure. This woman, vile or sublime, he adored for the pleasures she had brought as her dower; and Delphine loved Rastignac as Tantalus would have loved some angel who had satisfied his hunger and quenched the burning thirst in his parched throat.

"Well," said Mme. de Nucingen when he came back in evening dress, "how is my father?"

"Very dangerously ill," he answered; "if you will grant me a proof of your affection, we will just go in to see him on the way."

"Very well," she said. "Yes, but afterwards. Dear Eugène, do be nice, and don't preach to me. Come."

They set out for the ball. Eugène said nothing for a while, apparently absorbed in deep meditation.

“What is it now?” she asked.

“I can hear the death-rattle in your father’s throat,” he said, almost angrily. And with the hot indignation of youth, he told the story of Mme. de Restaud’s vanity and cruelty, of her father’s final act of self-sacrifice, that had brought about this struggle between life and death, of the price that had been paid for Anastasie’s golden embroideries. Delphine cried.

“I shall look frightful,” she thought. She dried her tears.

“I will nurse my father; I will not leave his bedside,” she said aloud.

“Ah! now you are as I would have you,” exclaimed Rastignac.

The lamps of five hundred carriages lit up the darkness about the Hôtel de Beauséant. A gendarme in all the glory of his uniform stood on either side of the brightly lighted gateway. The great world was flocking thither that night in its eager curiosity to see the great lady at the moment of her fall, and the rooms on the ground floor were already full to overflowing, when Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac appeared. Never since Louis XIV. tore her lover away from La Grande Mademoiselle, and the whole court hastened to visit that unfortunate princess, had a disastrous love affair made such a sensation in Paris. But the youngest daughter of the almost royal house of Burgundy had risen proudly above her pain, and moved till the last moment like a queen in this world—its vanities had always been valueless for her, save in so far as they contributed to the triumph of her passion. The salons were filled with the most beautiful women in Paris, resplendent in their toilets, and radiant with smiles. Ministers and ambassadors, the most distinguished men at court, men bedizened with decorations, stars, and ribbons, men who bore the most illustrious names in France, had gathered about the Vicomtesse.

The music of the orchestra vibrated in wave after wave of

sound from the golden ceiling of the palace, now made desolate for its queen.

Madame de Beauséant stood at the door of the first salon to receive the guests who were styled her friends. She was dressed in white, and wore no ornament in the plaits of hair braided about her head; her face was calm; there was no sign there of pride, nor of pain, nor of joy that she did not feel. No one could read her soul; she stood there like some Niobe carved in marble. For a few intimate friends there was a tinge of satire in her smile; but no scrutiny saw any change in her, nor had she looked otherwise in the days of the glory of her happiness. The most callous of her guests admired her as young Rome applauded some gladiator who could die smiling. It seemed as if society had adorned itself for a last audience of one of its sovereigns.

“I was afraid that you would not come,” she said to Rastignac.

“Madame,” he said, in an unsteady voice, taking her speech as a reproach, “I shall be the last to go, that is why I am here.”

“Good,” she said, and she took his hand. “You are perhaps the only one that I can trust here among all these. Oh, my friend, when you love, love a woman whom you are sure that you can love always. Never forsake a woman.”

She took Rastignac’s arm, and went towards a sofa in the card-room.

“I want you to go to the Marquis,” she said. “Jacques, my footman, will go with you; he has a letter that you will take. I am asking the Marquis to give my letters back to me. He will give them all up, I like to think that. When you have my letters, go up to my room with them. Some one shall bring me word.”

She rose to go to meet the Duchesse de Langeais, her most intimate friend, who had come like the rest of the world.

Rastignac went. He asked for the Marquis d’Ajuda at the

Hôtel Rochefide, feeling certain that the latter would be spending his evening there, and so it proved. The Marquis went to his own house with Rastignac, and gave a casket to the student, saying as he did so, "They are all there."

He seemed as if he was about to say something to Eugène, to ask about the ball, or the Vicomtesse; perhaps he was on the brink of the confession that, even then, he was in despair, and knew that his marriage would be a fatal mistake; but a proud gleam shone in his eyes, and with deplorable courage he kept his noblest feelings a secret.

"Do not even mention my name to her, my dear Eugène." He grasped Rastignac's hand sadly and affectionately, and turned away from him. Eugène went back to the Hôtel Beauséant, the servant took him to the Vicomtesse's room. There were signs there of preparations for a journey. He sat down by the fire, fixed his eyes on the cedar-wood casket, and fell into deep mournful musings. Mme. de Beauséant loomed up largely in these imaginings, like a goddess in the Iliad.

"Ah! my friend!—" said the Vicomtesse; she crossed the room and laid her hand on Rastignac's shoulder. He saw the tears in his cousin's uplifted eyes, saw that one hand was raised to take the casket, and that the fingers of the other trembled. Suddenly she took the casket, put it in the fire, and watched it burn.

"They are dancing," she said. "They all came very early; but death will be long in coming. Hush! my friend," and she laid a finger on Rastignac's lips, seeing that he was about to speak. "I shall never see Paris again. I am taking my leave of this world. At five o'clock this morning I shall set out on my journey; I mean to bury myself in the remotest part of Normandy. I have had very little time to make my arrangements; since three o'clock this afternoon I have been busy signing documents, setting my affairs in order; there was no one whom I could send to——"

She broke off.

“He was sure to be——”

Again she broke off; the weight of her sorrow was more than she could bear. In such moments as these everything is agony, and some words are impossible to utter.

“And so I counted upon you to do me this last piece of service this evening,” she said. “I should like to give you some pledge of friendship. I shall often think of you. You have seemed to me to be kind and noble, fresh-hearted and true, in this world where such qualities are seldom found. I should like you to think sometimes of me. Stay,” she said, glancing about her, “there is this box that has held my gloves. Every time I opened it before going to a ball or to the theatre, I used to feel that I must be beautiful, because I was so happy; and I never touched it except to lay some gracious memory in it: there is so much of my old self in it, of a Madame de Beauséant who now lives no longer. Will you take it? I will leave directions that it is to be sent to you in the Rue d’Artois. Mme. de Nucingen looked very charming this evening. Eugène, you must love her. Perhaps we may never see each other again, my friend; but be sure of this, that I shall pray for you who have been kind to me. Now let us go downstairs. People shall not think that I am weeping. I have all time and eternity before me, and where I am going I shall be alone, and no one will ask me the reason of my tears. One last look round first.”

She stood for a moment. Then she covered her eyes with her hands for an instant, dashed away the tears, bathed her face with cold water, and took the student’s arm.

“Let us go!” she said.

This suffering, endured with such noble fortitude, shook Eugène with a more violent emotion than he had felt before. They went back to the ballroom, and Mme. de Beauséant went through the rooms on Eugène’s arm—the last delicately gracious act of a gracious woman. In another moment he saw the sisters, Mme. de Restaud and Mme. de Nucingen.

The Countess shone in all the glory of her magnificent diamonds; every stone must have scorched like fire, she was never to wear them again. Strong as love and pride might be in her, she found it difficult to meet her husband's eyes. The sight of her was scarcely calculated to lighten Rastignac's sad thoughts; through the blaze of those diamonds he seemed to see the wretched pallet-bed on which Father Goriot was lying. The Vicomtesse misread his melancholy; she withdrew her hand from his arm.

"Come," she said to him, "I must not deprive you of a pleasure."

Eugène was soon claimed by Delphine. She was delighted with the impression that she had made, and eager to lay at her lover's feet the homage she had received in this new world in which she hoped to live and move, henceforth, a conspicuous figure.

"What do you think of Nasie?" she asked him.

"She has discounted everything, even her own father's death," said Rastignac.

Towards four o'clock in the morning the rooms began to empty. A little later the music ceased, and the Duchesse de Langeais and Rastignac were left in the great ballroom. The Vicomtesse, who thought to find the student there alone, came back there at the last. She had taken leave of M. de Beauséant, who had gone off to bed, saying again as he went, "It is a great pity, my dear, to shut yourself up at your age! Pray stay among us."

Mme. de Beauséant saw the Duchess, and, in spite of herself, an exclamation broke from her.

"I saw how it was, Clara," said Mme. de Langeais. "You are going from among us, and you will never come back. But you must not go until you have heard me, until we have understood each other."

She took her friend's arm, and they went together into the next room. There the Duchess looked at her with tears in

her eyes ; she held her friend in a close embrace, and kissed her cheek.

“ I could not let you go without a word, dearest ; the remorse would have been too hard to bear. You can count upon me as surely as upon yourself. You have shown yourself great this evening ; I feel that I am worthy of your friendship, and I mean to prove myself worthy of it. I have not always been kind ; I was in the wrong ; forgive me, dearest ; I wish I could unsay anything that may have hurt you ; I take back those words. One common sorrow has brought us together again, for I do not know which of us is the more miserable. M. de Montriveau was not here to-night ; do you understand what that means ? None of those who saw you to-night, Clara, will ever forget you. I mean to make one last effort. If I fail, I shall go into a convent. Clara, where are you going ? ”

“ Into Normandy, to Courcelles. I shall love and pray there until the day when God shall take me from this world. M. de Rastignac ! ” called the Vicomtesse, in a tremulous voice, remembering that the young man was waiting there.

The student knelt to kiss his cousin’s hand.

“ Good-by, Antoinette ! ” said Mme. de Beauséant. “ May you be happy. ” She turned to the student. “ You are young, ” she said ; “ you have some beliefs still left. I have been privileged, like some dying people, to find sincere and reverent feeling in those about me as I take my leave of this world. ”

It was nearly five o’clock that morning when Rastignac came away. He had put Mme. de Beauséant into her traveling carriage, and received her last farewells, spoken amid fast-falling tears ; for no greatness is so great that it can rise above the laws of human affection, or live beyond the jurisdiction of pain, as certain demagogues would have the people believe. Eugène returned on foot to the Maison Vauquer

through the cold and darkness. His education was nearly complete.

“There is no hope for poor Father Goriot,” said Bianchon, as Rastignac came into the room. Eugène looked for a while at the sleeping man, then he turned to his friend. “Dear fellow, you are content with the modest career you have marked out for yourself; keep to it. I am in hell, and I must stay there. Believe everything that you hear said of the world, nothing is too impossibly bad. No Juvenal could paint the horrors hidden away under the covering of gems and gold.”

At two o'clock in the afternoon Bianchon came to wake Rastignac, and begged him to take charge of Goriot, who had grown worse as the day wore on. The medical student was obliged to go out.

“Poor old man, he has not two days to live, maybe not many hours,” he said; “but we must do our utmost, all the same, to fight the disease. It will be a very troublesome case, and we shall want money. We can nurse him between us, of course, but, for my own part, I have not a penny. I have turned out his pockets, and rummaged through his drawers—result, *nix*. I asked him about it while his mind was clear, and he told me he had not a farthing of his own. What have you?”

“I have twenty francs left,” said Rastignac; “but I will take them to the roulette table, I shall be sure to win.”

“And if you lose?”

“Then I shall go to his sons-in-law and his daughters and ask them for money.”

“And suppose they refuse?” Bianchon retorted. “The most pressing thing just now is not really money; we must put mustard poultices, as hot as they can be made, on his feet and legs. If he calls out, there is still some hope for him. You know how to set about doing it, and, besides, Christophe will help you. I am going round to the dispen-

sary to persuade them to let us have the things we want on credit. It is a pity that we could not move him to the hospital; poor fellow, he would be better there. Well, come along, I leave you in charge; you must stay with him till I come back."

The two young men went back to the room where the old man was lying. Eugène was startled at the change in Goriot's face, so livid, distorted, and feeble.

"How are you, papa?" he said, bending over the pallet-bed. Goriot turned his dull eyes upon Eugène, looked at him attentively, and did not recognize him. It was more than the student could bear; the tears came into his eyes.

"Bianchon, ought we to have curtains put up in the windows?"

"No, the temperature and the light do not affect him now. It would be a good thing for him if he felt heat or cold; but we must have a fire in any case to make tisanes and heat the other things. I will send round a few sticks; they will last till we can have in some firewood. I burned all the bark fuel you had left, as well as his, poor man, yesterday and during the night. The place was so damp that the water stood in drops on the walls; I could hardly get the room dry. Christophe came in and swept the floor, but the place is like a stable; I had to burn juniper, the smell was something horrible."

"My God!" said Rastignac. "To think of those daughters of his."

"One moment, if he asks for something to drink, give him this," said the house student, pointing to a large white jar. "If he begins to groan, and the belly feels hot and hard to the touch, you know what to do; get Christophe to help you. If he should happen to grow much excited, and begin to talk a good deal, and even to ramble in his talk, do not be alarmed. It would not be a bad symptom. But send Christophe to the Hospice Cochin. Our doctor, my chum, or I will come and

apply moxas. We had a great consultation this morning while you were asleep. A surgeon, a pupil of Gall's, came, and our house surgeon, and the head physician from the Hôtel-Dieu. Those gentlemen considered that the symptoms were very unusual and interesting; the case must be carefully watched, for it throws a light on several obscure and rather important scientific problems. One of the authorities says that if there is more pressure of serum on one or other portion of the brain, it should affect his mental capacities in such and such directions. So if he should talk, notice very carefully what kind of ideas his mind seems to run on; whether memory, or penetration, or the reasoning faculties are exercised; whether sentiments or practical questions fill his thoughts; whether he makes forecasts or dwells on the past; in fact, you must be prepared to give an accurate report of him. It is quite likely that the extravasation fills the whole brain, in which case he will die in the imbecile state in which he is lying now. You cannot tell anything about these mysterious nervous diseases. Suppose the crash came here," said Bianchon, touching the back of the head, "very strange things have been known to happen; the brain sometimes partially recovers, and death is delayed. Or the congested matter may pass out of the brain altogether through channels which can only be determined by a post-mortem examination. There is an old man at the Hospital for Incurables, an imbecile patient, in his case the effusion has followed the direction of the spinal cord; he suffers the most horrible agonies, but still he lives."

"Did they enjoy themselves?" It was Father Goriot who spoke. He had recognized Eugène.

"Oh! he thinks of nothing but his daughters," said Bianchon. "Scores of times last night he said to me, 'They are dancing now! She has her dress.' He called them by their names. He made me cry, the devil take it, calling with that tone in his voice, for 'Delphine! my little Delphine!

and Nasie!' Upon my word," said the medical student, "it was enough to make any one burst out crying."

"Delphine," said the old man, "she is there, isn't she? I knew she was there," and his eyes sought the door.

"I am going down now to tell Sylvie to get the poultices ready," said Bianchon. "They ought to go on at once."

Rastignac was left alone with the old man. He sat at the foot of the bed, and gazed at the face before him, so horribly changed that it was shocking to see.

"Noble natures cannot dwell in this world," he said; "Mme. de Beauséant has fled from it, and there he lies dying. What place indeed is there in the shallow, petty, frivolous thing called society, for noble thoughts and feelings?"

Pictures of yesterday's ball rose up in his memory, in strange contrast to the death-bed scene before him. Bianchon suddenly appeared.

"I say, Eugène, I have just seen our head surgeon at the hospital, and I ran all the way back here. If the old man shows any signs of reason, if he begins to talk, cover him with a mustard poultice from the neck to the base of the spine, and send round for us."

"Dear Bianchon," exclaimed Eugène.

"Oh! it is an interesting case from a scientific point of view," said the medical student, with all the enthusiasm of a neophyte.

"So!" said Eugène. "Am I really the only one who cares for the poor old man for his own sake?"

"You would not have said so if you had seen me this morning," returned Bianchon, who did not take offense at this speech. "Doctors who have seen a good deal of practice never see anything but the disease, but, my dear fellow, I can see the patient still."

He went. Eugène was left alone with the old man, and with an apprehension of a crisis that set in, in fact, before very long.

“ Ah ! dear boy, is that you ? ” said Father Goriot, recognizing Eugène.

“ Did you feel better ? ” asked the law student, taking his hand.

“ Yes. My head felt as if it were being screwed in a vise, but now it is set free again. Did you see my girls ? They will be here directly ; as soon as they know that I am ill they will hurry here at once ; they used to take such care of me in the Rue de la Jussienne ! Great heavens ! if only my room was fit for them to come into ! There has been a young man here, who has burned up all my bark fuel.”

“ I can hear Christophe coming upstairs,” Eugène answered. “ He is bringing up some firewood that that young man has sent you.”

“ Good, but how am I to pay for the wood ? I have not a penny left, dear boy. I have given everything, everything. I am a pauper now. Well, at least the golden gown was grand, was it not ? (Ah ! what pain this is !) Thanks, Christophe ! God will reward you, my boy ; I have nothing left now.”

Eugène went over to Christophe and whispered in the man’s ear, “ I will pay you well, and Sylvie too, for your trouble.”

“ My daughters told you that they were coming, didn’t they, Christophe ? Go again to them, and I will give you five francs. Tell them that I am not feeling well, that I should like to kiss them both and see them once again before I die. Tell them that, but don’t alarm them more than you can help.”

Rastignac signed to Christophe to go, and the man hurriedly departed.

“ They will come before long,” the old man went on. “ I know them so well. My tender-hearted Delphine ! If I am going to die, she will feel it so much ! And so will Nasie. I do not want to die ; they will cry if I die ; and if I die,

dear Eugène, I shall not see them any more. It will be very dreary there where I am going. For a father it is hell to be without your children; I have served my apprenticeship already since they married. My heaven was in the Rue de la Jussienne. Eugène, do you think that if I go to heaven I could come back to earth, and be near them in spirit? I have heard some such things said. Is it true? It is as if I could see them at this moment as they used to be when we all lived in the Rue de la Jussienne. They used to come downstairs of a morning. 'Good-morning, papa!' they used to say; and I would take them on my knees; we had all sorts of little games of play together, and they had such pretty coaxing ways. We always had breakfast together, too, every morning, and they had dinner with me—in fact, I was a father then. I enjoyed my children. They did not think for themselves so long as they lived in the Rue de la Jussienne; they knew nothing of the world; they loved me with all their hearts. *Mon Dieu!* why could they not always be little girls? (Oh! my head! this racking pain in my head!) Ah! ah! forgive me, children; this pain is fearful; it must be agony indeed, for you have used me to endure pain. *Mon Dieu!* if only I held their hands in mine, I should not feel it at all. Do you think that they are on the way? Christophe is so stupid; I ought to have gone myself. *He* will see them. But you went to the ball yesterday; just tell me how they looked. They did not know that I was ill, did they, or they would not have been dancing, poor little things? Oh! I must not be ill any longer. They stand too much in need of me; their fortunes are in danger. And such husbands as they are bound to! I must get well! (Oh! what pain this is! what pain this is!— ah! ah!) I must get well, you see; for they *must* have money, and I know how to set about making some. I will go to Odessa and manufacture starch there. I am an old hand, I will make millions. (Oh! this is agony!) ”

Goriot was silent for a moment ; it seemed to require his whole strength to endure the pain.

“ If they were here, I should not complain,” he said. “ So why should I complain now ? ”

He seemed to grow drowsy with exhaustion, and lay quietly for a long time. Christophe came back ; and Rastignac, thinking that Goriot was asleep, allowed the man to give his story aloud.

“ First of all, sir, I went to Madame la Comtesse,” he said ; “ but she and her husband were so busy that I couldn't get to speak to her. When I insisted that I must see her, M. de Restaud came out to me himself, and went on like this — ‘ M. Goriot is dying, is he ? Very well, it is the best thing he can do. I want Mme. de Restaud to transact some important business, when it is all finished she can go. ’ The gentleman looked angry, I thought. I was just going away when Mme. de Restaud came out into an ante-chamber through a door that I did not notice, and said, ‘ Christophe, tell my father that my husband wants me to discuss some matters with him, and I cannot leave the house, the life or death of my children is at stake ; but as soon as it is over, I will come. ’ As for Madame la Baronne, that is another story ! I could not speak to her either, and I did not even see her. Her waiting-woman said, ‘ Ah, yes, but madame only came back from a ball at a quarter to five this morning ; she is asleep now, and if I wake her before mid-day she will be cross. As soon as she rings, I will go and tell her that her father is worse. It will be time enough then to tell her bad news ! ’ I begged and I prayed, but, there ! it was no good. Then I asked for M. le Baron, but he was out. ”

“ To think that neither of his daughters should come ! ” exclaimed Rastignac. “ I will write to them both. ”

“ Neither of them ! ” cried the old man, sitting upright in bed. “ They are busy, they are asleep, they will not come ! I knew that they would not. Not until you are dying do you

know your children—— Oh! my friend, do not marry; do not have children! You give them life; they give you your death-blow. You bring them into the world, and they send you out of it. No, they will not come. I have known that these ten years. Sometimes I have told myself so, but I did not dare to believe it.”

The tears gathered and stood without overflowing the red sockets.

“Ah! if I were rich still, if I had kept my money, if I had not given all to them, they would be with me now; they would fawn on me and cover my cheeks with their kisses! I should be living in a great mansion; I should have grand apartments and servants and a fire in my room; and *they* would be about me all in tears, and their husbands and their children. I should have had all that; now, I have nothing. Money brings everything to you; even your daughters. My money. Oh! where is my money? If I had plenty of money to leave behind me, they would nurse me and tend me; I should hear their voices, I should see their faces. Ah, God! who knows? They both of them have hearts of stone. I loved them too much; it was not likely that they should love me. A father ought always to be rich; he ought to keep his children well in hand, like unruly horses. I have gone down on my knees to them. Wretches! this is the crowning act that brings the last ten years to a proper close. If you but knew how much they made of me just after they were married. (Oh! this is cruel torture!) I had just given them each eight hundred thousand francs; they were bound to be civil to me after that, and their husbands too were civil. I used to go to their houses; it was, ‘My kind father’ here, ‘My dear father’ there. There was always a place for me at their tables. I used to dine with their husbands now and then, and they were very respectful to me. I was still worth something, they thought. How should they know? I have not said anything about my affairs. It is worth while to be civil to a man

who has given his daughters eight hundred thousand francs apiece ; and they showed me every attention then—but it was all for my money. Grand people are not great. I found that out by experience ! I went to the theatre with them in their carriage ; I might stay as long as I cared to stay at their evening parties. In fact, they acknowledged me as their father ; publicly they owned that they were my daughters. But I was always a shrewd one, you see, and nothing was lost upon me. Everything went straight to the mark and pierced my heart. I saw quite well that it was all sham and pretense, but there is no help for such things as these. I felt less at my ease at their dinner table than I did downstairs here. I had nothing to say for myself. So these grand folks would ask in my son-in-law's ear, ' Who may that gentleman be ? ' ' The father-in-law with the dollars ; he is very rich. ' ' The devil he is ! ' they would say, and look again at me with the respect due to my money. Well, if I was in the way sometimes, I paid dearly for my mistakes. And, besides, who is perfect ? (My head is one sore ! ) Dear Monsieur Eugène, I am suffering so now, that a man might die of the pain ; but it is nothing, nothing to be compared with the pain I endured when Anastasie made me feel, for the first time, that I had said something stupid. She looked at me, and that glance of hers opened all my veins. I used to want to know everything, to be learned ; and one thing I did learn thoroughly—I knew that I was not wanted here on earth.

“ The next day I went to Delphine for comfort, and what should I do there but make some stupid blunder that made her angry with me. I was like one driven out of his senses. For a week I did not know what to do ; I did not dare to go to see them for fear they should reproach me. And that was how they both turned me out of the house.

“ Oh, God ! Thou knowest all the misery and anguish that I have endured ; Thou hast counted all the wounds that have been dealt to me in these years that have aged and

changed me and whitened my hair and drained my life ; why dost Thou make me to suffer so to-day? Have I not more than expiated the sin of loving them too much? They themselves have been the instruments of vengeance ; they have tortured me for my sin of affection.

“ Ah, well ! fathers know no better ; I loved them so ; I went back to them as a gambler goes to the gaming-table. This love was my vice, you see, my mistress—they were everything in the world to me. They were always wanting something or other, dresses and ornaments, and what not ; their maids used to tell me what they wanted, and I used to give them the things for the sake of the welcome that they bought for me. But, at the same time, they used to give me little lectures on my behavior in society ; they began about it at once. Then they began to feel ashamed of me. That is what comes of having your children well brought up. I could not go to school again at my time of life. (This pain is fearful ! *Mon Dieu!* These doctors ! these doctors ! If they would open my head, it would give me some relief !) Oh, my daughters, my daughters ! Anastasie ! Delphine ! If I could only see them ! Send for the police, and make them come to me ! Justice is on my side, the whole world is on my side, I have natural rights, and the law with me. I protest ! The country will go to ruin if a father’s rights are trampled underfoot. That is easy to see. The whole world turns on fatherly love ; fatherly love is the foundation of society ; it will crumble into ruin when children do not love their fathers. Oh ! if I could only see them, and hear them, no matter what they said ; if I could simply hear their voices, it would soothe the pain. Delphine ! Delphine most of all. But tell them when they come not to look so coldly at me as they do. Oh ! my friend, my good Monsieur Eugène, you do not know what it is when all the golden light in a glance suddenly turns to a leaden gray. It has been one long winter here since the light in their eyes shone no more for me. I

have had nothing but disappointments to devour. Disappointment has been my daily bread ; I have lived on humiliation and insults. I have swallowed down all the affronts for which they sold me my poor stealthy little moments of joy ; for I love them so ! Think of it ! a father hiding himself to get a glimpse of his children ! I have given all my life to them, and to-day they will not give me an hour ! I am hungering and thirsting for them, my heart is burning in me, but they will not come to bring relief in the agony, for I am dying now, I feel that this is death. Do they not know what it means to trample on a father's corpse ? There is a God in heaven who avenges us fathers whether we will or not.

“ Oh ! they will come ! Come to me, darlings, and give me one more kiss ; one last kiss, the Viaticum for your father, who will pray God for you in heaven. I will tell Him that you have been good children to your father, and plead your cause with God ! After all, it is not their fault. I tell you they are innocent, my friend. Tell every one that it is not their fault, and no one need be distressed on my account. It is all my own fault, I taught them to trample upon me. I loved to have it so. It is no one's affair but mine ; man's justice and God's justice have nothing to do in it. God would be unjust if He condemned them for anything they may have done to me. I did not behave to them properly ; I was stupid enough to resign my rights. I would have humbled myself in the dust for them. What could you expect ? The most beautiful nature, the noblest soul, would have been spoiled by such indulgence. I am a wretch, I am justly punished. I, and I only, am to blame for all their sins ; I spoiled them. To-day they are as eager for pleasure as they used to be for sugar-plums. When they were little girls I indulged them in every whim. They had a carriage of their own when they were fifteen. They have never been crossed. I am guilty, and not they—but I sinned through love.

“ My heart would open at the sound of their voices. I can

hear them ; they are coming. Yes ! yes ! they are coming. The law demands that they should be present at their father's death-bed ; the law is on my side. It would only cost them the hire of a cab. I would pay that. Write to them, tell them that I have millions to leave to them ! On my word of honor, yes. I am going to manufacture Italian paste foods at Odessa. I understand the trade. There are millions to be made in it. Nobody has thought of the scheme as yet. You see, there will be no waste, no damage in transit, as there always is with wheat and flour. Hey ! hey ! and starch too ; there are millions to be made in the starch trade ! You will not be telling a lie. Millions, tell them ; and even if they really come because they covet the money, I would rather let them deceive me ; and I shall see them in any case. I want my children ! I gave them life ; they are mine, mine !" and he sat upright. The head thus raised, with its scanty white hair, seemed to Eugène like a threat ; every line that could still speak spoke of menace.

"There, there, dear father," said Eugène, "lie down again ; I will write to them at once. As soon as Bianchon comes back I will go for them myself, if they do not come before."

"If they do not come?" repeated the old man, sobbing. "Why, I shall be dead before then ; I shall die in a fit of rage, of rage ! Anger is getting the better of me. I can see my whole life at this minute. I have been cheated ! They do not love me—they have never loved me all their lives ! It is all clear to me. They have not come, and they will not come. The longer they put off their coming, the less they are likely to give me this joy. I know them. They have never cared to guess my disappointments, my sorrows, my wants ; they never cared to know my life ; they will have no presentiment of my death ; they do not even know the secret of my tenderness for them. Yes, I see it all now. I have laid my heart open so often that they take everything I do

for them as a matter of course. They might have asked me for the very eyes out of my head, and I would have bidden them to pluck them out. They think that all fathers are like theirs. You should always make your value felt. Their own children will avenge me. Why, for their own sakes they should come to me! Make them understand that they are laying up retribution for their own death-beds. All crimes are summed up in this one—— Go to them; just tell them that if they stay away it will be parricide! There is enough laid to their charge already without adding that to the list. Cry aloud as I do now, ‘Nasie! Delphine! here! Come to your father; the father who has been so kind to you is lying ill!’ Not a sound; no one comes! Then am I to die like a dog? This is to be my reward—I am forsaken at the last. They are wicked, heartless women; curses on them, I loathe them. I shall rise at night from my grave to curse them again; for, after all, my friends, have I done wrong! They are behaving very badly to me, eh?—— What am I saying? Did you not tell me just now that Delphine was in the room? She is more tender-hearted than her sister—— Eugène, you are my son, you know. You will love her; be a father to her! Her sister is very unhappy. And there are their fortunes! Ah, God! I am dying, this anguish is almost more than I can bear! Cut off my head; leave me nothing but my heart.”

“Christophe!” shouted Eugène, alarmed by the way in which the old man moaned, and by his cries, “go for M. Bianchon, and send a cab here for me. I am going to fetch them, dear father; I will bring them back to you.”

“Make them come! Compel them to come! Call out the Guard, the military, anything and everything, but make them come!” He looked at Eugène, and a last gleam of intelligence shone in his eyes. “Go to the authorities, to the public prosecutor, let them bring them here; come they shall!”

“But you have cursed them.”

“Who said that!” said the old man in dull amazement. “You know quite well that I love them, I adore them! I shall be quite well again if I can see them—— Go for them, my good neighbor, my dear boy, you are kind-hearted; I wish I could repay you for your kindness, but I have nothing to give you now, save the blessing of a dying man. Ah! if I could only see Delphine, to tell her to pay my debt to you. If the other cannot come, bring Delphine to me at any rate. Tell her that unless she comes, you will not love her any more. She is so fond of you that she will come to me then. Give me something to drink! There is a fire in my bowels. Press something against my forehead! If my daughters would lay their hands there, I think I should get better—— *Mon Dieu!* who will recover their money for them when I am gone?—— I will manufacture vermicelli out in Odessa; I will go to Odessa for their sakes.”

“Here is something to drink,” said Eugène, supporting the dying man on his left arm, while he held a cup of tisane to Goriot’s lips.

“How you must love your own father and mother!” said the old man, and grasped the student’s hands in both of his. It was a feeble, trembling grasp. “I am going to die; I shall die without seeing my daughters; do you understand? To be always thirsting, and never to drink; that has been my life for the last ten years—— I have no daughters, my sons-in-law killed them. No, since their marriages they have been dead to me. Fathers should petition the Chambers to pass a law against marriage. If you love your daughters, do not let them marry. A son-in-law is a rascal who poisons a girl’s mind and contaminates her whole nature. Let us have no more marriages! It robs us of our daughters; we are left alone upon our death-beds, and they are not with us then. They ought to pass a law for dying fathers. This is awful! It cries for vengeance! They cannot come, because my sons-in-law

forbid them!— Kill them!— Restaud and the Alsatian, kill them both! They have murdered me between them; they— Death or my daughters!— Ah! it is too late, I am dying, and they are not here!— Dying without them! Nasie!— Fifine! Why do you not come to me? Your papa is going——”

“Dear Father Goriot, calm yourself. There, there, lie quietly and rest; don't worry yourself, don't think.”

“I shall not see them. Oh! the agony of it!”

“You *shall* see them.”

“Really?” cried the old man, still wandering. “Oh! shall I see them; I shall see them and hear their voices. I shall die happy. Ah! well, after all, I do not wish to live; I cannot stand this much longer; this pain that grows worse and worse. But, oh! to see them, to touch their dresses— ah! nothing but their dresses, that is very little; still, to feel something that belongs to them. Let me touch their hair with my fingers—— their hair——”

His head fell back on the pillow, as if a sudden heavy blow had struck him down, but his hands groped feebly over the quilt, as if to find his daughters' hair.

“My blessing on them——” he said, making an effort, “my blessing——”

His voice died away. Just at that moment Bianchon came into the room.

“I met Christophe,” he said; “he is gone for your cab.”

Then he looked at the patient, and raised the closed eyelids with his fingers. The two students saw how dead and lustreless the eyes beneath had grown.

“He will not get over this, I am sure,” said Bianchon. He felt the old man's pulse, and laid a hand over his heart.

“The machinery works still; more is the pity, in his state it would be better for him to die.”

“Ah! my word, it would!”

“What is the matter with you? You are as pale as death.”

“Dear fellow, the moans and cries that I have just heard—— There is a God! Ah! yes, yes, there is a God, and He has made a better world for us, or this world of ours would be a nightmare. I could have cried like a child; but this is too tragical, and I am sick at heart.”

“We want a lot of things, you know; and where is the money to come from?”

Rastignac took out his watch.

“There, be quick and pawn it. I do not want to stop on the way to the Rue du Helder; there is not a moment to lose, I am afraid, and I must wait here till Christophe comes back. I have not a farthing; I shall have to pay the cabman when I get home again.”

Rastignac rushed down the stairs, and drove off to the Rue du Helder. The awful scene through which he had just passed quickened his imagination, and he grew fiercely indignant. He reached Mme. de Restaud’s house only to be told by the servant that his mistress could see no one.

“But I have brought a message from her father, who is dying,” Rastignac told the man.

“The Count has given us the strictest orders, sir——”

“If it is M. de Restaud who has given the orders, tell him that his father-in-law is dying, and that I am here and must speak with him at once.”

The men went.

Eugène waited for a long while. “Perhaps her father is dying at this moment,” he thought.

Then the man came back, and Eugène followed him to the little drawing-room. M. de Restaud was standing before the fireless grate, and did not ask his visitor to seat himself.

“Monsieur le Comte,” said Rastignac, “M. Goriot, your father-in-law, is lying at the point of death in a squalid den in the Latin Quarter. He has not a penny to pay for firewood; he is expected to die at any moment, and keeps calling for his daughter——”

“I feel very little affection for M. Goriot, sir, as you probably are aware,” the Count answered coolly. “His character has been compromised in connection with Mme. de Restaud; he is the author of the misfortunes that have embittered my life and troubled my peace of mind. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me if he lives or dies. Now you know my feelings with regard to him. Public opinion may blame me, but I care nothing for public opinion. Just now I have other and much more important matters to think about than the things that fools and chatterers may say about me. As for Mme. de Restaud, she cannot leave the house; she is in no condition to do so. And, besides, I shall not allow her to leave it. Tell her father that as soon as she has done her duty by her husband and child she shall go to see him. If she has any love for her father, she can be free to go to him, if she chooses, in a few seconds; it lies entirely with her——”

“Monsieur le Comte, it is no business of mine to criticise your conduct; you can do as you please with your wife, but may I count upon you keeping your word with me? Well, then, promise me to tell her that her father has not twenty-four hours to live; that he looks in vain for her, and has cursed her already as he lies on his death-bed—that is all I ask.”

“You can tell her yourself,” the Count answered, impressed by the thrill of indignation in Eugène’s voice.

The Count led the way to the room where his wife usually sat. She was drowned in tears, and lay crouching in the depths of an armchair, as if she were tired of life and longed to die. It was piteous to see her. Before venturing to look at Rastignac, she glanced at her husband in evident and abject terror that spoke of complete prostration of body and mind; she seemed crushed by a tyranny both mental and physical. The Count jerked his head towards her; she construed this as a permission to speak.

“I heard all that you said, monsieur. Tell my father that

if he knew all he would forgive me—— I did not think there was such torture in the world as this ; it is more than I can endure, monsieur ! But I will not give way as long as I live,” she said, turning to her husband. “I am a mother. Tell my father that I have never sinned against him in spite of appearances !” she cried aloud in her despair.

Eugène bowed to the husband and wife ; he guessed the meaning of the scene, and that this was a terrible crisis in the Countess’ life. M. de Restaud’s manner had told him that his errand was a fruitless one ; he saw that Anastasie had no longer any liberty of action. He came away amazed and bewildered, and hurried to Mme. de Nucingen. Delphine was in bed.

“Poor dear Eugène, I am ill,” she said. “I caught cold after the ball, and I am afraid of pneumonia. I am waiting for the doctor to come.”

“If you were at death’s door,” Eugène broke in, “you must be carried somehow to your father. He is calling for you. If you could hear the faintest of those cries, you would not feel ill any longer.”

“Eugène, I dare say my father is not quite so ill as you say ; but I cannot bear to do anything that you do not approve, so I will do just as you wish. As for *him*, he would die of grief I know if I went out to see him and brought on a dangerous illness. Well, I will go as soon as I have seen the doctor. Ah !” she cried out, “you are not wearing your watch, how is that ?”

Eugène reddened.

“Eugène, Eugène ! if you have sold it already or lost it even—— Oh ! it would be very wrong of you !”

The student bent over Delphine and said in her ear, “Do you want to know ? Very well, then, you shall know. Your father has nothing left to pay for the shroud that they will lay him in this evening. Your watch has been pawned, for I had nothing either.”

Delphine sprang out of bed, ran to her desk, and took out her purse. She gave it to Eugène, and rang the bell, crying—

“I will go, I will go at once, Eugène. Leave me, I will dress. Why, I should be an unnatural daughter! Go back; I will be there before you. Thérèse,” she called to the waiting-woman, “ask M. de Nucingen to come upstairs at once and speak to me.”

Eugène was almost happy when he reached the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève; he was so glad to bring the news to the dying man that one of his daughters was coming. He fumbled in Delphine’s purse for money, so as to dismiss the cab at once; and discovered that the young, beautiful, and wealthy woman of fashion had only seventy francs in her private purse. He climbed the stairs and found Bianchon supporting Goriot, while the house surgeon from the hospital was applying moxas to the patient’s back—under the direction of the physician, it was the last expedient of science, and it was tried in vain.

“Can you feel them?” asked the physician. But Goriot had caught sight of Rastignac, and answered, “They are coming, are they not?”

“There is hope yet,” said the surgeon; “he can speak.”

“Yes,” said Eugène, “Delphine is coming, and will be here shortly.”

“Oh! that is nothing!” said Bianchon; “he has been talking about his daughters all the time. He calls for them as a man impaled calls for water, they say——”

“We may as well give up,” said the physician, addressing the surgeon. “Nothing more can be done now; the case is hopeless.”

Bianchon and the house surgeon stretched the dying man out again on his loathsome bed.

“But the sheets ought to be changed,” added the physician. “Even if there is no hope left, something is due to human nature. I shall come back again, Bianchon,” he said, turn-

ing to the medical student. "If he complains again, rub some laudanum over the diaphragm."

He went, and the house surgeon went with him.

"Come, Eugène, pluck up heart, my boy," said Bianchon, as soon as they were alone; "we must set about changing his sheets, and put him into a clean shirt. Go and tell Sylvie to bring up some sheets and come and help us to make the bed."

Eugène went downstairs, and found Mme. Vauquer engaged in setting the table; Sylvie was helping her. Eugène had scarcely opened his mouth before the widow walked up to him with the acidulous sweet smile of a cautious shopkeeper who is anxious neither to lose money nor to offend a customer.

"My dear Monsieur Eugène," she said, when he had spoken, "you know quite as well as I do that Father Goriot has not a brass farthing left. If you give out clean linen for a man who is going to just turn up his eyes, you are not likely to see your sheets again, for one is sure to be wanted to wrap him in. Now, you owe me a hundred and forty-four francs as it is, add forty francs to that for the pair of sheets, and then there are several little things, besides the candle that Sylvie will give you; altogether, it will all mount up to at least two hundred francs, which is more than a poor widow like me can afford to lose. Lord! now, Monsieur Eugène, look at it fairly. I have lost quite enough in these five days since this run of ill-luck set in for me. I would rather than ten crowns that the old gentleman had moved out as you said. It sets the other lodgers against the house. It would not take much to make me send him to the workhouse. In short, just put yourself in my place. I have to think of my establishment first, for I have my own living to make."

Eugène hurried up to Goriot's room.

"Bianchon," he cried, "the money or the watch?"

"There it is on the table, or the three hundred and sixty-odd francs that are left of it. I paid up all the old scores out

of it before they let me have the things. The pawn ticket lies there under the money."

Rastignac hurried downstairs.

"Here, madame," he said in disgust, "let us square accounts. M. Goriot will not stay much longer in your house, nor shall I——"

"Yes, he will go out feet foremost, poor old gentleman," she said, counting the francs with a half-facetious, half-lugubrious expression.

"Let us get this over," said Rastignac.

"Sylvie, look out some sheets, and go upstairs to help the gentlemen."

"You won't forget Sylvie," said Mme. Vauquer speaking in Eugène's ear; "she has been sitting up these two nights."

As soon as Eugène's back was turned, the old woman hurried after her handmaid.

"Take the sheets that have had the sides turned into the middle, number 7. Lord! they are plenty good enough for a corpse," she said in Sylvie's ear.

Eugène, by this time, was part of the way upstairs, and did not overhear the elderly economist.

"Quick," said Bianchon, "let us change his shirt. Hold him upright."

Eugène went to the head of the bed and supported the dying man, while Bianchon drew off his shirt; and then Goriot made a movement as if he tried to clutch something to his breast, uttering a low inarticulate moaning the while, like some dumb animal in mortal pain.

"Ah yes!" cried Bianchon. "It is the little locket and the chain made of hair that he wants; we took it off a while ago when we put the blisters on him! Poor fellow! he must have it again. There it lies on the chimney-piece."

Eugène went to the chimney-piece and found a little plait of faded golden hair—Mme. Goriot's hair, no doubt. He read the name on the little round locket, ANASTASIE on the

one side, DELPHINE on the other. It was the symbol of his own heart that the father always wore on his breast. The curls of hair inside the locket were so fine and soft that it was plain they had been taken from two childish heads. When the old man felt the locket once more, his chest heaved with a long deep sigh of satisfaction, like a groan. It was something terrible to see, for it seemed as if the last quiver of the nerves were laid bare to their eyes, the last communication of sense to the mysterious point within whence our sympathies come and whither they go. A delirious joy lighted up the distorted face. The terrific and vivid force of the feeling that had survived the power of thought made such an impression on the students that the dying man felt their hot tears falling on him, and gave a shrill cry of delight.

“Nasie ! Fifine !”

“There is life in him yet,” said Bianchon.

“What does he go on living for ?” said Sylvie.

“To suffer,” answered Rastignac.

Bianchon made a sign to his friend to follow his example, knelt down and passed his arms under the sick man, and Rastignac on the other side did the same, so that Sylvie, standing in readiness, might draw the sheet from beneath and replace it with the one that she had brought. Those tears, no doubt, had misled Goriot ; for he gathered up all his remaining strength in a last effort, stretched out his hands, groped for the students’ heads, and as his fingers caught convulsively at their hair, they heard a faint whisper—

“Ah ! my angels !”

Two words, two inarticulate murmurs, shaped into words by the soul which fled forth with them as they left his lips.

“Poor dear !” cried Sylvie, melted by that exclamation ; the expression of the great love raised for the last time to a sublime height by that most ghastly and involuntary of lies.

The father’s last breath must have been a sigh of joy, and in that sigh his whole life was summed up ; he was cheated

even at the last. They laid Father Goriot upon his wretched bed with reverent hands. Thenceforward there was no expression on his face, only the painful traces of the struggle between life and death that was going on in the machine; for that kind of cerebral consciousness that distinguishes between pleasure and pain in a human being was extinguished; it was only a question of time—and the mechanism itself would be destroyed.

“He will lie like this for several hours, and die so quietly at last that we shall not know when he goes; there will be no rattle in the throat. The brain must be completely suffused.”

As he spoke there was a footstep on the staircase, and a young woman hastened up, panting for breath.

“She has come too late,” said Rastignac.

But it was not Delphine; it was Thérèse, her waiting-woman, who stood in the doorway.

“Monsieur Eugène,” she said, “Monsieur and Madame have had a terrible scene about some money that Madame (poor thing!) wanted for her father. She fainted, and the doctor came, and she had to be bled, calling out all the while, ‘My father is dying; I want to see papa!’ It was heart-breaking to hear her——”

“That will do, Thérèse. If she came now, it would be trouble thrown away. M. Goriot cannot recognize any one now.”

“Poor, dear gentleman, is he as bad as all that?” said Thérèse.

“You don’t want me now, I must go and look after my dinner; it is half-past four,” remarked Sylvie. The next instant she all but collided with Mme. de Restaud on the landing outside.

There was something awful and appalling in the sudden apparition of the Countess. She saw the bed of death by the dim light of the single candle, and her tears flowed at the

sight of her father's passive features, from which the life had almost ebbed. Bianchon with thoughtful tact then left the room.

“I could not escape soon enough,” she said to Rastignac.

The student bowed sadly in reply. Mme. de Restaud took her father's hand and kissed it.

“Forgive me, father! You used to say that my voice would call you back from the grave; ah! come back for one moment to bless your penitent daughter. Do you hear me? Oh! this is fearful! No one on earth will ever bless me henceforth; every one hates me; no one loves me but you in all the world. My own children will hate me. Take me with you, father; I will love you, I will take care of you. He does not hear me—— I am mad——”

She fell on her knees, and gazed wildly at the human wreck before her.

“My cup of misery is full,” she said, turning her eyes upon Eugène. “M. de Trailles has fled, leaving enormous debts behind him, and I have found out that he was deceiving me. My husband will never forgive me, and I have left my fortune in his hands. I have lost all my illusions. Alas! I have forsaken the one heart that loved me (she pointed to her father as she spoke), and for whom? I have held his kindness cheap, and slighted his affection; many and many a time I have given him pain, ungrateful wretch that I am!”

“He knew it,” said Rastignac.

Just then Goriot's eyelids unclosed; it was only a muscular contraction, but the Countess' sudden start of reviving hope was no less dreadful than the dying eyes.

“Is it possible that he can hear me?” cried the Countess. “No,” she answered herself, and sat down beside the bed. As Mme. de Restaud seemed to wish to sit by her father, Eugène went down to take a little food. The boarders were already assembled.

“Well,” remarked the painter, as he joined them, “it seems that there is to be a death-orama upstairs.”

“Charles, I think you might find something less painful to joke about,” said Eugène.

“So we may not laugh here,” returned the painter. “What harm does it do? Bianchon said that the old man was quite insensible.”

“Well, then,” said the employé from the Muséum, “he will die as he has lived.”

“My father is dead!” shrieked the Countess.

The terrible cry brought Sylvie, Rastignac, and Bianchon; Mme. de Restaud had fainted away. When she recovered they carried her downstairs, and put her into the cab that stood waiting at the door. Eugène sent Thérèse with her, and bade the maid take the Countess to Mme. de Nucingen.

Bianchon came down to them.

“Yes, he is dead,” he said.

“Come, sit down to dinner, gentlemen,” said Mme. Vaquer, “or the soup will be cold.”

The two students sat down together.

“What is the next thing to be done?” Eugène asked of Bianchon.

“I have closed his eyes and composed his limbs,” said Bianchon. “When the certificate has been officially registered at the mayor’s office, we will sew him in his winding-sheet and bury him somewhere. What do you think we ought to do?”

“He will not smell at his bread like this any more,” said the painter, mimicking the old man’s little trick.

“Oh, hang it all!” cried the tutor, “let Father Goriot drop, and let us have something else for a change. He is a standing dish, and we have had him with every sauce this hour or more. It is one of the privileges of the good city of Paris that anybody may be born, or live, or die there without attracting any attention whatsoever. Let us profit by the

advantages of civilization. There are fifty or sixty deaths every day; if you have a mind to do it, you can sit down at any time and wail over whole hecatombs of dead in Paris. Father Goriot has gone off the hooks, has he? So much the better for him. If you venerate his memory, keep it to yourselves, and let the rest of us feed in peace."

"Oh, to be sure," said the widow, "it is all the better for him that he is dead. It looks as though he had had trouble enough, poor soul, while he was alive."

And this was all the funeral oration delivered over him who had been for Eugène the type and embodiment of fatherhood.

The fifteen lodgers began to talk as usual. When Bianchon and Eugène had satisfied their hunger, the rattle of spoons and forks, the boisterous conversation, the expressions on the faces that bespoke various degrees of want of feeling, gluttony, or indifference, everything about them made them shiver with loathing. They went out to find a priest to watch that night with the dead. It was necessary to measure their last pious cares by the scanty sum of money that remained. Before nine o'clock that evening the body was laid out on the bare sacking of the bedstead in the desolate room; a lighted candle stood on either side, and the priest watched at the foot. Rastignac made inquiries of this latter as to the expenses of the funeral, and wrote to the Baron de Nucingen and the Comte de Restaud, entreating both gentlemen to authorize their man of business to defray the charges of laying their father-in-law in the grave. He sent Christophe with the letters; then he went to bed, tired out, and slept.

Next day Bianchon and Rastignac were obliged to take the certificate to the registrar themselves, and by twelve o'clock the formalities were completed. Two hours went by; no word came from the Count nor from the Baron; nobody appeared to act for them, and Rastignac had already been obliged to pay the priest. Sylvie asked ten francs for sewing

the old man in his winding-sheet and making him ready for the grave, and Eugène and Bianchon calculated that they had scarcely sufficient to pay for the funeral, if nothing was forthcoming from the dead man's family. So it was the medical student who laid him in a pauper's coffin, despatched from Bianchon's hospital, whence he obtained it at a cheaper rate.

"Let us play those wretches a trick," said he. "Go to the cemetery, buy a grave for five years at Père-Lachaise, and arrange with the church and the undertaker to have a third-class funeral. If the daughters and their husbands decline to repay you, you can carve this on the headstone—'*Here lies M. Goriot, father of the Comtesse de Restaud and the Baronne de Nucingen, interred at the expense of two students.*'"

Eugène took part of his friend's advice, but only after he had gone in person first to M. and Mme. de Nucingen and then to M. and Mme. de Restaud—a fruitless errand. He went no farther than the doorstep in either house. The servants had received strict orders to admit no one.

"Monsieur and madame can see no visitors. They have just lost their father, and are in deep grief over their loss."

Eugène's Parisian experience told him that it was idle to press the point. Something clutched strangely at his heart when he saw that it was impossible to reach Delphine.

"Sell some of your ornaments," he wrote hastily in the porter's room, "so that your father may be decently laid in his last resting-place."

He sealed the note, and begged the porter to give it to Thérèse for her mistress; but the man took it to the Baron de Nucingen, who flung the note into the fire. Eugène, having finished his errands, returned to the lodging-house about three o'clock. In spite of himself, the tears came into his eyes. The coffin, in its scanty covering of black cloth, was standing there on the pavement before the gate, on two chairs. A

withered sprig of hyssop was soaking in the holy water bowl of silver-plated copper; there was not a soul in the street, not a passer-by had stopped to sprinkle the coffin; there was not even an attempt at a black drapery over the wicket. It was a pauper who lay there; no one made a pretense of mourning for him; he had neither friends nor kindred—there was no one to follow him to the grave.

Bianchon's duties compelled him to be at the hospital, but he had left a few lines for Eugène, telling his friend about the arrangements he had made for the burial service. The house student's note told Rastignac that a mass was beyond their means, that the ordinary office for the dead was cheaper and must suffice, and that he had sent word to the undertaker by Christophe. Eugène had scarcely finished reading Bianchon's scrawl, when he looked up and saw the little circular gold locket that contained the hair of Goriot's two daughters in Mme. Vauquer's hands.

“How dared you take it?” he asked.

“Good Lord! is that to be buried along with him?” retorted Sylvie, “It is gold.”

“Of course it shall!” Eugène answered indignantly; “he shall at any rate take one thing that may represent his daughters into the grave with him.”

When the hearse came, Eugène had the coffin carried into the house again, unscrewed the lid, and reverently laid on the old man's breast the token that recalled the days when Delphine and Anastasie were innocent little maidens, before they began “to think for themselves,” as he had moaned out in his agony.

Rastignac and Christophe and the two undertaker's men were the only followers of the funeral. The Church of Saint-Étienne du Mont was only a little distance from the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève. When the coffin had been deposited in a low, dark, little chapel, the law student looked round in vain for Goriot's two daughters or their husbands. Christophe

was his only fellow-mourner ; Christophe, who appeared to think it was his duty to attend the funeral of the man who had put him in the way of such handsome tips. As they waited there in the chapel for the two priests, the chorister, and the beadle, Rastignac grasped Christophe's hand. He could not utter a word just then.

"Yes, Monsieur Eugène," said Christophe, "he was a good and worthy man, who never said one word louder than another ; he never did any one any harm, and gave nobody any trouble."

The two priests, the chorister, and the beadle came, and said and did as much as could be expected for seventy francs in an age when religion cannot afford to say prayers for nothing.

The ecclesiastics chanted a psalm, the *Libera nos* and the *De profundis*. The whole service lasted about twenty minutes. There was but one mourning coach, which the priest and chorister agreed to share with Eugène and Christophe.

"There is no one else to follow us," remarked the priest, "so we may as well go quickly, and so save time ; it is half-past five."

But just as the coffin was put in the hearse, two empty carriages, with the armorial bearings of the Comte de Restaud and the Baron de Nucingen, arrived and followed in the procession to Père-Lachaise. At six o'clock Goriot's coffin was lowered into the grave, his daughters' servants standing round the while. The ecclesiastic recited the short prayer that the students could afford to pay for, and then both priests and lackeys disappeared at once. The two grave-diggers flung in several spadefuls of earth, and then stopped and asked Rastignac for their fee. Eugène felt in vain in his pocket, and was obliged to borrow five francs of Christophe. This thing, so trifling in itself, gave Rastignac a terrible pang of distress. It was growing dusk, the damp twilight fretted his nerves ; he gazed down into the grave, and the tears he shed were drawn from him by the sacred emotion, a single-hearted sorrow.

When such tears fall on earth, their radiance reaches heaven. And with those tears that fell on Father Goriot's grave, Eugène Rastignac's youth ended. He folded his arms and gazed at the clouded sky ; and Christophe, after a glance at him, turned and went—Rastignac was left alone.

He went a few paces farther, to the highest point of the cemetery, and looked out over Paris and the windings of the Seine ; the lamps were beginning to shine on either side of the river. His eyes turned almost eagerly to the space between the column of the Place Vendôme and the cupola of the Invalides ; there lay the shining world that he had wished to reach. He glanced over that humming hive, seeming to draw a foretaste of its honey, and said magniloquently—

“ Henceforth there is war between us.”

And by way of throwing down the glove to society, Rastignac went to dine with Mme. de Nucingen.





## M. GOBSECK.

*To M. le Baron Barchou de Penkoen.*

*Among all the pupils of the Oratorian school at Vendôme, we are, I think, the only two who have afterwards met in mid-career of a life of letters—we who once were cultivating Philosophy when by rights we should have been minding our De viris. When we met, you were engaged upon your noble works on German philosophy, and I upon this study. So neither of us has missed his vocation; and you, when you see your name here, will feel, no doubt, as much pleasure as he who inscribes his work to you. Your old school-fellow,*

1840.

DE BALZAC.

It was one o'clock in the morning, during the winter of 1829–30, but in the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's salon two persons stayed on who did not belong to her family circle. A young and good-looking man heard the clock strike, and took his leave. When the courtyard echoed with the sound of a departing carriage, the Vicomtesse looked up, saw that no one was present save her brother and a friend of the family finishing their game of piquet, and went across to her daughter. The girl, standing by the chimney-piece, apparently examining a transparent fire-screen, was listening to the sounds from the courtyard in a way that justified certain maternal fears.

“Camille,” said the Vicomtesse, “if you continue to behave to young Comte de Restaud as you have done this evening, you will oblige me to see no more of him here. Listen, child, and if you have any confidence in my love, let

me guide you in life. At seventeen one cannot judge of past or future, nor of certain social considerations. I have only one thing to say to you. M. de Restaud has a mother, a mother who would waste millions of francs; a woman of no birth, a Mlle. Goriot; people talked a good deal about her at one time. She behaved so badly to her own father, that she certainly does not deserve to have so good a son. The young Count adores her, and maintains her in her position with dutifulness worthy of all praise, and he is extremely good to his brother and sister. But however admirable *his* behavior may be," the Vicomtesse added with a shrewd expression, "so long as his mother lives, any family would take alarm at the idea of intrusting a daughter's fortune and future to young Restaud."

"I overheard a word now and again in your talk with Mlle. de Grandlieu," cried the friend of the family, "and it made me anxious to put in a word of my own. I have won, M. le Comte," he added, turning to his opponent. "I shall throw you over and go to your niece's assistance."

"See what it is to have an attorney's ears!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse. "My dear Derville, how could you know what I was saying to Camille in a whisper?"

"I knew it from your looks," answered Derville, seating himself in a low chair by the fire.

Camille's uncle went to her side, and Mme. de Grandlieu took up her position on a hearth stool between her daughter and Derville.

"The time has come for telling a story, which should modify your judgment as to Ernest de Restaud's prospects."

"A story!" cried Camille. "Do begin at once, monsieur."

The glance that Derville gave the Vicomtesse told her that this tale was meant for her. The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, be it said, was one of the greatest ladies in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, by reason of her fortune and her ancient name; and though it may seem improbable that a Paris

attorney should speak so familiarly to her, or be so much at home in her house, the fact is nevertheless easily explained.

When Mme. de Grandlieu returned to France with the royal family, she came to Paris, and at first lived entirely on the pension allowed her out of the civil list by Louis XVIII.—an intolerable position. The Hôtel de Grandlieu had been sold by the Republic. It came to Derville's knowledge that there were flaws in the title, and he thought that it ought to return to the Vicomtesse. He instituted proceedings for nullity of contract, and gained the day. Encouraged by this success, he used legal quibbles to such purpose that he compelled some institution or other to disgorge the forest of Liceney. Then he won certain lawsuits against the Canal d'Orléans, and recovered a tolerably large amount of property, with which the Emperor had endowed various public institutions. So it fell out that, thanks to the young attorney's skillful management, Mme. de Grandlieu's income reached the sum of some sixty thousand francs, to say nothing of the vast sums returned to her by the law of indemnity. And Derville, a man of high character, well-informed, modest, and pleasant in company, became the house-friend of the family.

By his conduct of Mme. de Grandlieu's affairs he had fairly earned the esteem of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and numbered the best families among his clients ; but he did not take advantage of his popularity, as an ambitious man might have done. The Vicomtesse would have had him sell his practice and enter the magistracy, in which career advancement would have been swift and certain with such influence at his disposal ; but he persistently refused all offers. He only went into society to keep up his connections, but he occasionally spent an evening at the Hôtel de Grandlieu. It was a very lucky thing for him that his talents had been brought into the light by his devotion to Mme. de Grandlieu, for his practice otherwise might have gone to pieces. Derville had not an attorney's soul. Since Ernest de Restaud had appeared at

the Hôtel de Grandlieu, and he had noticed that Camille felt attracted to the young man, Derville had been as assiduous in his visits as any dandy of the Chaussée-d'Antin newly admitted to the noble Faubourg. At a ball only a few days before, when he happened to stand near Camille, and said, indicating the Count—

“It is a pity that yonder youngster has not two or three million francs, is it not?”

“Is it a pity? I do not think so,” the girl answered. “M. de Restaud has plenty of ability; he is well educated, and the minister, his chief, thinks well of him. He will be a remarkable man, I have no doubt. ‘Yonder youngster’ will have as much money as he wishes when he comes into power.”

“Yes, but suppose that he were rich already?”

“Rich already?” repeated Camille, flushing red. “Why, all the girls in the room would be quarreling for him,” she added, glancing at the quadrilles.

“And then,” retorted the attorney, “Mlle. de Grandlieu might not be the one towards whom his eyes are always turned? That is what that red color means! You like him, do you not? Come, speak out.”

Camille suddenly rose to go.

“She loves him,” Derville thought.

Since that evening, Camille had been unwontedly attentive to the attorney, who approved of her liking for Ernest de Restaud. Hitherto, although she knew well that her family lay under great obligations to Derville, she had felt respect rather than real friendship for him, their relation was more a matter of politeness than of warmth of feeling; and by her manner, and by the tones of her voice, she had always made him sensible of the distance which socially lay between them. Gratitude is a charge upon the inheritance which the second generation is apt to repudiate.

“This adventure,” Derville began after a pause, “brings

the one romantic event in my life to my mind. You are laughing already," he went on; "it seems so ridiculous, doesn't it, that an attorney should speak of a romance in his life? But once I was five-and-twenty, like everybody else, and even then I had seen some queer things. I ought to begin at the beginning by telling you about some one whom it is impossible that you should have known. The man in question was a usurer.

"Can you grasp a clear notion of that sallow, wan face of his? I wish the Académie would give me leave to dub such faces the *lunar* type. It was like silver-gilt, with the gilt rubbed off. His hair was iron-gray, sleek, and carefully combed; his features might have been cast in bronze; Talleyrand himself was not more impassive than this money-lender. A pair of little eyes, yellow as a ferret's, and with scarce an eyelash to them, peered out from under the sheltering peak of a shabby old cap, as if they feared the light. He had the thin lips that you see in Rembrandt's or Metsu's portraits of alchemists and shrunken old men, and a nose so sharp at the tip that it put you in mind of a gimlet. His voice was low; he always spoke suavely; he never flew into a passion. His age was a problem; it was hard to say whether he had grown old before his time, or whether by economy of youth he had saved enough to last him his life.

"This room, and everything in it, from the green baize of his bureau to the strip of carpet by the bed, was as clean and threadbare as the chilly sanctuary of some elderly spinster who spends her days in rubbing her furniture. In winter-time, the live brands of the fire smoldered all day in a bank of ashes; there was never any flame in his grate. He went through his day, from his uprising to his evening coughing-fit, with the regularity of a pendulum, and in some sort was a clockwork man, wound up by a night's slumber. Touch a wood-louse on an excursion across your sheet of paper, and the creature shams death; and in something the same way my

acquaintance would stop short in the middle of a sentence, while a cart went by, to save the strain to his voice. Following the example of Fontanelle, he was thrifty of pulse-strokes, and concentrated all human sensibility in the innermost sanctuary of self.

“His life flowed soundless as the sands of an hour-glass. His victims sometimes flew into a rage and made a great deal of noise, followed by a great silence; so is it in a kitchen after a fowl’s neck has been wrung.

“Towards evening this bill of exchange incarnate would assume ordinary human shape, and his metals were metamorphosed into a human heart. When he was satisfied with his day’s business, he would rub his hands; his inward glee would escape like smoke through every rift and wrinkle of his face. In no other way is it possible to give an idea of the mute play of muscle which expressed sensations similar to the soundless laughter of ‘Leather-Stocking.’ Indeed, even in transports of joy, his conversation was confined to monosyllables; he wore the same non-committal countenance.

“This was the neighbor chance found for me in the house in the Rue des Grès, where I used to live when as yet I was only a second clerk finishing my third year’s studies. The house is damp and dark, and boasts no courtyard. All the windows look on the street; the whole dwelling, in claustral fashion, is divided into rooms or cells of equal size, all opening upon a long corridor dimly lit with borrowed lights. The place must have been part of an old convent once. So gloomy was it, that the gaiety of eldest sons forsook them on the stairs before they reached my neighbor’s door. He and his house were much alike; even so does the oyster resemble his native rock.

“I was the one creature with whom he had any communication, socially speaking; he would come in to ask for a light, to borrow a book or a newspaper, and of an evening he would allow me to go into his cell, and when he was in the humor

we would chat together. These marks of confidence were the results of four years of neighborhood and my own sober conduct. From sheer lack of pence, I was bound to live pretty much as he did. Had he any relations or friends? Was he rich or poor? Nobody could give an answer to these questions. I myself never saw money in his room. Doubtless his capital was safely stowed in the strong rooms of the bank. He used to collect his bills himself as they fell due, running all over Paris on a pair of shanks as skinny as a stag's. On occasion he could be a martyr to prudence. One day, when he happened to have gold in his pockets, a double napoleon worked its way somehow or other out of his fob and fell, and another lodger following him up the stairs picked up the coin and returned it to its owner.

“‘That isn't mine!’ said he with a start of surprise. ‘Mine, indeed! If I were rich, should I live as I do!’

“He made his cup of coffee himself every morning on the cast-iron chafing dish which stood all day in the black angle of the grate; his dinner came in from a cookshop; and our old porter's wife went up at the prescribed hour to set his room in order. Finally, a whimsical chance, in which Sterne would have seen predestination, had named the man Gobseck. When I did business for him later, I came to know that he was about seventy-six years old at the time when we became acquainted. He was born about 1740, in some outlying suburb of Antwerp, of a Dutch father and a Jewish mother, and his name was Jean-Esther Van Gobseck. You remember how all Paris took an interest in that murder case, a woman named ‘The Holland Belle?’ I happened to mention it to my old neighbor, and he answered without the slightest symptom of interest or surprise, ‘She is my grandniece.’

“That was the only remark drawn from him by the death of his sole surviving next of kin, his sister's grand-daughter. From reports of the case I found that ‘The Holland Belle’ was in fact named Sara Van Gobseck. When I asked by

what curious chance his grandniece came to bear his surname, he smiled—

“ ‘The women never marry in our family.’ ”

“ Singular creature, he had never cared to find out a single relative among four generations counted on the female side. The thought of his heirs was abhorrent to him ; and the idea that his wealth could pass into other hands after his death simply inconceivable.

“ He was a child, ten years old, when his mother shipped him off as cabin-boy on a voyage to the Dutch Straits settlements, and there he knocked about for twenty years. The inscrutable lines on that sallow forehead kept the secret of horrible adventures, sudden panic, unhopèd-for luck, romantic cross events, joys that knew no limit, hunger endured and love trampled underfoot, fortunes risked, lost, and recovered, life endangered time and time again, and saved, it may be, by one of the rapid, ruthless decisions absolved by necessity. He had known Admiral Simeuse, M. de Lally, M. de Ker-garouët, M. d’Estaing, (Le Bailli de Suffren,) M. de Portenduère, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, Tippoo Sahib’s father, Tippoo Sahib himself. The bully who served Mahadaji Sindhia, King of Delhi, and did so much to found the power of the Mahrattas, had had dealings with M. Gobseck. Long residence at St. Thomas brought him in contact with Victor Hughes and other notorious pirates. In his quest of fortune he had left no stone unturned ; witness an attempt to discover the treasure of that tribe of savages so famous in Buenos Ayres and its neighborhood. He had a personal knowledge of the events of the American War of Independence. But if he spoke of the Indies or of America, as he did very rarely with me, and never with any one else, he seemed to regard it as an indiscretion and to repent of it afterwards. If humanity and sociability are in some sort a religion, M. Gobseck might be ranked as an infidel ; but though I set myself to study him, I must confess, to my shame, that his real nature was impenetrable

up to the very last. I even felt doubts at times as to his sex. If all usurers are like this one, I maintain that they belong to the neuter gender.

“ Did he adhere to his mother’s religion? Did he look on Gentiles as his legitimate prey? Had he turned Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mahometan, Brahmin, or what not? I never knew anything whatsoever about his religious opinions, and so far as I could see, he was indifferent rather than incredulous.

“ One evening I went in to see this man who had turned himself to gold; the usurer, whom his victims (his clients, as he styled them) were wont to call Daddy Gobseck, perhaps ironically, perhaps by way of antiphrasis. He was sitting in his armchair, motionless as a statue, staring fixedly at the mantle-shelf, where he seemed to read the figures of his statements. A lamp, with a pedestal that had once been green, was burning in the room; but so far from taking color from its smoky light, his face seemed to stand out positively paler against the background. He pointed to a chair set for me, but not a word did he say.

“ ‘ What thoughts can this being have in his mind?’ said I to myself. ‘ Does he know that a God exists; does he know there are such things as feeling, woman, happiness?’ I pitied him as I might have pitied a diseased creature. But, at the same time, I knew quite well that while he had millions of francs at his command, he possessed the world no less in idea—that world which he had explored, ransacked, weighed, appraised, and exploited.

“ ‘ Good-day, Daddy Gobseck,’ I began, as I quietly took the seat pointed out to me.

“ He turned his face towards me, with a slight contraction of his bushy, black eyebrows; this characteristic shade of expression in him meant as much as the most jubilant smile on a southern face.

“ ‘ You look just as gloomy as you did that day when the

news came of the failure of that bookseller whose sharpness you admired so much, though you were one of his victims.'

" 'One of his victims?' he repeated, with a look of astonishment.

" 'Yes. Did you not refuse to accept composition at the meeting of creditors until he undertook privately to pay you your debt in full; and did he not give you bills accepted by the insolvent firm; and then, when he set up in business again, did he not pay you the dividend upon those bills of yours, signed as they were by the bankrupt firm?'

" 'He was a sharp one, but I had it out of him.'

" 'Then have you some bills to protest? To-day is the 30th, I believe.'

" 'It was the first time that I had spoken to him of money. He looked ironically up at me; then in those bland accents, not unlike the husky tones which the tyro draws from a flute, he answered, 'I am amusing myself.'

" 'So you amuse yourself now and again?'

" 'Do you imagine that the only poets in the world are those who print their verses?' he asked, with a pitying look and shrug of the shoulders.

" 'Poetry in that head!' thought I, for as yet I knew nothing of his life.

" 'What life could be as glorious as mine?' he continued, and his eyes lighted up. 'You are young, your mental visions are colored by youthful blood, you see women's faces in the fire, while I see nothing but coals in mine. You have all sorts of beliefs, while I have no beliefs at all. Keep your illusions—if you can. Now I will show you life with the discount taken off. Go wherever you like, or stay at home by the fireside with your wife, there always comes a time when you settle down in a certain groove, the groove of your preference; and then happiness consists in the exercise of your faculties by applying them to realities. Anything more in the way of precept is false. My principles have been various,

among various men ; I had to change them with every change of latitude. Things that we admire in Europe are punishable in Asia, and a vice in Paris becomes a necessity when you have passed the Azores. There are no such things as hard-and-fast rules ; there are only conventions adapted to the climate. Fling a man headlong into one social melting-pot after another, and convictions and forms and moral systems become so many meaningless words to him. The one thing that always remains, the one sure instinct that nature has implanted in us, is the instinct of self-preservation. In European society you call this instinct self-interest. If you had lived as long as I have, you would know that there is but one concrete reality invariable enough to be worth caring about, and that is—GOLD. Gold represents every form of human power. I have traveled. I found out that there were either hills or plains everywhere : the plains are monotonous, the hills a weariness ; consequently, place may be left out of the question. As to manners ; man is man all the world over. The same battle between the poor and the rich is going on everywhere ; it is inevitable everywhere ; consequently, it is better to exploit than to be exploited. Everywhere you find the man of thews and sinews who toils, and the lymphatic man who torments himself ; and pleasures are everywhere the same, for when all sensations are exhausted, all that survives is vanity—vanity is the abiding substance of us, the *I* in us. Vanity is only to be satisfied by gold in floods. Our dreams need time and physical means and painstaking thought before they can be realized. Well, gold contains all things in embryo ; gold realizes all things for us.

“ ‘ None but fools and invalids can find pleasure in shuffling cards all evening long to find out whether they shall win a few pence at the end. None but driveling idiots could spend time in inquiring into all that is happening around them, whether Madame Such-an-One slept single on her couch or in company, whether she has more blood than lymph, more tem-

perament than virtue. None but the dupes, who fondly imagine that they are useful to their like, can interest themselves in laying down rules for political guidance amid events which neither they nor any one else foresee, nor ever will foresee. None but simpletons can delight in talking about stage players and repeating their sayings; making the daily promenade of a caged animal over a rather larger area; dressing for others, eating for others, priding themselves on a horse or a carriage such as no neighbor can have until three days later. What is all this but Parisian life summed up in a few phrases? Let us find a higher outlook on life than theirs. Happiness consists either in strong emotions which drain our vitality, or in methodical occupation which makes existence like a bit of English machinery, working with the regularity of clockwork. A higher happiness than either consists in a curiosity, styled noble, a wish to learn nature's secrets, or to attempt by artificial means to imitate nature to some extent. What is this in two words but science and art, or passion or calm? Ah! well, every human passion wrought up to its highest pitch in the struggle for existence comes to parade itself here before me—as I live in calm. As for your scientific curiosity, a kind of wrestling bout in which man is never uppermost, I replace it by an insight into all the springs of action in man and woman. To sum up, the world is mine without effort of mine, and the world has not the slightest hold on me. Listen to this,' he went on, 'I will tell you the history of my morning, and you will divine my pleasures.'

“He got up, pushed the bolt of the door, drew a tapestry curtain across it with a sharp grating sound of the rings on the rod, then he sat down again.

“‘This morning,’ he said, ‘I had only two amounts to collect; the rest of the bills that were due I gave away instead of cash to my customers yesterday. So much saved, you see, for when I discount a bill I always deduct two francs for a hired brougham—expenses of collection. A pretty thing it

would be, would it not, if my clients were to set *me* trudging all over Paris for a half-a-dozen francs of discount, when no man is my master, and I only pay seven francs in the shape of taxes?

“ ‘ The first bill for a thousand francs was presented by a young fellow, a smart buck with a spangled waistcoat, and an eyeglass, and a tilbury and an English horse, and all the rest of it. The bill bore the signature of one of the prettiest women in Paris, married to a count, a great landowner. Now, how came that countess to put her name to a bill of exchange, legally not worth the paper it was written upon, but practically very good business; for these women, poor things, are afraid of the scandal that a protested bill makes in a family, and would give themselves away in payment sooner than fail? I wanted to find out what that bill of exchange really represented. Was it stupidity, imprudence, love, or charity?

“ ‘ The second bill, bearing the signature “ Fanny Malvaut,” came to me from a linen-draper on the high way to bankruptcy. Now, no creature who has any credit with a bank comes to *me*. The first step to my door means that a man is desperately hard up; that the news of his failure will soon come out; and, most of all, it means that he has been everywhere else first. The stag is always at bay when I see him, and a pack of creditors are hard upon his track. The Countess lived in the Rue du Helder, and my Fanny in the Rue Montmartre. How many conjectures I made as I set out this morning! If these two women were not able to pay, they would show me more respect than they would show their own fathers. What tricks and grimaces would not the Countess try for a thousand francs! She would be so nice to me, she would talk to me in that ingratiating tone peculiar to endorsers of bills, she would pour out a torrent of coaxing words, perhaps she would beg and pray, and I——’ (here the old man turned his pale eyes upon me)—‘and I not to be

moved, inexorable!' he continued. 'I am there as the avenger, the apparition of remorse. So much for hypotheses. I reached the house.

" " " Madame la Comtesse is asleep," says the maid.

" " " When can I see her? "

" " " At twelve o'clock. "

" " " Is Madame la Comtesse ill? "

" " " No, sir, but she only came home at three o'clock this morning from a ball. "

" " " My name is Gobseck, tell her that I shall call again at twelve o'clock, " and out I went, leaving traces of my muddy boots on the carpet which covered the paved staircase. I like to leave mud on a rich man's carpet; it is not petty spite; I like to make them feel a touch of the claws of necessity. In the Rue Montmartre I thrust open the old gateway of a poor-looking house, and looked into a dark courtyard where the sunlight never shines. The porter's lodge was grimy, the window looked like the sleeve of some shabby wadded gown—greasy, dirty, and full of holes.

" " " Mlle. Fanny Malvaut? "

" " " She has gone out; but if you have come about a bill, the money is waiting for you. "

" " " I will look in again, " said I.

" " As soon as I knew that the porter had the money for me, I wanted to know what the girl was like; I pictured her as pretty. The rest of the morning I spent in looking at the prints in the shop windows along the boulevard; then, just as it struck twelve, I went through the Countess' ante-chamber.

" " " Madame has just this minute rung for me, " said the maid; " I don't think she can see you yet. "

" " " I will wait, " said I, and sat down in an easy-chair.

" " Venetian shutters were opened, and presently the maid came hurrying back.

" " " Come in, sir. "

" " From the sweet tone of the girl's voice, I knew that

the mistress could not be ready to pay. What a handsome woman it was that I saw in another moment! She had flung an India shawl hastily over her bare shoulders, covering herself with it completely, while it revealed the bare outlines of the form beneath. She wore a loose gown trimmed with snowy ruffles, which told plainly that her laundress' bills amounted to something like two thousand francs in the course of a year. Her dark curls escaped from beneath a bright India handkerchief, knotted carelessly about her head after the fashion of Creole women. The bed lay in disorder that told of broken slumber. A painter would have paid money to stay a while to see the scene that I saw. Under the luxurious hanging draperies, the pillow, crushed into the depths of an eider-down quilt, its lace border standing out in contrast against the background of blue silk, bore a vague impress that kindled the imagination. A pair of satin slippers gleamed from the great bear-skin rug spread by the carved mahogany lions at the bed-foot, where she had flung them off in her weariness after the ball. A crumpled gown hung over a chair, the sleeves touching the floor; stockings which a breath would have blown away were twisted about the leg of an easy-chair; white ribbon garters straggled over a settee. A fan of price, half unfolded, glittered on the chimney-piece. Drawers stood open; flowers, diamonds, gloves, a bouquet, a girdle, were littered about. The room was full of vague sweet perfume. And—beneath all the luxury and disorder, beauty and incongruity—I saw misery crouching in wait for her or for her adorer, misery rearing its head, for the countess had begun to feel the edge of those fangs. Her tired face was an epitome of the room strewn with relics of a past festival. The scattered gew-gaws, pitiable this morning, when gathered together and coherent, had turned heads the night before.

“ ‘What efforts to drink of the Tantalus cup of bliss I could read in these traces of love stricken by the thunderbolt

remorse—in this visible presentment of a life of luxury, extravagance, and riot. There were faint red marks on her young face, signs of the fineness of the skin; but her features were coarsened, as it were, and the circles about her eyes were unwontedly dark. Nature nevertheless was so vigorous in her, that these traces of past folly did not spoil her beauty. Her eyes glittered. She looked like some Herodias of da Vinci's (I have dealt in pictures), so magnificently full of life and energy was she; there was nothing starved nor stinted in feature or outline; she awakened desire; it seemed to me that there was some passion in her yet stronger than love. I was taken with her. It was a long while since my heart had throbbed; so I was paid then and there—for I would give a thousand francs for a sensation that should bring me back memories of youth.

“ “ “ Monsieur,” she said, finding a chair for me, “ will you be so good as to wait ? ” ”

“ “ “ Until this time to-morrow, madame,” I said, folding up the bill again. “ I cannot legally protest this bill any sooner.” And within myself I said—“ Pay the price of your luxury, pay for your name, pay for your ease, pay for the monopoly which you enjoy! The rich have invented judges and courts of law to secure their goods, and the guillotine—that candle in which so many an ignorant moth burns his wings. But for you who lay in silk, under silken coverlets, there is remorse, and grinding of teeth beneath a smile, and those fantastical lions' jaws are gaping to set their fangs in your heart.” ”

“ “ “ Protest the bill! Can you mean it ? ” she cried, with her eyes upon me; “ could you have so little consideration for me ? ” ”

“ “ “ If the King himself owed money to me, madame, and did not pay it, I should summons him even sooner than any other debtor.” ”

“ “ “ While we were speaking, somebody tapped gently at the door.” ”

“ “ “I cannot see any one,” she cried imperiously.

“ “ “But, Anastasie, I particularly wish to speak to you.”

“ “ “Not just now, dear,” she answered in a milder tone, but with no sign of relenting.

“ “ “What nonsense! You are talking to some one,” said the voice, and in came a man who could only be the Count.

“ “ “The countess gave me a glance. I saw how it was. She was thoroughly in my power. There was a time, when I was young, and might perhaps have been stupid enough not to protest the bill. At Pondicherry, in 1763, I let a woman off, and nicely she paid me out afterwards. I deserved it; what call was there for me to trust her?’

“ “ “What does this gentleman want?’” asked the Count.

“ “ “I could see that the Countess was trembling from head to foot; the white satin skin of her throat was rough, “turned to goose-flesh,” to use the familiar expression. As for me, I laughed in myself without moving a muscle.

“ “ “This gentleman is one of my tradesmen,” she said.

“ “ “The Count turned his back on me; I drew the bill half out of my pocket. After that inexorable movement, she came over to me and put a diamond into my hands. “Take it,” she said, “and be gone.”

“ “ “We exchanged values, and I made my bow and went. The diamond was quite worth twelve hundred francs to me. Out in the courtyard I saw a swarm of flunkeys, brushing their liveries, waxing their boots, and cleaning sumptuous equipages.

“ “ “This is what brings these people to me!” said I to myself. “It is to keep up this kind of thing that they steal millions with all due formalities, and betray their country. The great lord, and the little man who apes the great lord, bathes in mud once for all to save himself a splash or two when he goes afoot through the streets.”

“ “ “Just then the great gates were opened to admit a cabriolet. It was the same young fellow who had brought the bill to me.

“ “ “Sir,” I said, as he alighted, “ here are two hundred francs, which I beg you to return to Mme. la Comtesse, and have the goodness to tell her that I hold the pledge which she deposited with me this morning at her disposition for a week.”

“ “ He took the two hundred francs, and an ironical smile stole over his face ; it was as if he had said, “ Aha ! so she has paid it, has she ? — Faith, so much the better ! ” I read the Countess’ future in his face. That good-looking, fair-haired young gentleman is a heartless gambler ; he will ruin himself, ruin her, ruin her husband, ruin the children, eat up their portions, and work more havoc in Parisian saïons than a whole battery of howitzers in a regiment.

“ “ I went back to see Mlle. Fanny in the Rue Montmartre, climbed a very steep, narrow staircase, and reached a two-room apartment on the fifth floor. Everything was as neat as a new ducat. I did not see a speck of dust on the furniture in the first room, where Mlle. Fanny was sitting. Mlle. Fanny herself was a young Parisian girl, quietly dressed, with a delicate fresh face and a winning look. The arrangement of her neatly brushed chestnut hair in a double curve on her forehead lent a refined expression to blue eyes, clear as crystal. The broad daylight streaming in through the short curtains against the window-pane fell with softened light on her girlish face. A pile of shaped pieces of linen told me that she was a sempstress. She looked like the spirit of solitude. When I held out the bill, I remarked that she had not been at home when I called in the morning.

“ “ “But the money was left with the porter’s wife,” said she.

“ “ I pretended not to understand.

“ “ “You go out early, mademoiselle, it seems.”

“ “ “I very seldom leave my room ; but when you work all night, you are obliged to take a bath sometimes.”

“ “ I looked at her. A glance told me all about her life. Here was a girl condemned by misfortune to toil, a girl who came of honest farmer folk, for she had still a freckle or two

that told of country birth. There was an indefinable atmosphere of goodness about her; I felt as if I were breathing sincerity and frank innocence. It was refreshing to my lungs. Poor innocent child, she had faith in something; there was a crucifix and a sprig or two of green box above her poor little painted wooden bedstead; I felt touched, or somewhat inclined that way. I felt ready to offer to charge no more than twelve per cent., and so give something towards establishing her in a good way of business.

“ “ “But may be she has a little youngster of a cousin,” I said to myself, “who would raise money on her signature and sponge on the poor girl.”

“ “So I went away, keeping my generous impulses well under control; for I have frequently had occasion to observe that when benevolence does no harm to him who gives, it is the ruin of him who takes. When you came in I was thinking that Fanny Malvaut would make a nice little wife; I was thinking of the contrast between her pure, lonely life and the life of the Countess—she has sunk as low as a bill of exchange already, she will sink to the lowest depths of degradation before she has done!’ I scrutinized him during the deep silence that followed, but in a moment he spoke again. ‘Well,’ he said, ‘do you think that it is nothing to have this power of insight into the deepest recesses of the human heart, to embrace so many lives, to see the naked truth underlying it all? There are no two dramas alike: there are hideous sores, deadly chagrins, love scenes, misery that soon will lay under the ripples of the Seine, young men’s joys that lead to the scaffold, the laughter of despair, and sumptuous banquets. Yesterday it was a tragedy. A worthy soul of a father drowned himself because he could not support his family. To-morrow it is a comedy; some youngster will try to rehearse the scene of M. Dimanche, brought up to date. You have heard people extol the eloquence of our latter-day preachers; now and again I have wasted my time by going to hear them;

they produced a change in my opinions, but in my conduct (as somebody said, I can't recollect his name), in my conduct—never! Well, well; these good priests and your Mirabeaus and Vergniauds and the rest of them are mere stammering beginners compared with these orators of mine.

“ ‘Often it is some girl in love, some gray-headed merchant on the verge of bankruptcy, some mother with a son's wrong-doing to conceal, some starving artist, some great man whose influence is on the wane, and, for lack of money, is likely to lose the fruit of all his labors—the power of their pleading has made me shudder. Sublime actors such as these play for me, for an audience of one, and they cannot deceive me. I can look into their inmost thoughts, and read them as God reads them. Nothing is hidden from me. Nothing is refused to the holder of the purse-strings to loose and to bind. I am rich enough to buy the consciences of those who control the action of ministers, from their office boys to their mistresses. Is not that power? I can possess the fairest women, receive their softest caresses; is not that pleasure? And is not your whole social economy summed up in terms of power and pleasure?’

“ ‘There are ten of us in Paris, silent, unknown kings, the arbiters of your destinies. What is life but a machine set in motion by money? Know this for certain—methods are always confounded with results; you will never succeed in separating the soul from the senses, spirit from matter. Gold is the spiritual basis of existing society. The ten of us are bound by the ties of common interest; we meet on certain days of the week at the Café Thémis near the Pont Neuf, and there, in conclave, we reveal the mysteries of finance. No fortune can deceive us; we are in possession of family secrets in all directions. We keep a kind of “Black Book,” in which we note the most important bills issued, drafts on public credit, or on banks, or given and taken in the course of business. We are the Casuists of the Paris Bourse, a kind of Inquisition

weighing and analyzing the most insignificant actions of every man of any fortune, and our forecasts are infallible. One of us looks out over the judicial world, one over the financial, another surveys the administrative, and yet another the business world. I myself keep an eye on eldest sons, artists, people in the great world, and gamblers—on the most sensational side of Paris. Every one who comes to us lets us into his neighbor's secrets. Thwarted passion and mortified vanity are great babblers. Vice and disappointment and vindictiveness are the best of all detectives. My colleagues, like myself, have enjoyed all things, are sated with all things, and have reached the point when power and money are loved for their own sake.

“‘Here,’ he said, indicating his bare, chilly room, ‘here the most high-mettled gallant, who chafes at a word and draws sword for a syllable elsewhere, will entreat with clasped hands. There is no city merchant so proud, no woman so vain of her beauty, no soldier of so bold a spirit, but that they entreat me here, one and all, with tears of rage or anguish in their eyes. Here they kneel—the famous artist, and the man of letters, whose name will go down to posterity. Here, in short’ (he lifted his hand to his forehead), ‘all the inheritances and all the concerns of all Paris are weighed in the balance. Are you still of the opinion that there are no delights behind the blank mask which so often has amazed you by its impassiveness?’ he asked, stretching out that livid face which reeked of money.

“I went back to my room, feeling stupefied. The little, wizened, old man had grown great. He had been metamorphosed under my eyes into a strange visionary symbol; he had come to be the power of gold personified. I shrank, shuddering, from life and my kind.

“‘Is it really so?’ I thought; ‘must everything be resolved into gold?’

“I remember that it was long before I slept that night. I

saw heaps of gold all about me. My thoughts were full of the lovely Countess ; I confess, to my shame, that the vision completely eclipsed another quiet, innocent figure, the figure of the woman who had entered upon a life of toil and obscurity ; but on the morrow, through the clouds of slumber, Fanny's sweet face rose before me in all its beauty, and I thought of nothing else."

"Will you take a glass of *eau sucrée* ?" asked the Vicomtesse, interrupting Derville.

"I should be glad of it."

"But I can see nothing in this that can touch our concerns," said Mme. de Grandlieu, as she rang the bell.

"Sardanapalus !" cried Derville, flinging out his favorite invocation. "Mademoiselle Camille will be wide awake in a moment if I say that her happiness depended not so long ago upon Daddy Gobseck ; but as the old gentleman died at the age of ninety, M. de Restaud will soon be in possession of a handsome fortune. This requires some explanation. As for Fanny Malvaut, you know her ; she is my wife."

"Poor fellow, he would admit that, with his usual frankness, with a score of people to hear him !" said the Vicomtesse.

"I would proclaim it to the universe," said the attorney.

"Go on, drink your glass, my poor Derville. You will never be anything but the happiest and the best of men."

"I left you in the Rue du Helder," remarked the uncle, raising his face after a gentle doze. "You had gone to see a countess ; what have you done with her ?"

"A few days after my conversation with the old Dutchman," Derville continued, "I sent in my thesis, and became first a licentiate in law, and afterwards an advocate. The old miser's opinion of me went up considerably. He consulted me (gratuitously) on all the ticklish bits of business which he

undertook when he had made quite sure how he stood, business which would have seemed unsafe to any ordinary practitioner. This man, over whom no one appeared to have the slightest influence, listened to my advice with something like respect. It is true that he always found that it turned out very well.

“At length I became head-clerk in the office where I had worked for three years, and then I left the Rue des Grès for rooms in my employer’s house. I had my board and lodging and a hundred and fifty francs per month. It was a great day for me!

“When I went to bid the usurer good-by, he showed no sign of feeling, he was neither cordial nor sorry to lose me, he did not ask me to come to see him, and only gave me one of those glances which seemed in some way to reveal a power of second-sight.

“By the end of the week my old neighbor came to see me with a tolerably thorny bit of business, an expropriation, and he continued to ask my advice with as much freedom as if he paid for it.

“My principal was a man of pleasure and expensive tastes; before the second year (1818–1819) was out he had gotten himself into difficulties, and was obliged to sell his practice. A professional connection in those days did not fetch the present exorbitant prices, and my principal asked a hundred and fifty thousand francs. Now an active man, of competent knowledge and intelligence, might hope to pay off the capital in ten years, paying interest and living respectably in the meantime—if he could command confidence. But I was the seventh child of a small tradesman at Noyon, I had not a sou to my name, nor personal knowledge of any capitalist but Daddy Gobseck. An ambitious idea, and an indefinable glimmer of hope, put heart into me. To Gobseck I betook myself, and slowly one evening I made my way to the Rue des Grès. My heart thumped heavily as I knocked at his door in the gloomy

house. I recollected all the things that he used to tell me, at a time when I myself was very far from suspecting the violence of the anguish awaiting those who crossed his threshold. Now it was I who was about to beg and pray like so many others.

“ ‘Well, no, not *that*,’ I said to myself; ‘an honest man must keep his self-respect wherever he goes. Success is not worth cringing for; let us show him a front as decided as his own.’

“ Daddy Gobseck had taken my room since I left the house, so as to have no neighbor; he had made a little grated window too in his door since then, and did not open until he had taken a look at me and saw who I was.

“ ‘Well,’ said he, in his thin, flute notes, ‘so your principal is selling his practice.’

“ ‘How did you know that?’ said I; ‘he has not spoken of it as yet except to me.’

“ The old man’s lips were drawn in puckers, like a curtain, to either corner of his mouth, as a soundless smile bore a hard glance company.

“ ‘Nothing else would have brought you here,’ he said drily, after a pause, which I spent in confusion.

“ ‘Listen to me, M. Gobseck,’ I began, with such serenity as I could assume before the old man, who gazed at me with steady eyes. There was a clear light burning in them that disconcerted me.

“ He made a gesture as if to bid me ‘Go on.’ ‘I know that it is not easy to work on your feelings, so I will not waste my eloquence on the attempt to put my position before you—I am a penniless clerk, with no one to look to but you, and no heart in the world but yours can form a clear idea of my probable future. Let us leave hearts out of the question. Business is business, and business is not carried on with sentimentality like romances. Now to the facts. My principal’s practice is worth in his hands about twenty thousand francs

per annum; in my hands, I think it would bring in forty thousand. He is willing to sell it for a hundred and fifty thousand francs. And *here,*' I said, striking my forehead, 'I feel that if you would lend me the purchase-money, I could clear it off in ten years' time.'

" 'Come, that is plain speaking,' said Daddy Gobseck, and he held out his hand and grasped mine. 'Nobody since I have been in business has stated the motives of his visit more clearly. Guarantees?' asked he, scanning me from head to foot. 'None to give,' he added after a pause. 'How old are you?'

" 'Twenty-five in ten days' time,' said I, 'or I could not open the matter.'

" 'Precisely.'

" 'Well?'

" 'It is possible.'

" 'My word, we must be quick about it, or I shall have some one buying over my head.'

" 'Bring your certificate of birth round to-morrow morning, and we will talk. I will think it over in the meantime,' he replied.

" Next morning, at eight o'clock, I stood in the old man's room. He took the document, put on his spectacles, coughed, spat, wrapped himself up in his black greatcoat, and read the whole certificate through from beginning to end. Then he turned it over and over, looked at me, coughed again, fidgeted about in his chair, and said, 'We will try to arrange this bit of business.'

" I trembled.

" 'I make fifty per cent. on my capital,' he continued, 'sometimes I make a hundred, two hundred, five hundred per cent.'

" I turned pale at the words.

" 'But as we are acquaintances, I shall be satisfied to take twelve and a half per cent. per'—(he hesitated)—'well, yes,

from you I would be content to take thirteen per cent. per annum. Will that suit you?’

“ ‘Yes,’ I answered.

“ ‘But if it is too much, stick up for yourself, Grotius!’ (a name he jokingly gave me). ‘When I ask you for thirteen per cent., it is all in the way of business; look into it, see if you can pay it; I don’t like a man to agree too easily. Is it too much?’

“ ‘No,’ said I, ‘I will make up for it by working a little harder.’

“ ‘Gad! your clients will pay for it!’ said he, looking at me wickedly out of the corner of his eyes.

“ ‘No, by all the devils in hell!’ cried I, ‘it shall be I who will pay. I would sooner cut my hand off than flay people.’

“ ‘Good-night,’ said Daddy Gobseck.

“ ‘Why, fees are all according to scale,’ I added.

“ ‘Not for compromises and settlements out of court, and cases where litigants come to terms,’ said he. ‘You can send in a bill for thousands of francs, six thousand even at a swoop (it depends on the importance of the case), for conferences with So-and-so, and expenses, and drafts, and memorials, and your jargon. A man must learn to look out for business of this kind. I will recommend you as a most competent, clever attorney. I will send you such a lot of work of this sort that your colleagues will be fit to burst with envy. Werbrust, Palma, and Gigonnet, my cronies, shall hand over their expropriations to you; they have plenty of them, the Lord knows! So you will have two practices—the one you are buying, and the other I will build up for you. You ought almost to pay me fifteen per cent. on my loan.’

“ ‘So be it, but no more,’ said I, with the firmness which means that a man is determined not to concede another point.

“ ‘Daddy Gobseck’s face relaxed; he looked pleased with me.

“ ‘I shall pay the money over to your principal myself,’ said he, ‘so as to establish a lien on the purchase and caution-money.’

“ ‘Oh, anything you like in the way of guarantees.’

“ ‘And besides that, you will give me bills for the amount made payable to a third party (name left blank), fifteen bills of ten thousand francs each.’

“ ‘Well, so long as it is acknowledged in writing that this is a double——’

“ ‘No!’ Gobseck broke in upon me. ‘No! Why should I trust you any more than you trust me?’

“ I kept silence.

“ ‘And furthermore,’ he continued, with a sort of good-humor, ‘you will give me your advice without charging fees so long as I live, will you not?’

“ ‘So be it; so long as there is no outlay.’

“ ‘Precisely,’ said he. ‘Ah, by-the-by, you will allow me to go to see you?’ (Plainly the old man found it not so easy to assume the air of good-humor.)

“ ‘I shall always be glad.’

“ ‘Ah! yes, but it would be very difficult to arrange of a morning. You will have your affairs to attend to, and I have mine.’

“ ‘Then come in the evening.’

“ ‘Oh, no!’ he answered briskly, ‘you ought to go into society and see your clients, and I myself have my friends at my café.’

“ ‘His friends!’ thought I to myself. ‘Very well,’ said I, ‘why not come at dinner-time?’

“ ‘That is the time,’ said Gobseck, ‘after ’Change, at five o’clock. Good, you will see me Wednesdays and Saturdays. We will talk over business like a pair of friends. Aha! I am gay, sometimes. Just give me the wing of a partridge and a glass of champagne, and we will have our chat together. I know a great many things that can be told now at this dis-

tance of time ; I will teach you to know men, and what is more, women ? ’

“ ‘ Oh ! a partridge and a glass of champagne if you like. ’

“ ‘ Don’t do anything foolish, or I shall lose my faith in you. And don’t set up housekeeping in a grand way. Just one old general servant. I will come and see that you keep your health. I have capital invested in your head, he ! he ! so I am bound to look after you. There, come round in the evening, and bring your principal with you ! ’

“ ‘ Would you mind telling me, if there is no harm in asking, what was the good of my birth certificate in this business ? ’ I asked, when the little old man and I stood on the doorstep.

“ Jean-Esther Van Gobseck shrugged his shoulders, smiled maliciously, and said, ‘ What blockheads youngsters are ! Learn, master attorney (for learn you must, if you don’t mean to be taken in), that integrity and brains in a man under thirty are commodities which can be mortgaged. After that age there is no counting on a man. ’

“ And with that he shut the door.

“ Three months later I was an attorney. Before very long, madame, it was my good-fortune to undertake the suit for the recovery of your estates. I won the day, and my name became known. In spite of the exorbitant rate of interest, I paid off Gobseck in less than five years. I married Fanny Malvaut, whom I loved with all my heart. There was a parallel between her life and mine, between our hard work and our luck, which increased the strength of feeling on either side. One of her uncles, a well-to-do farmer, died and left her seventy thousand francs, which helped to clear off the loan. From that day my life has been nothing but happiness and prosperity. Nothing is more utterly uninteresting than a happy man, so let us say no more on that head, and return to the rest of the characters.

“ About a year after the purchase of the practice, I was

dragged into a bachelor breakfast-party given by one of our number who had lost a bet to a young man greatly in vogue in the fashionable world. M. de Trailles, the flower of the dandyism of that day, enjoyed a prodigious reputation."

"But he is still enjoying it," put in the Comte de Born. "No one wears his clothes with a finer air, nor drives a tandem with a better grace. It is Maxime's gift; he can gamble, eat, and drink more gracefully than any man in the world. He is a judge of horses, hats, and pictures. All the women lose their heads over him. He always spends something like a hundred thousand francs a year, and no creature can discover that he has an acre of land or a single dividend warrant. The typical knight-errant of our salons, our boudoirs, our boulevards, an amphibian half-way between a man and a woman—Maxime de Trailles is a singular being, fit for anything, and good for nothing, quite as capable of perpetrating a benefit as of planning a crime; sometimes base, sometimes noble, more often bespattered with mire than besprinkled with blood, knowing more of anxiety than of remorse, more concerned with his digestion than with any mental process, shamming passion, feeling nothing. Maxime de Trailles is a brilliant link between the hulks and the best society; he belongs to the eminently intelligent class from which a Mirabeau, or a Pitt, or a Richelieu springs at times, though it is more wont to produce Counts of Horn, Fouquier-Tinville, and Coignards."

"Well," pursued Derville, when he had heard the Vicomtesse's brother to the end, "I had heard a good deal about this individual from poor Father Goriot, a client of mine; and I had already been at some pains to avoid the dangerous honor of his acquaintance, for I came across him sometimes in society. Still, my chum was so pressing about this breakfast party of his that I could not well get out of it, unless I wished to earn a name for squeamishness. Madame, you could hardly imagine what a bachelor's breakfast-party is like. It means superb display and a studied refinement seldom seen;

the luxury of a miser when vanity leads him to be sumptuous for a day.

“You are surprised as you enter the room at the neatness of the table, dazzling by reason of its silver and crystal and linen damask. Life is here in full bloom; the young fellows are graceful to behold; they smile and talk in low, demure voices like so many brides; everything about them looks girlish. Two hours later you might take the room for a battlefield after the fight. Broken glasses, serviettes crumpled and torn to rags lie strewn about among the nauseous-looking remnants of food on the dishes. There is an uproar that stuns you, jesting toasts, a fire of witticisms and bad jokes; faces are empurpled, eyes inflamed and expressionless; unintentional confidences tell you the whole truth. Bottles are smashed, and songs trolled out in the height of a diabolical racket; men call each other out, hang on each other’s necks, or fall to fisticuffs; the room is full of a horrid, close scent made up of a hundred odors, and noise enough for a hundred voices. No one has any notion of what he is eating or drinking or saying. Some are depressed, others babble; one will turn monomaniac, repeating the same word over and over again like a bell set jangling; another tries to keep the tumult within bounds; the steadiest will propose an orgie. If any one in possession of his faculties should come in, he would think that he had interrupted a Bacchanalian rite.

“It was in the thick of such a chaos that M. de Trailles tried to insinuate himself into my good graces. My head was fairly clear, I was upon my guard. As for him, though he pretended to be decently drunk, he was perfectly cool, and knew very well what he was about. How it was done I do not know, but the upshot of it was that when we left Grignon’s rooms about nine o’clock in the evening, M. de Trailles had thoroughly bewitched me. I had given him my promise that I would introduce him the next day to our Papa Gobseck. The words ‘honor,’ ‘virtue,’ ‘countess,’ ‘honest woman,’

and 'ill-luck' were mingled in his discourse with magical potency, thanks to that golden tongue of his.

“When I awoke next morning, and tried to recollect what I had done the day before, it was with great difficulty that I could make a connected tale from my impressions. At last, it seemed to me that the daughter of one of my clients was in danger of losing her reputation, together with her husband's love and esteem, if she could not get fifty thousand francs together in the course of the morning. There had been gaming debts, and carriage-builders' accounts, money lost to heaven knows whom. My magician of a boon companion had impressed it upon me that she was rich enough to make good these reverses by a few years of economy. But only now did I begin to guess the reasons of his urgency. I confess, to my shame, that I had not the shadow of a doubt but that it was a matter of importance that Daddy Gobseck should make it up with this dandy. I was dressing when the young gentleman appeared.

“‘M. le Comte,’ said I, after the usual greetings, ‘I fail to see why you should need me to effect an introduction to Van Gobseck, the most civil and smooth-spoken of capitalists. Money will be forthcoming if he has any, or rather, if you can give him adequate security.’

“‘Monsieur,’ said he, ‘it does not enter into my thoughts to force you to do me a service, even though you have passed your word.’

“‘Sardanapalus!’ said I to myself, ‘am I going to let that fellow imagine for one moment that I will not keep my word with him?’

“‘I had the honor of telling you yesterday,’ said he, ‘that I had fallen out with Daddy Gobseck most inopportunistically; and as there is scarcely another man in Paris who can come down on the nail with a hundred thousand francs, at the end of the month, I begged of you to make my peace with him. But let us say no more about it——’

“M. de Trailles looked at me with civil insult in his expression, and made as if he would take his leave.

“‘I am ready to go with you,’ said I.

“When we reached the Rue des Grès, my dandy looked about him with a circumspection and uneasiness that set me wondering. His face grew livid, flushed, and yellow, turn and turn about, and by the time that Gobseck’s door came in sight the perspiration stood in drops on his forehead. We were just getting out of the cabriolet, when a hackney cab turned into the street. My companion’s hawk’s-eye detected a woman in the depths of the vehicle. His face lighted up with a gleam of almost savage joy; he called to a little boy who was passing, and gave him his horse to hold. Then we went up to the old bill-discounter.

“‘M. Gobseck,’ said I, ‘I have brought one of my most intimate friends to see you (whom I trust as I would trust the devil,’ I added for the old man’s private ear). ‘To oblige me you will do your best for him (at the ordinary rate), and pull him out of his difficulty (if it suits your convenience).’

“M. de Trailles made his bow to M. Gobseck, took a seat, and listened to us with a courtier-like attitude; its charming humility would have touched your heart to see, but my M. Gobseck sits in his chair by the fireside without moving a muscle or changing a feature. He looked very much like the statue of Voltaire under the peristyle of the Théâtre-Français, as you see it of an evening; he had partly risen as if to bow, and the skull cap that covered the top of his head, and the narrow strip of sallow forehead exhibited, completed his likeness to the man of marble.

“‘I have no money to spare except for my own clients,’ said he.

“‘So you are cross because I may have tried in other quarters to ruin myself?’ said the Count, laughing.

“‘Ruin yourself!’ repeated M. Gobseck ironically.

“‘Were you about to remark that it is impossible to ruin a

man who has nothing?' inquired the dandy. 'Why I defy you to find a better *stock* in Paris!' he cried, swinging round on his heels.

"This half-earnest buffoonery produced not the slightest effect upon M. Gobseck.

"'Am I not on intimate terms with the Ronquerolles, the Marsays, the Franchessinis, the two Vandenesses, the Ajuda-Pintos—all the most fashionable young men in Paris, in short? A prince and an ambassador (you know them both) are my partners at play. I draw my revenues from London and Carlsbad and Baden and Bath. Is not this the most brilliant of all industries!'

"'True.'

"'You make a sponge of me, begad! so you do. You encourage me to go and swell myself out in society, so that you can squeeze me when I am hard up; but you yourselves are sponges, just as I am, and death will give you a squeeze some day.'

"'That is possible.'

"'If there were no spendthrifts, what would become of you? The pair of us are like soul and body.'

"'Precisely so.'

"'Come, now, give us your hand, Granddaddy Gobseck, and be magnanimous if this is "true" and "possible" and "precisely so."'

"'You come to me,' the usurer answered coldly, 'because Girard, Palma, Werbrust, and Gigonnet are full up of your paper; they are offering it at a loss of fifty per cent.; and as it is likely they only gave you half the figure on the face of the bills, they are not worth five-and-twenty per cent. of their supposed value. I am your most obedient! Can I in common decency lend a stiver to a man who owes thirty thousand francs, and has not one farthing?' M. Gobseck continued. 'The day before yesterday you lost ten thousand francs at a ball at the Baron de Nucingen's.'

“ ‘Sir,’ said the Count, with rare impudence, ‘my affairs are no concern of yours,’ and he looked the old man up and down. ‘A man has no debts till payment is due.’

“ ‘True.’

“ ‘My bills will be duly met.’

“ ‘That is possible.’

“ ‘And at this moment the question between you and me is simply whether the security I am going to offer is sufficient for the sum I have come to borrow.’

“ ‘Precisely.’

“ A cab stopped at the door, and the sound of wheels filled the room.

“ ‘I will bring something directly which perhaps will satisfy you,’ cried the young man, and he left the room.

“ ‘Oh! my son,’ exclaimed M. Gobseck, rising to his feet, and stretching out his arms to me, ‘if he has good security, you have saved my life. It would be the death of me. Werbrust and Gigonnet imagined that they were going to play off a trick on me; and now, thanks to you, I shall have a good laugh at their expense to-night.’

“ There was something frightful about the old man’s ecstasy. It was the one occasion when he opened his heart to me; and that flash of joy, swift though it was, will never be effaced from my memory.

“ ‘Favor me so far as to stay here,’ he added. ‘I am armed, and a sure shot. I have gone tiger-hunting, and fought on the deck when there was nothing for it but to win or die; but I don’t care to trust myself to yonder elegant scoundrel.’

“ He sat down again in his armchair before his bureau, and his face grew pale and impassive as before.

“ ‘Ah!’ he continued, turning to me, ‘you will see that lovely creature I once told you about; I can hear a fine lady’s step in the corridor; it is she, no doubt;’ and, as a matter of fact, the young man came in with a woman on his arm. I

recognized the Countess, whose levée M. Gobseck had described for me, one of Father Goriot's two daughters.

“ The Countess did not see me at first ; I stayed where I was in the bay window, with my face against the pane ; but I saw her give Maxime a suspicious glance as she came into the money-lender's damp, dark room. So beautiful was she, that in spite of her faults I felt sorry for her. There was a terrible storm of anguish in her heart ; the haughty, proud features were drawn and distorted with pain which she strove in vain to disguise. The young man had come to be her evil genius. I admired M. Gobseck, whose perspicacity had foreseen their future four years ago at the first bill which she endorsed.

“ ‘ Probably,’ said I to myself, ‘ this monster with the angel's face controls every possible spring of action in her : rules her through vanity, jealousy, pleasure, and the current of life in the world.’ ”

The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu broke in on the story.

“ Why, the woman's very virtues have been turned against her,” she exclaimed. “ He has made her shed tears of devotion, he has brought out the utmost natural generosity of woman, and then abused her kindness and made her pay very dearly for unhallowed bliss.”

Derville did not understand the signs which Mme. de Grandlieu made to him.

“ I confess,” he said, “ that I had no inclination to shed tears over the lot of this unhappy creature, so brilliant in society, so repulsive to eyes that could read her heart ; I shuddered rather at the sight of her murderer, a young angel with such a clear brow, such red lips and white teeth, such a winning smile. There they stood before their judge, he scrutinizing them much as some old fifteenth-century Dominican inquisitor might have peered into the dungeons of the Holy Office while the torture was administered to two Moors.

“ The Countess spoke tremulously. ‘ Sir,’ she said, ‘ is

there any way of obtaining the value of these diamonds, and of keeping the right of repurchase?' She held out a jewel-case.

“ ‘Yes, madame,’ I put in, and came forward.

“ She looked at me, and a shudder ran through her as she recognized me, and gave me the glance which means, ‘Say nothing of this,’ all the world over.

“ ‘This,’ said I, ‘constitutes a sale with faculty of redemption, as it is called, a formal agreement to transfer and deliver over a piece of property, either real estate or personalty, for a given time, on the expiration of which the previous owner recovers his title to the property in question, upon payment of a stipulated sum.’

“ She breathed more freely. The Count looked black ; he had grave doubts whether Gobseck would lend very much on the diamonds after such a fall in their value. Gobseck, impassive as ever, had taken up his magnifying glass, and was quietly scrutinizing the jewels. If I were to live for a hundred years, I should never forget the sight of his face at that moment. There was a flush in his pale cheeks ; his eyes seemed to have caught the sparkle of the stones, for there was an unnatural glitter in them. He rose and went to the light, holding the diamonds close to his toothless mouth, as if he meant to devour them ; mumbling vague words over them, holding up bracelets, sprays, necklaces, and tiaras one after another, to judge of their water, whiteness, and cutting ; taking them out of the jewel-case and putting them in again, letting the play of the light bring out all their fires. He was more like a child than an old man ; or, rather, childhood and dotage seemed to meet in him.

“ ‘Fine stones ! The set would have fetched three hundred thousand francs before the Revolution. What water. Genuine Asiatic diamonds from Golconda or Visapur. Do you know what they are worth? No, no ; no one in Paris but Gobseck can appreciate them. In the time of the empire

such a set would have cost another two hundred thousand francs ! ’

“ He gave a disgusted shrug, and added—

“ ‘ But now diamonds are going down in value every day. The Brazilians have swamped the market with them since the peace ; but the India stones are a better color. Others wear them now besides court ladies. Does madame go to court ? ’

“ While he flung out these terrible words, he examined one stone after another with delight which no words can describe.

“ ‘ Flawless ! ’ he said. ‘ Here is a speck !— here is a flaw !— A fine stone that ! ’

“ His haggard face was so lighted up by the sparkling jewels, that it put me in mind of a dingy old mirror, such as you see in country inns. The glass receives every luminous image without reflecting the light, and a traveler bold enough to look for his face in it beholds a man in an apoplectic fit.

“ ‘ Well ? ’ asked the Count, clapping Gobseck on the shoulder.

“ The old boy trembled. He put down his playthings on his bureau, took his seat, and was a money-lender once more—hard, cold, and polished as a marble column.

“ ‘ How much do you want ? ’

“ ‘ One hundred thousand francs for three years, ’ said the Count.

“ ‘ That is possible, ’ said Gobseck, and from a mahogany box (Gobseck’s jewel-case) he drew out a faultlessly adjusted pair of scales !

“ He weighed the diamonds, calculating the value of stones and setting at sight (heaven knows how !), delight and severity struggling in the expression of his face the meanwhile. The Countess was plunged in a kind of a stupor ; to me, watching her, it seemed that she was fathoming the depths of the abyss into which she had fallen. There was remorse still left in that woman’s soul. Perhaps a hand held out in human charity might save her. I would try.

“ ‘Are the diamonds your personal property, madame?’ I asked in a clear voice.

“ ‘Yes, monsieur,’ she said, looking at me with proud eyes.

“ ‘Make out the deed of purchase with power of redemption, chatterbox,’ said Gobseck to me, resigning his chair at the bureau in my favor.

“ ‘Madame is without doubt a married woman?’ I tried again.

“ She nodded abruptly.

“ ‘Then I will not draw up the deed,’ said I.

“ ‘And why not?’ asked M. Gobseck.

“ ‘Why not?’ echoed I, as I drew the old man into the bay window so as to speak aside with him. ‘Why not? This woman is under her husband’s control; the agreement would be void in law; you could not possibly assert your ignorance of a fact recorded on the very face of the document itself. You would be compelled at once to produce the diamonds deposited with you, according to the weight, value, and cutting therein described.’

“ M. Gobseck cut me short with a nod, and turned towards the guilty couple.

“ ‘He is right!’ he said. ‘That puts the whole thing in a different light. Eighty thousand francs down, and you leave the diamonds with me,’ he added, in a husky, flute-like voice. ‘In the way of property, possession is as good as a title.’

“ ‘But——’ objected the young man.

“ ‘You can take it or leave it,’ continued M. Gobseck, returning the jewel-case to the lady as he spoke.

“ ‘I have too many risks to run.’

“ ‘It would be better to throw yourself at your husband’s feet,’ I bent to whisper in her ear.

“ The usurer doubtless knew what I was saying from the movement of my lips. He gave me a cool glance. The Count’s face grew livid. The Countess was visibly wavering.

Maxime stepped up to her, and, low as he spoke, I could catch the words—

“ ‘Adieu, dear Anastasie, may you be happy! As for me, by to-morrow my troubles will be over.’

“ ‘Sir!’ cried the lady, turning to M. Gobseck, ‘I accept your offer.’

“ ‘Come, now,’ returned M. Gobseck. ‘You have been a long time in coming to it, my fair lady.’

“He wrote out a cheque for fifty thousand francs on the Bank of France, and handed it to the Countess.

“ ‘Now,’ continued he with a smile, such a smile as you will see in portraits of M. Voltaire, ‘now I will give you the rest of the amount in bills, thirty thousand francs’ worth of paper as good as bullion. This gentleman here has just said, “My bills will be met when they are due,”’ added he, producing certain drafts bearing the Count’s signature, all protested the day before at the request of some of the confraternity, who had probably made them over to him (M. Gobseck) at a considerably reduced figure.

“The young man growled out something, in which the words ‘Old scoundrel!’ were audible. Daddy Gobseck did not move an eyebrow. He drew a pair of pistols out of a pigeon-hole, remarking coolly—

“ ‘As the insulted man, I fire first.’

“ ‘Maxime, you owe this gentleman an explanation,’ cried the trembling Countess in a low voice.

“ ‘I had no intention of giving offense,’ stammered Maxime.

“ ‘I am quite sure of that,’ M. Gobseck answered calmly; ‘you had no intention of meeting your bills, that was all.’

“The Countess rose, bowed, and vanished, with a great dread gnawing her, I doubt not. M. de Trailles was bound to follow, but before he went he managed to say—

“ ‘If either of you gentlemen should forget himself, I will have his blood, or he will have mine.’

“ ‘Amen!’ called Daddy Gobseck as he put his pistols back in their place; ‘but a man must have blood in his veins though before he can risk it, my son, and you have nothing but mud in yours.’

“When the door was closed, and the two vehicles had gone, M. Gobseck rose to his feet and began to prance about.

“ ‘I have the diamonds! I have the diamonds!’ he cried again and again, ‘the beautiful diamonds! such diamonds! and tolerably cheap, too. Aha! aha! Werbrust and Gigonnet, you thought you had old Papa Gobseck! *Ego sum papa!* I am master of the lot of you! Paid! paid, principal and interest! How silly they will look to-night when I shall come out with this story between two games of dominoes!’

“The dark glee, the savage ferocity aroused by the possession of a few water-white pebbles, set me shuddering. I was dumb with amazement.

“ ‘Aha! There you are, my boy!’ said he. ‘We will dine together. We will have some fun at your place, for I haven’t a home of my own, and these restaurants, with their broths, and sauces, and wines, would poison the devil himself.’

“Something in my face suddenly brought back the usual cold, impassive expression to his.

“ ‘You don’t understand it,’ he said, and, sitting down by the hearth, he put a tin saucepan full of milk on the brasier. ‘Will you breakfast with me?’ continued he. ‘Perhaps there will be enough here for two.’

“ ‘Thanks,’ said I, ‘I do not breakfast till noon.’

“I had scarcely spoken before hurried footsteps sounded from the passage. The stranger stopped at M. Gobseck’s door and rapped; there was that in the knock which suggested a man transported with rage. M. Gobseck reconnoitred him through the grating; then he opened the door, and in came a man of thirty-five or so, judged harmless apparently in spite of his anger. The new-comer, who was quite plainly

dressed, bore a strong resemblance to the late Duc de Richelieu. You must often have met him, he was the Countess' husband, a man with the aristocratic figure (permit the expression to pass) peculiar to statesmen of your Faubourg.

“ ‘Sir,’ said this person, addressing himself to M. Gobseck, who had quite recovered his tranquillity, ‘did my wife go out of this house just now?’

“ ‘That is possible.’

“ ‘Well, sir, do you not take my meaning?’

“ ‘I have not the honor of the acquaintance of my lady your wife,’ returned Gobseck. ‘I have had a good many visitors this morning, women and men, and mannish young ladies, and young gentlemen who look like young ladies. I should find it very hard to say——’

“ ‘A truce to jesting, sir! I mean the woman who has this moment gone out from you.’

“ ‘How can I know whether she is your wife or not? I never had the pleasure of seeing you before.’

“ ‘You are mistaken, M. Gobseck,’ said the Count, with profound irony in his voice. ‘We have met before, one morning in my wife’s bedroom. You had come to demand payment for a bill—no bill of hers.’

“ ‘It was no business of mine to inquire what value she had received for it,’ said M. Gobseck, with a malignant look at the Count. ‘I had come by the bill in the way of business. At the same time, monsieur,’ continued M. Gobseck, quietly pouring coffee into his bowl of milk, without a trace of excitement or hurry in his voice, ‘you will permit me to observe that your right to enter my house and expostulate with me is far from proven to my mind. I came of age in the sixty-first year of the preceding century.’

“ ‘Sir,’ said the Count, ‘you have just bought family diamonds, which do not belong to my wife, for a mere trifle.’

“ ‘Without feeling it incumbent upon me to tell you my private affairs, I will tell you this much, M. le Comte—if

Mme. la Comtesse has taken your diamonds, you should have sent a circular round to all the jewelers, giving them notice not to buy them ; she might have sold them separately.'

“ ‘ You know my wife, sir ! ’ roared the Count.

“ ‘ True.’

“ ‘ She is in her husband’s power.’

“ ‘ That is possible.’

“ ‘ She had no right to dispose of those diamonds——’

“ ‘ Precisely.’

“ ‘ Very well, sir ? ’

“ ‘ Very well, sir. I knew your wife, and she is in her husband’s power ; I am quite willing, she is in the power of a good many people ; but—I—do—not—know—your diamonds. If Mme. la Comtesse can put her name to a bill, she can go into business of course, and buy and sell diamonds on her own account. The thing is plain on the face of it ! ’

“ ‘ Good-day, sir ! ’ cried the Count, now white with rage. ‘ There are courts of justice.’

“ ‘ Quite so.’

“ ‘ This gentleman here,’ he added, indicating me, ‘ was a witness of the sale.’

“ ‘ That is possible.’

“ The Count turned to go. Feeling the gravity of the affair, I suddenly put in between the two belligerents.

“ ‘ M. le Comte,’ said I, ‘ you are right, and M. Gobseck is by no means in the wrong. You could not prosecute the purchaser without bringing your wife into court, and the whole of the odium would not fall on her. I am an attorney, and I owe it to myself, and still more to my professional position, to declare that the diamonds of which you speak were purchased by M. Gobseck in my presence ; but, in my opinion, it would be unwise to dispute the legality of the sale, especially as the goods are not readily recognizable. In equity your contention would lie, in law it would collapse. M. Gobseck is too honest a man to deny that the sale was a profitable

transaction, more especially as my conscience, no less than my duty, compels me to make the admission. But once bring the case into a court of law, M. le Comte, the issue would be doubtful. My advice to you is to come to terms with M. Gobseck, who can plead that he bought the diamonds in all good faith; you would be bound in any case to return the purchase money. Consent to an arrangement, with power to redeem at the end of seven or eight months, or a year even, or any convenient lapse of time, for the repayment of the sum borrowed by Mme. la Comtesse, unless you would prefer to repurchase them outright and give security for repayment.'

"Gobseck dipped his bread into the bowl of coffee, and ate with perfect indifference; but at the words 'come to terms,' he looked at me as much as to say, 'A fine fellow that! he has learned something from my lessons!' And I, for my part, riposted with a glance, which he understood uncommonly well. The business was dubious and shady; there was pressing need of coming to terms. Gobseck could not deny all knowledge of it, for I should appear as a witness. The Count thanked me with a smile of good-will.

"In the debate which followed, Gobseck showed greed enough and skill enough to baffle a whole congress of diplomats; but in the end I drew up an instrument, in which the Count acknowledged the receipt of eighty-five thousand francs, interest included, in consideration of which Gobseck undertook to return the diamonds to the Count.

"'What waste!' exclaimed he as he put his signature to the agreement. 'How is it possible to bridge such a gulf?'

"'Have you many children, sir?' Gobseck asked gravely.

"The Count winced at the question; it was as if the old money-lender, like an experienced physician, had put his finger at once on the sore spot. The Comtesse's husband did not reply.

"'Well,' said Gobseck, taking the pained silence for answer, 'I know your story by heart. The woman is a fiend,

but perhaps you love her still; I can well believe it; she made an impression on me. Perhaps, too, you would rather save your fortune, and keep it for one or two of your children? Well, fling yourself into the whirlpool of society, lose that fortune at play, come to Gobseck pretty often. The world will say that I am a Jew, a Tartar, a usurer, a pirate, will say that I have ruined you! I snap my fingers at them! If anybody insults me, I lay my man out; nobody is a surer shot nor handles a rapier better than your servant. And every one knows it. Then, have a friend—if you can find one—and make over your property to him by a fictitious sale. You call that a *fidei commissum*, don't you?' he asked, turning to me.

“The Count seemed to be entirely absorbed in his own thoughts.

“‘You shall have your money to-morrow,’ he said, ‘have the diamonds in readiness,’ and he went.

“‘There goes one who looks to me to be as stupid as an honest man,’ M. Gobseck said coolly when the Count had gone.

“‘Say rather stupid as a man of passionate nature.’

“‘The Count owes you your fee for drawing up the agreement!’ M. Gobseck called after me as I took my leave.

“One morning, a few days after the scene which initiated me into the terrible depths beneath the surface of the life of a woman of fashion, the Count came into my private office.

“‘I have come to consult you on a matter of grave moment,’ he said, ‘and I begin by telling you that I have perfect confidence in you, as I hope to prove to you. Your behavior to Mme. de Grandlieu is above all praise,’ the Count went on. (You see, madame, that you have paid me a thousand times over for a very simple matter.)

“I bowed respectfully, and replied that I had done nothing but the duty of an honest man.

“ ‘ Well,’ the Count went on, ‘ I have made a great many inquiries about the singular personage to whom you owe your position. And from all that I can learn, M. Gobseck is a philosopher of the Cynic school. What do you think of his probity?’

“ ‘ M. le Comte,’ said I, ‘ M. Gobseck is my benefactor—at fifteen per cent.,’ I added, laughing. ‘ But his avarice does not authorize me to paint him to the life for a stranger’s benefit.’

“ ‘ Speak out, sir. Your frankness cannot injure M. Gobseck or yourself. I do not expect to find an angel in a pawnbroker.’

“ ‘ Daddy Gobseck,’ I began, ‘ is intimately convinced of the truth of the principle which he takes for a rule of life. In his opinion, money is a commodity which you may sell cheap or dear, according to circumstances, with a clear conscience. A capitalist, by charging a high rate of interest, becomes in his eyes a secured partner by anticipation in the profits of a paying concern or speculation. Apart from the peculiar philosophical views of human nature and financial principles, which enable him to behave like a usurer, I am fully persuaded that, out of his business, he is the most loyal and upright soul in Paris. There are two men in him ; he is petty and great—a miser and a philosopher. If I were to die and leave a family behind me, he would be the guardian whom I should appoint. This was how I came to see M. Gobseck in this light, monsieur. I know nothing of his past life. He may have been a pirate, may, for anything I know, have been all over the world, trafficking in diamonds, or men, or women, or state secrets ; but this I affirm of him—never has human soul been more thoroughly tempered and tried. When I paid off my loan, I asked him, with a little circumlocution of course, how it was that he had made me pay such an exorbitant rate of interest ; and why, seeing that I was a friend, and he meant to do me a kindness, he should not have yielded to the wish

and made it complete. "My son," he said, "I released you from all need to feel any gratitude by giving you ground for the belief that you owed me nothing." So we are the best friends in the world. That answer, monsieur, gives you the man better than any amount of description.'

"'I have made up my mind once and for all,' said the Count. 'Draw up the necessary papers; I am going to transfer my property to Gobseck. I have no one but you to trust to in the draft of the counter-deed, which will declare that this transfer is a simulated sale, and that Gobseck as trustee will administer my estate (as he knows how to administer), and undertakes to make over my fortune to my eldest son when he comes of age. Now, sir, this I must tell you: I should be afraid to have that precious document in my own keeping. My boy is so fond of his mother, that I cannot trust him with it. So dare I beg of you to keep it for me? In case of death, Gobseck would make you legatee of my property. Every contingency is provided for.'

"The Count paused for a moment. He seemed greatly agitated.

"'A thousand pardons,' he said at length; 'I am in great pain, and have very grave misgivings as to my health. Recent troubles have disturbed me very painfully, and forced me to take this great step.'

"'Allow me first to thank you, monsieur,' said I, 'for the trust you place in me. But I am bound to deserve it by pointing out to you that you are disinheriting your—other children. They bear your name. Merely as the children of a once-loved wife, now fallen from her position, they have a claim to an assured existence. I tell you plainly that I cannot accept the trust with which you propose to honor me unless their future is secured.'

"The Count trembled violently at the words, and tears came into his eyes as he grasped my hand, saying, 'I did not know my man thoroughly. You have made me both glad and

sorry. We will make provision for the children in the counter-deed.'

"I went with him to the door; it seemed to me that there was a glow of satisfaction in his face at the thought of this act of justice.

"Now, Camille, this is how a young wife takes the first step to the brink of a precipice. A quadrille, a ballad, a picnic party is sometimes cause sufficient of frightful evils. You are hurried on by the presumptuous voice of vanity and pride, on the faith of a smile or through giddiness and folly! Shame and misery and remorse are three furies awaiting every woman the moment she oversteps the limits——"

"Poor Camille can hardly keep awake," the Vicomtesse hastily broke in. "Go to bed, child; you have no need of appalling pictures to keep you pure in heart and conduct."

Camille de Grandlieu took the hint and went.

"You were going rather too far, dear M. Derville," said the Vicomtesse, "an attorney is not a mother of daughters nor yet a preacher."

"But any newspaper is a thousand times——"

"Poor Derville!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse, "what has come over you? Do you really imagine that I allow a daughter of mine to read the newspapers? Go on," she added after a pause.

"Three months after everything was signed and sealed between the Count and Gobseck——"

"You can call him the Comte de Restaud, now that Camille is not here," said the Vicomtesse.

"So be it! Well, time went by, and I saw nothing of the counter-deed, which by rights should have been in my hands. An attorney in Paris lives in such a whirl of business that with certain exceptions which we make for ourselves, we have not the time to give each individual client the amount of interest which he himself takes in his affairs. Still, one day when Gobseck came to dine with me, I asked him as we left

the table if he knew how it was that I had heard no more of M. de Restaud.

“‘There are excellent reasons for that,’ he said; ‘the noble Count is at death’s door. He is one of the soft stamp that cannot learn how to put an end to chagrin, and allow it to wear them out instead. Life is a craft, a profession; every man must take the trouble to learn that business. When he has learned what life is by dint of painful experiences, the fibre of him is toughened, and acquires a certain elasticity, so that he has his sensibilities under his own control; he disciplines himself till his nerves are like steel springs, which always bend, but never break; given a sound digestion, and a man in such training ought to live as long as the cedars of Lebanon, and famous trees they are.’

“‘Then is the Count actually dying?’ I asked.

“‘That is possible,’ said Gobseck; ‘the winding up of his estate will be a juicy bit of business for you.’

“I looked at my man, and said, by way of sounding him—

“‘Just explain to me how it is that we, the Count and I, are the only men in whom you take an interest?’

“‘Because you are the only two who have trusted me without finessing,’ he said.

“Although this answer warranted my belief that Gobseck would act fairly even if the counter-deed were lost, I resolved to go to see the Count. I pleaded a business engagement, and we separated.

“I went straight to the Rue du Helder, and was shown into a room where the Countess sat playing with her children. When she heard my name, she sprang up and came to meet me, then she sat down and pointed without a word to a chair by the fire. Her face wore the inscrutable mask beneath which women of the world conceal their most vehement emotions. Trouble had withered that face already. Nothing of its beauty now remained, save the marvelous outlines in which its principal charm had lain.

“ ‘It is essential, madame, that I should speak to M. le Comte——’

“ ‘If so, you would be more favored than I am,’ she said, interrupting me. ‘M. de Restaud will see no one. He will hardly allow his doctor to come, and will not be nursed even by me. When people are ill, they have such strange fancies! They are like children, they do not know what they want.’

“ ‘Perhaps, like children, they know very well what they want.’

“The Countess reddened. I almost repented a thrust worthy of Gobseck. So, by way of changing the conversation, I added, ‘But M. de Restaud cannot possibly lie there alone all day, madame.’

“ ‘His oldest boy is with him,’ she said.

“It was useless to gaze at the Countess; she did not blush this time, and it looked to me as if she were resolved more firmly than ever that I should not penetrate into her secrets.

“ ‘You must understand, madame, that my proceeding is no way indiscreet. It is strongly to his interest——’ I bit my lips, feeling that I had gone the wrong way to work. The Countess immediately took advantage of my slip.

“ ‘My interests are in no way separate from my husband’s, sir,’ said she. ‘There is nothing to prevent you addressing yourself to me——’

“ ‘The business which brings me here concerns no one but M. le Comte,’ I said firmly.

“ ‘I will let him know of your wish to see him.’

“The civil tone and expression assumed for the occasion did not impose upon me; I divined that she would never allow me to see her husband. I chatted on about indifferent matters for a little while, so as to study her; but, like all women who have once begun to plot for themselves, she could dissimulate with the rare perfection which, in your sex, means the last degree of perfidy. If I may dare to say it, I looked for anything from her, even a crime. She produced this

feeling in me, because it was so evident from her manner and in all that she did or said, down to the very inflections of her voice, that she had an eye to the future. I went.

“Now I will pass on to the final scenes of this adventure, throwing in a few circumstances brought to light by time, and some details guessed by Gobseck’s perspicacity or by my own.

“When the Comte de Restaud apparently plunged into the vortex of dissipation, something passed between the husband and wife, something which remains an impenetrable secret, but the wife sank even lower in the husband’s eyes. As soon as he became so ill that he was obliged to take to his bed, he manifested his aversion for the Countess and the two youngest children. He forbade them to enter his room, and any attempt to disobey his wishes brought on such dangerous attacks that the doctor implored the Countess to submit to her husband’s wish.

“Mme. de Restaud had seen the family estates and property, nay, the very mansion in which she lived, pass into the hands of Gobseck, who appeared to play the fantastic part of ogre so far as their wealth was concerned. She partially understood what her husband was doing, no doubt. M. de Trailles was traveling in England (his creditors had been a little too pressing of late), and no one else was in a position to enlighten the lady, and explain that her husband was taking precautions against her at Gobseck’s suggestion. It is said that she held out for a long while before she gave the signature required by French law for the sale of the property; nevertheless the Count gained his point. The Countess was convinced that her husband was realizing his fortune, and that somewhere or other there would be a little bunch of notes representing the amount; they had been deposited with a notary, or perhaps at the bank, or in some safe hiding-place. Following out her train of thought, it was evident that M. de Restaud must of necessity have some kind of document in

his possession by which any remaining property could be recovered and handed over to his son.

“So she made up her mind to keep the strictest possible watch over the sick-room. She ruled despotically in the house, and everything in it was submitted to this feminine espionage. All day she sat in the salon adjoining her husband’s room, so that she could hear every syllable that he uttered, every least movement that he made. She had a bed put there for her of a night, but she did not sleep very much. The doctor was entirely in her interests. Such wifely devotion seemed praiseworthy enough. With the natural subtlety of perfidy, she took care to disguise M. de Restaud’s repugnance for her, and feigned distress so perfectly that she gained a sort of celebrity. Straight-laced women were even found to say that she had expiated her sins. Always before her eyes she beheld a vision of the destitution to follow on the Count’s death if her presence of mind should fail her; and in these ways the wife, repulsed from the bed of pain on which her husband lay and groaned, had drawn a charmed circle round about it. So near, yet kept at a distance; all-powerful, but in disgrace, the apparently devoted wife was lying in wait for death and opportunity; crouching like the ant-lion at the bottom of his spiral pit, ever on the watch for the prey that cannot escape, listening to the fall of every grain of sand.

“The strictest censor could not but recognize that the Countess pushed maternal sentiment to the last degree. Her father’s death had been a lesson to her, people said. She worshiped her children. They were so young that she could hide the disorders of her life from their eyes, and could win their love; she had given them the best and most brilliant education. I confess that I cannot help admiring her and feeling sorry for her. Gobseck used to joke me about it. Just about that time she had discovered Maxime’s baseness, and was expiating the sins of the past in tears of blood. I am sure of it. Hateful as were the measures which she took

for regaining control of her husband's money, were they not the result of a mother's love, and a desire to repair the wrongs she had done her children? And again, it may be, like many a woman who has experienced the storms of lawless love, she felt a longing to lead a virtuous life again. Perhaps she only learned the worth of that life when she came to reap the woful harvest sown by her errors.

“Every time that little Ernest came out of his father's room, she put him through a searching examination as to all that his father had done or said. The boy willingly complied with his mother's wishes, and told her even more than she asked in her anxious affection, as he thought.

“My visit was a ray of light for the Countess. She was determined to see in me the instrument of the Count's vengeance, and resolved that I should not be allowed to go near the dying man. I augured ill of all this, and earnestly wished for an interview, for I was not easy in my mind about the fate of the counter-deed. If it should fall into the Countess' hands, she might turn it to her own account, and that would be the beginning of a series of interminable lawsuits between her and Gobseck. I knew the usurer well enough to feel convinced that he would never give up the property to her; there was room for plenty of legal quibbling over a series of transfers, and I alone knew all the ins and outs of the matter. I was minded to prevent such a tissue of misfortune, so I went to the Countess a second time.

“I have noticed, madame,” said Derville, turning to the Vicomtesse, and speaking in a confidential tone, “certain moral phenomena to which we do not pay enough attention. I am naturally an observer of human nature, and instinctively I bring a spirit of analysis to the business that I transact in the interest of others, when human passions are called into lively play. Now, I have often noticed, and always with new wonder, that two antagonists almost always divine each other's inmost thoughts and ideas. Two enemies sometimes

possess a power of clear insight into mental processes, and read each other's minds as two lovers read in either soul. So when we came together, the Countess and I, I understood at once the reason of her antipathy for me, disguised though it was by the most gracious forms of politeness and civility. I had been forced to be her confidant, and a woman cannot but hate the man before whom she is compelled to blush. And she on her side knew that if I was the man in whom her husband placed confidence, that husband had not as yet given up his fortune.

“I will spare you the conversation, but it abides in my memory as one of the most dangerous encounters in my career. Nature had bestowed on her all the qualities which, combined, are irresistibly fascinating; she could be pliant and proud by turns, and confiding and coaxing in her manner; she even went so far as to try to arouse curiosity and kindle love in her effort to subjugate me. It was a failure. As I took my leave of her, I caught a gleam of hate and rage in her eyes that made me shudder. We parted enemies. She would fain have crushed me out of existence; and for my own part, I felt pity for her, and for some natures pity is the deadliest of insults. This feeling pervaded the last representations I put before her; and when I left her, I left, I think, dread in the depths of her soul, by declaring that, turn which way she would, ruin lay inevitably before her.

“ ‘If I were to see M. le Comte, your children's property at any rate would——’

“ ‘I should be at your mercy,’ she said, breaking in upon me, disgust in her gesture.

“Now that we had spoken frankly, I made up my mind to save the family from impending destitution. I resolved to strain the law at need to gain my ends, and this was what I did. I sued the Comte de Restaud for a sum of money, ostensibly due to Gobseck, and gained judgment. The Countess, of course, did not allow him to know of this, but I

had gained my point, I had a right to affix seals to everything on the death of the Count. I bribed one of the servants in the house—the man undertook to let me know at any hour of the day or night if his master should be at the point of death, so that I could intervene at once, scare the Countess with a threat of affixing seals, and so secure the counter-deed.

“ I learned later on that the woman was studying the Code, with her husband’s dying moans in her ears. If we could picture the thoughts of those who stand about a death-bed, what fearful sights should we not see? Money is always the motive-spring of the schemes elaborated, of all the plans that are made and the plots that are woven about it! Let us leave these details, nauseating in the nature of them; but perhaps they may have given you some insight into all that this husband and wife endured; perhaps too they may unveil much that is passing in secret in other houses.

“ For two months the Comte de Restaud lay on his bed, alone, and resigned to his fate. Mortal disease was slowly sapping the strength of mind and body. Unaccountable and grotesque sick fancies preyed upon him; he would not suffer them to set his room in order, no one should nurse him, he would not even allow them to make his bed. All his surroundings bore the marks of this last degree of apathy, the furniture was out of place, the daintiest trifles were covered with dust and cobwebs. In health he had been a man of refined and expensive tastes, now he positively delighted in the comfortless look of the room. A host of objects required in illness—rows of medicine bottles, empty and full, most of them dirty; crumpled linen, and broken plates—littered the writing-table, chairs, and chimney-pieces. An open warming-pan lay on the floor before the grate; a bath, still full of mineral water, had not been taken away. The sense of coming dissolution pervaded all the details of an unsightly chaos. Signs of death appeared in things inanimate before the destroyer came to the body on the bed. The Comte de

Restaud could not bear the daylight, the Venetian shutters were closed, darkness deepened the gloom in the dismal chamber. The sick man himself had wasted greatly. All the life in him seemed to have taken refuge in the still brilliant eyes. The livid whiteness of his face was something horrible to see, enhanced as it was by the long dank locks of hair that straggled along his cheeks, for he would never suffer them to cut it. He looked like some religious fanatic in the desert. Mental suffering was extinguishing all human instincts in this man of scarce fifty years of age, whom all Paris had known as so brilliant and so successful.

“One morning at the beginning of December, 1824, he looked up at Ernest, who sat at the foot of his bed gazing at his father with wistful eyes.

“ ‘Are you in pain?’ the little Vicomte asked.

“ ‘No,’ said the Count, with a ghastly smile, ‘it all lies *here and about my heart!*’

“He pointed to his forehead, and then laid his wasted fingers on his hollow chest. Ernest began to cry at the sight.

“ ‘How is it that M. Derville does not come to me?’ the Count asked his servant (he thought that Maurice was really attached to him, but the man was entirely in the Countess’ interest)—‘What! Maurice!’ and the dying man suddenly sat upright in his bed, and seemed to recover all his presence of mind, ‘I have sent for my attorney seven or eight times during the last fortnight, and he does not come!’ he cried. ‘Do you imagine that I am to be trifled with? Go for him, at once, this very instant, and bring him back with you. If you do not carry out my orders, I shall get up and go myself.’

“ ‘Madame,’ said the man as he came into the salon, ‘you heard M. le Comte; what ought I to do?’

“ ‘Pretend to go to the attorney, and when you come back, tell your master that his man of business is forty leagues away from Paris on an important lawsuit. Say that he is expected back at the end of the week. Sick people never know how

ill they are,' thought the Countess ; ' he will wait till the man comes home.'

"The doctor had said on the previous evening that the Count could scarcely live through the day. When the servant came back two hours later to give that hopeless answer, the dying man seemed to be greatly agitated.

" ' O God !' he cried again and again, ' I put my trust in none but Thee.'

"For a long while he lay and gazed at his son, and spoke in a feeble voice at last.

" ' Ernest, my boy, you are very young ; but you have a good heart ; you can understand, no doubt, that a promise given to a dying man is sacred ; a promise to a father—— Do you feel that you can be trusted with a secret, and keep it so well and closely that even your mother herself shall not know that you have a secret to keep ? There is no one else in this house whom I can trust to-day. You will not betray my trust, will you ?'

" ' No, father.'

" ' Very well, then, Ernest, in a minute or two I will give you a sealed packet that belongs to M. Derville ; you must take such care of it that no one can know that you have it ; then you must slip out of the house and put the letter into the post-box at the corner.'

" ' Yes, father.'

" ' Can I depend upon you ?'

" ' Yes, father.'

" ' Come and kiss me. You have made death less bitter to me, dear boy. In six or seven years' time you will understand the importance of this secret, and you will be well rewarded then for your quickness and obedience, you will know then how much I love you. Leave me alone for a minute, and let no one—no matter whom—come in meanwhile.'

"Ernest went out and saw his mother standing in the next room.

“ ‘Ernest,’ said she ‘come here.’

“ She sat down, drew her son to her knees and clasped him in her arms and held him tightly to her heart.

“ ‘Ernest, your father said something to you just now.’

“ ‘Yes, mamma.’

“ ‘What did he say?’

“ ‘I cannot repeat it, mamma.’

“ ‘Oh, my dear child,’ cried the Countess, kissing him in rapture. ‘You have kept your secret; how glad that makes me! Never tell a lie; never fail to keep your word—those are two principles which should never be forgotten.’

“ ‘Oh! mamma, how beautiful you are! *You* never told a lie, I am quite sure.’

“ ‘Once or twice, Ernest dear, I have lied. Yes, and I have not kept my word under circumstances which speak louder than all precepts. Listen, my Ernest, you are big enough and intelligent enough to see that your father drives me away, and will not allow me to nurse him, and this is not natural, for you know how much I love him.’

“ ‘Yes, mamma.’

“ The Countess began to cry. ‘Poor child!’ she said, ‘this misfortune is the result of treacherous insinuations. Wicked people have tried to separate me from your father to satisfy their greed. They mean to take all our money from us and to keep it for themselves. If your father were well, the division between us would soon be over; he would listen to me; he is loving and kind; he would see his mistake. But now his mind is affected, and his prejudices against me have become a fixed idea, a sort of mania with him. It is one result of his illness. Your father’s fondness for you is another proof that his mind is deranged. Until he fell ill you never noticed that he loved you more than Pauline or Georges. It is all caprice with him now. In his affection for you he might take it into his head to tell you to do things for him. If you do not want to ruin us all, my darling, and

to see your mother begging her bread like a pauper woman, you must tell her everything——’

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ cried the Count. He had opened the door and stood there, a sudden, half-naked apparition, almost as thin and fleshless as a skeleton.

“ His smothered cry produced a terrible effect upon the Countess ; she sat motionless, as if a sudden stupor had seized her. Her husband was as white and wasted as if he had risen out of his grave.

“ ‘ You have filled my life to the full with trouble, and now you are trying to vex my death-bed, to warp my boy’s mind, and make a depraved man of him ! ’ he cried hoarsely.

“ The Countess flung herself at his feet. His face, working with the last emotions of life, was almost hideous to see.”

“ ‘ Mercy ! mercy ! ’ she cried aloud, shedding a torrent of tears.

“ ‘ Have you shown me any pity ? ’ he asked. ‘ I allowed you to squander your own money, and now do you mean to squander my fortune, too, and ruin my son ? ’

“ ‘ Ah ! well, yes, have no pity for me, be merciless to me ! ’ she cried. ‘ But the children ? Condemn your widow to live in a convent ; I will obey you ; I will do anything, anything that you bid me, to expiate the wrong I have done you, if that only the children may be happy ! The children ! Oh, the children ! ’

“ ‘ I have only one child, ’ said the Count, stretching out a wasted arm, in his despair, towards his son.

“ ‘ Pardon a penitent woman, a penitent woman ! —— ’ wailed the Countess, her arms about her husband’s damp feet. She could not speak for sobbing ; vague, incoherent sounds broke from her parched throat.

“ ‘ You dare to talk of penitence after all that you said to Ernest ! ’ exclaimed the dying man, shaking off the Countess, who lay groveling at his feet. ‘ You turn me to ice ! ’ he added, and there was something appalling in the indifference





W. Boncher

*CLOTHES AND PAPERS AND RAGS LAY TOSSED ABOUT IN  
CONFUSION.*



with which he uttered the words. 'You have been a bad daughter; you have been a bad wife; you will be a bad mother.'

"The wretched woman fainted away. The dying man reached his bed and lay down again, and a few hours later sank into unconsciousness. The priests came and administered the sacraments.

"At midnight he died; the scene that morning had exhausted his remaining strength, and on the stroke of midnight I arrived with Daddy Gobseck. The house was in confusion, and under cover of it we walked up into the little salon adjoining the death-chamber. The three children were there in tears, with two priests, who had come to watch with the dead. Ernest came over to me, and said that his mother desired to be alone in the Count's room.

"'Do not go in,' he said; and I admired the child for his tone and gesture; 'she is praying there.'

"Gobseck began to laugh that soundless laugh of his, but I felt too much touched by the feeling in Ernest's little face to join in the miser's sardonic amusement. When Ernest saw that we moved towards the door, he planted himself in front of it, crying out, 'Mamma, here are some gentlemen in black who want to see you!'

"Gobseck lifted Ernest out of the way as if the child had been a feather, and opened the door.

"What a scene it was that met our eyes! The room was in frightful disorder; clothes and papers and rags lay tossed about in a confusion horrible to see in the presence of death; and there, in the midst, stood the Countess in disheveled despair, unable to utter a word, her eyes glittering. The Count had scarcely breathed his last before his wife came in and forced open the drawers and the desk; the carpet was strewn with litter, some of the furniture and boxes were broken, the signs of violence could be seen everywhere. But if her search had at first proved fruitless, there was that in her excitement

and attitude which led me to believe that she had found the mysterious documents at last. I glanced at the bed, and professional instinct told me all that had happened. The mattress had been flung contemptuously down by the bedside, and across it, face downwards, lay the body of the Count, like one of the paper envelopes that strewed the carpet—he too was nothing now but an envelope. There was something grotesquely horrible in the attitude of the stiffening, rigid limbs.

“The dying man must have hidden the counter-deed under his pillow to keep it safe so long as life should last; and his wife must have guessed his thought; indeed, it might be read plainly in his last dying gesture, in the convulsive clutch of his claw-like hands. The pillow had been flung to the floor at the foot of the bed; I could see the print of her heel upon it. At her feet lay a paper with the Count’s arms on the seals; I snatched it up, and saw that it was addressed to me. I looked steadily at the Countess with the pitiless clear-sightedness of an examining magistrate confronting a guilty creature. The contents were blazing in the grate; she had flung them on the fire at the sound of our approach, imagining, from a first hasty glance at the provisions which I had suggested for her children, that she was destroying a will which disinherited them. A tormented conscience and involuntary horror of the deed which she had done had taken away all power of reflection. She had been caught in the act, and possibly the scaffold was rising before her eyes, and she already felt the felon’s branding iron.

“There she stood gasping for breath, waiting for us to speak, staring at us with haggard eyes, and every feature manifesting a guilty conscience.

“I went across to the grate and pulled out an unburned fragment. ‘Ah, madame!’ I exclaimed, ‘you have ruined your children! Those papers were their titles to their property.’

“ Her mouth twitched, she looked as if she were threatened by a paralytic seizure.

“ ‘ Eh ! eh ! ’ cried Gobseck ; the harsh, shrill tone grated upon our ears like the sound of a brass candlestick scratching a marble surface.

“ There was a pause, then the old man turned to me and said quietly—

“ ‘ Do you intend Mme. la Comtesse to suppose that I am not the rightful owner of the property sold to me by her late husband ? This house belongs to me now.’

“ A sudden blow on the head from a bludgeon would have given me less pain and astonishment. The Countess saw the look of hesitation in my face.

“ ‘ Monsieur,’ she cried, ‘ Monsieur ! ’ She could find no other words.

“ ‘ You are a trustee, are you not ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ That is possible.’

“ ‘ Then do you mean to take advantage of this crime of hers ? ’

“ ‘ Precisely.’

“ I went at that, leaving the Countess sitting by her husband’s bedside, shedding hot tears. Gobseck followed me. Outside in the street I separated from him, but he came after me, flung me one of those searching glances with which he probed men’s minds, and said in the husky flute-tones, pitched in a shriller key—

“ ‘ Do you take it upon yourself to judge me ? ’

“ From that time forward we saw little of each other. Gobseck let the Count’s mansion on lease ; he spent the summers on the country estates. He was a lord of the manor in earnest, putting up farm buildings, repairing mills and roadways, and planting timber. I came across him one day in a walk in the Jardin des Tuileries.

“ ‘ The Countess is behaving like a heroine,’ said I ; ‘ she

gives herself up entirely to the children's education; she is giving them a perfect bringing up. The oldest boy is a charming young fellow——'

“ ‘That is possible.’

“ ‘But ought you not to help Ernest?’ I suggested.

“ ‘Help him!’ cried Gobseck. ‘Not I! Adversity is the greatest of all teachers; adversity teaches us to know the value of money and the worth of men and women. Let him set sail on the seas of Paris; when he is a qualified pilot, we will give him a ship to steer.’

“ I left him without seeking to explain the meaning of his words.

“ M. de Restaud's mother has prejudiced him against me, and he is very far from taking me as his legal adviser; still, I went to see Gobseck last week to tell him about Ernest's love for Mlle. Camille, and pressed him to carry out his contract, since that young Restaud is just of age.

“ I found that the old-bill discounter had been kept to his bed for a long time by the complaint of which he was to die. He put me off, saying that he would give the matter his attention when he could get up again and see after his business; his idea being no doubt that he would not give up any of his possessions so long as the breath was in him; no other reason could be found for his shuffling answer. He seemed to me to be much worse than he at all suspected. I stayed with him long enough to discern the progress of a passion which age had converted into a sort of craze. He wanted to be alone in the house, and had taken the rooms one by one as they fell vacant. In his own room he had changed nothing; the furniture which I knew so well sixteen years ago looked the same as ever; it might have been kept under a glass case. Gobseck's faithful old portress, with her husband, a pensioner, who sat in the entry while she was upstairs, was still his house-keeper and charwoman, and now in addition his sick-nurse. In spite of his feebleness, Gobseck saw his clients himself as

heretofore, and received sums of money ; his affairs had been so simplified, that he only needed to send his pensioner out now and again on an errand, and could carry on business in his bed.

“ After the treaty, by which France recognized the Haytian Republic, Gobseck was one of the members of the commission appointed to liquidate claims and assess repayments due by Hayti ; his special knowledge of old fortunes in San Domingo, and the planters and their heirs and assigns to whom the indemnities were due, had led to his nomination. Gobseck’s peculiar genius had then devised an agency for discounting the planters’ claims on the government. The business was carried on under the names of Werbrust and Gigonnet, with whom he shared the spoil without disbursements, for his knowledge was accepted instead of capital. The agency was a sort of distillery, in which money was extracted from doubtful claims, and the claims of those who knew no better, or had no confidence in the government. As a liquidator, Gobseck could make terms with the large landed proprietors ; and these, either to gain a higher percentage of their claims or to ensure prompt settlements, would send him presents in proportion to their means. In this way presents came to be a kind of percentage upon sums too large to pass through his control, while the agency bought up cheaply the small and dubious claims, or the claims of those persons who preferred a little ready money to a deferred and somewhat hazy repayment by the Republic. Gobseck was the insatiable boa-constrictor of the great business. Every morning he received his tribute, eyeing it like a Nabob’s prime minister, as he considers whether he will sign a pardon. Gobseck would take anything, from the present of game sent him by some poor devil or the pound’s weight of wax-candles from devout folk, to the rich man’s plate and the speculator’s gold snuff-box. Nobody knew what became of the presents sent to the old money-lender. Everything went in, but nothing came out.

“ ‘On the word of an honest woman,’ said the portress, an old acquaintance of mine, ‘I believe he swallows it all and is none the fatter for it ; he is as thin and dried up as the cuckoo in the clock.’

“ ‘At length, last Monday, Gobseck sent his pensioner for me. The man came up to my private office.

“ ‘Be quick and come, M. Derville,’ said he, ‘the governor is just going to hand in his checks ; he has grown as yellow as a lemon ; he is fidgeting to speak with you ; death has fair hold of him ; the rattle is working in his throat.’

“ ‘When I entered Gobseck’s room, I found the dying man kneeling before the grate. If there was no fire on the hearth, there was at any rate a monstrous heap of ashes. He had dragged himself out of bed, but his strength had failed him, and he could neither go back nor find voice to complain.

“ ‘You felt cold, old friend,’ I said, as I helped him back to his bed ; ‘how can you do without a fire?’

“ ‘I am not cold at all,’ he said. ‘No fire here ! no fire ! I am going, I know not where, lad,’ he went on, glancing at me with blank, lightless eyes, ‘but I am going away from this. I have *carpology*,’ said he (the use of the technical term showing how clear and accurate his mental processes were even now). ‘I thought the room was full of live gold, and I got up to catch some of it. To whom will all mine go, I wonder ? Not to the Crown ; I have left a will, look for it, Grotius. “The Holland Belle” had a daughter ; I once saw the girl somewhere or other, in the Rue Vivienne, one evening. They call her “La Torpille,” I believe ; she is as pretty as pretty can be ; look her up, Grotius. You are my executor ; take what you like ; help yourself. There are Strasbourg pies there, and bags of coffee, and sugar, and gold spoons. Give the Odiot service to your wife. But who is to have the diamonds ? Are you going to take them, lad ? There is snuff too—sell it at Hamburg, tobaccos are worth half as much again at Hamburg. All sorts of things I have, in fact, and

now I must go and leave them all. Come, Papa Gobseck, no weakness, be yourself ! ’

“ He raised himself in bed, the lines of his face standing out as sharply against the pillow as if the profile had been cast in bronze ; he stretched out a lean arm and bony hand along the coverlet and clutched it, as if so he would fain keep his hold on life, then he gazed hard at the grate, cold as his own metallic eyes, and died in full consciousness of death. To us—the portress, the old pensioner, and myself—he looked like one of the old Romans standing behind the consuls in Lethière’s picture of the ‘ Death of the Sons of Brutus.’

“ ‘ He was a good-plucked one, the old Lascar ! ’ said the pensioner in his soldierly fashion.

“ But as for me, the dying man’s fantastical enumeration of his riches was still sounding in my ears, and my eyes, following the direction of his, rested on that heap of ashes. It struck me that it was very large. I took the tongs, and, as soon as I stirred the cinders, I felt the metal underneath, a mass of gold and silver coins, receipts taken during his illness, doubtless, after he grew too feeble to lock the money up, and could trust no one to take it to the bank for him.

“ ‘ Run for the justice of the peace,’ said I, turning to the old pensioner, ‘ so that everything can be sealed here at once.’

“ Gobseck’s last words and the old portress’ remarks had struck me. I took the keys of the rooms on the first and second floor to make a visitation. The first door that I opened revealed the meaning of the phrases which I took for mad ravings ; and I saw the length to which covetousness goes when it survives only as an illogical instinct, the last stage of greed of which you find so many examples among misers in country towns.

“ In the room next to the one in which Gobseck had died, a quantity of eatables of all kinds were stored—putrid pies, moldy fish, nay, even shell-fish ; the stench almost choked

me. Maggots and insects swarmed. These comparatively recent presents were put down, pell-mell, among chests of tea, bags of coffee, and packing-cases of every shape. A silver soup tureen on the chimney-piece was full of advices of the arrival of goods consigned to his order at Havre, bales of cotton, hogsheads of sugar, barrels of rum, coffees, indigo, tobaccos, a perfect bazaar of colonial produce. The room itself was crammed with furniture, and silver-plate, and lamps, and vases, and pictures; there were books, and curiosities, and fine engravings lying rolled up, unframed. Perhaps these were not all presents, and some part of this vast quantity of stuff had been deposited with him in the shape of pledges, and had been left on his hands in default of payment. I noticed jewel-cases, with ciphers and armorial bearings stamped upon them, and sets of fine table-linen, and weapons of price; but none of the things were docketed. I opened a book which seemed to be misplaced, and found a thousand-franc note in it. I promised myself that I would go through everything thoroughly; I would try the ceilings, and floors, and walls, and cornices to discover all the gold, hoarded with such passionate greed by a Dutch miser worthy of a Rembrandt's brush. In all the course of my professional career I have never seen such impressive signs of the eccentricity of avarice.

“I went back to his room, and found an explanation of this chaos and accumulation of riches in a pile of letters lying under the paper-weights on his desk—Gobseck's correspondence with the various dealers to whom doubtless he usually sold his presents. These persons had, perhaps, fallen victims to Gobseck's cleverness, or Gobseck may have wanted fancy prices for his goods; at any rate, every bargain hung in suspense. He had not disposed of the eatables to Chevet, because Chevet would only take them of him at a loss of thirty per cent. Gobseck haggled for a few francs between the prices, and while they wrangled the goods became unsalable. Again,

Gobseck had refused free delivery of his silver-plate, and declined to guarantee the weights of his coffees. There had been a dispute over each article, the first indication in Gobseck of the childishness and incomprehensible obstinacy of age, a condition of mind reached at last by all men in whom a strong passion survives the intellect.

“I said to myself, as he had said, ‘To whom will all these riches go?’— And when I think of the grotesque information he gave me as to the present address of his heiress, I foresee that it will be my duty to search all the houses of ill-fame in Paris to pour out an immense fortune on some worthless jade. But, in the first place, know this—that in a few days’ time Ernest de Restaud will come into a fortune to which his title is unquestionable, a fortune which will put him in a position to marry Mlle. Camille, even after adequate provision has been made for his mother the Comtesse de Restaud, and his sister and brother.”

“Well, dear M. Derville, we will think about it,” said Mme. de Grandlieu. “M. Ernest ought to be very wealthy indeed if such a family as ours must accept that mother of his. Bear in mind that my son will be the Duc de Grandlieu one day; he will unite the estates of both the houses that bear our name, and I wish him to have a brother-in-law to his mind.”

“But Restaud bears *gules, a traverse argent, on four scutcheons or, a cross sable*, and that is a very pretty coat of arms.”

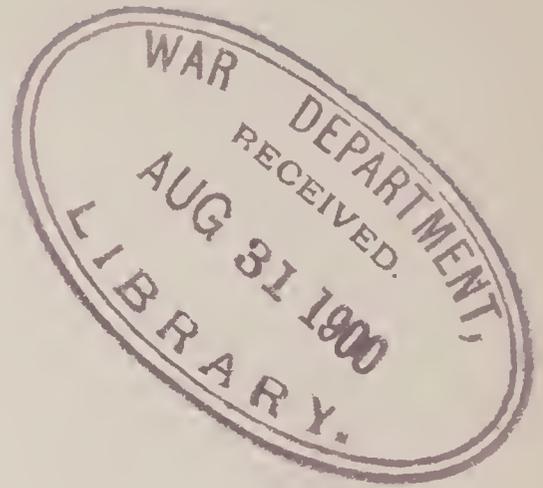
“That is true,” said the Vicomtesse; “and, besides, Camille need not see her mother-in-law.”

“Mme. de Beauséant used to receive Mme. de Restaud,” said the gray-haired uncle.

“Oh! that was at her great crushes,” replied the Vicomtesse.

PARIS, *January*, 1830.





URSULE MIROUËT  
MADAME FIRMIANI  
A FORSAKEN WOMAN  
THE IMAGINARY MISTRESS



## P R E F A C E .

“*URSULE MIROUËT*,” dedicated by Balzac to his niece, Sophie Surville, and avowedly written “in the fear of the young person,” or, as the author more elegantly puts it, “in uncompromising respect of the noble principles of a pious education,” exposes itself by the very fact to two different sorts of prejudice. It is sure to be cried up by one set of judges as “wholesome,” and to be cried down by another as “goody.”

The latter charge is certainly unfair, for Balzac has by no means written the book in rose-pink and sky-blue only, nor has he been afraid to show things more or less as they are. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to admit that evidences of restraint and convention do exist. Ursule—even more than Eugénie, who becomes a person on at least two occasions, her struggle with her father, and her *revanche* over her cousin—is a thing of shreds and patches, an ideal being in whom that mysterious “candor,” to which the French attach such excessive value in a girl, and which they make such haste to do away with altogether in a woman, seems to shut out all positive individuality. She is very nice; but she is not very human.

Nor can the machinery of dreams, hypnotism, Swedenborgianism, and what not, which Balzac, following out one of his well-known manias, chose to work into the book, be said to add very largely to its verisimilitude. It contrasts too sharply with the extremely prosaic, if not always very probable, details of Minoret-Levrault’s theft of the will, and of the jealousy of the heirs, which it is interesting to contrast with Dickens’ management of the same subject in “Great

Expectations." How far this combination is artistically possible or advisable is a question of abstract criticism into which we need not enter. I think it does not require much argument to prove that Balzac has not, as a matter of fact, quite shown the possibility or the desirableness here. I do not know in the work of a man of genius a more striking instance of the wisdom of the principle, *Nec Deus intersit*, to which, in our day, Horace would certainly have given the form, "Keep the supernatural in fiction out, unless you can't manage with the natural."

However, even this may be a question of opinion; and it is at least worth while to point out that in this book Balzac has anticipated, very curiously and interestingly, a large class of English fiction of a later day, which, in its turn, has been imitated in France. The whole scheme, indeed, of "Ursule Mirouët," by no means owing only to its respect of the young person, though doubtless partly owing to this, is far more that of an English novel than of a French. The absence of the usual "triangle," and of all courtship of married women, together with the difficulty (which a Frenchman even now, to some extent, experiences, and experienced much more in Balzac's days), of making very much of "honest" love scenes between man and maid, put Balzac's always fertile invention upon hunting out and setting to work other sources of interest, which, with the possible exception of the dream-and-vision part of the book, he has, as a rule, engineered very happily. Even the love affair between Ursule and Savinien de Portenduère is not to be contemptuously spoken of; and the figure of Savinien is very pleasantly touched. It is to be noted that even Balzac's favorite heroes of unprincipled convention—Marsay, Rastignac, and the rest—exhibit themselves less theatrically in their dealings with the youthful Vicomte than in almost any other of their numerous appearances. Marsay's theory of debt may be amusingly and advantageously contrasted with the opposite, but in a certain

sense complementary, remarks of George Warrington on the same subject in "Pendennis." Madame de Portenduère, too, is good, and not overdone.

On the cabals against Ursule opinions may perhaps differ. It is not easy to say that anything is improbable in the case of a stupid malefactor like Minoret-Levrault; and *odisse quem læseris* is an eternal verity. Still, one would rather have been inclined to suppose that the postmaster, having been so completely successful in his theft, would instinctively feel that it was wiser to let Ursule alone. The malignity of Goupil, too, seems a little overdone, and the whole character of this agreeable lawyer's clerk again presents *mutatis mutandis* something of the eccentric extravagance of Dickens, between whom and Balzac the parallel is perpetually fascinating, because of its constant intermixture of likenesses and contrasts.

But the comic personages generally must be said to be very good. They are not overdone, as the great English novelist just referred to would probably have overdone them; indeed, Balzac has been distinctly sober and sparing in the delineation of their "humors." Dickens certainly, and most English novelists probably, would have been tempted to bring much more to the front poor Madame Crémière's linguistic peculiarities. These will remind everybody of Mrs. Malaprop, though they are more like a historical but much less famous example, the "Lingo Grande," which Southey in divers letters to Grosvenor Bedford puts into the mouth of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Coleridge. The doctor, the magistrate, the curé, the public prosecutor, and all the powers that be play their parts well, and more than a mere good word is deserved by Désiré Minoret, to whom Balzac has been rather cruel.

The doctor himself is a more problematical character. His conversion smacks a little of the stage; and it certainly might seem that such an experienced personage, well aware of the ferocity of the fortune-hunters who surrounded him,

would have taken rather more pains to put the future of Ursule out of danger by lodging a duplicate will somewhere, or availing himself of some of the devices in which French law, even under the Code Napoléon, is nearly as fertile as English. But the testamentary unreason of mankind is a sufficiently well-authenticated fact to justify Balzac.

Altogether, the book, if not exactly in the first-class for power, takes high rank for variety of interest and for the peculiar character of its scheme. It has no duplicate in its author's work, and we could not spare it. "Ursule Mirouët" first appeared in a newspaper, *Le Messager*, in the issues of August 25 to September 23 inclusive; and when next year it was published in two volumes by Souverain, it had, as it had in the periodical, twenty-one chapters with headings. Yet another year, and it lost these chapters, and all divisions except the two part-headings of "The Heirs in Alarm" and "The Minoret Property," and took place in the third edition of the "Scènes de La Vie de Province," and the first of the "Comédie" generally.

The three short stories which follow the title story are each quite characteristic of the author's style and manner. The various descriptions of the heroine in "Madame Firmiani" have a point and sparkle which are almost peculiar to the not quite mature works of men of genius, and the actual story has a lightness which perhaps would have disappeared if Balzac had handled it at greater length. "A Forsaken Woman" partakes more of the character of an anecdote than that of a story; yet, withal, the account of the first meeting of Madame de Beauséant and M. de Nueil is positively good; and the introduction, with its sketch of what Balzac knew or dreamed to be society, has the merit of most of his overtures. "The Imaginary Mistress" may be called somewhat fantastic, and the final trait, whether false or not to nature, will provoke some critics. But the devotion of Paz is exactly one of those things which suited Balzac best, and which he could

handle most effectively. "Madame Firmiani" was first published in the *Revue de Paris* for February, 1832; then became a "Conte Philosophique," and still in the same year a "Scène de la Vie Parisienne." It was in the 1842 collection that it took up its abode in the "Scènes de la Vie Privée." "A Forsaken Woman" appeared in the same periodical in September of the same year, was a "Scène de la Vie de Province" next year, and was shifted to the "Vie Privée" when the "Comédie" was first arranged. "The Imaginary Mistress" made its appearance about the same period, and took position in the "Scènes de la Vie Privée.

G. S.



1875  
The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the membership of the Society since the last meeting of the Council, viz. the 1st of January 1875.

1. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
2. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
3. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
4. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
5. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
6. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
7. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
8. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
9. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]  
10. Mr. J. H. [Name] [Address]

THE  
SECRETARY

# URSULE MIROUËT

*To Mademoiselle Sophie Surville.*

*It is a real pleasure, my dear niece, to dedicate to you a book of which the subject and the details have gained the approbation—so difficult to secure—of a young girl to whom the world is yet unknown, and who will make no compromise with the high principles derived from a pious education. You young girls are a public to be dreaded; you ought never to be suffered to read any book less pure than your own pure souls, and you are forbidden certain books, just as you are not allowed to see society as it really is. Is it not enough, then, to make a writer proud, to know that he has satisfied you? Heaven grant that affection may not have misled you! Who can say? The future only, which you, I hope, will see, though he may not, who is your uncle*

DE BALZAC.

## I.

### THE HEIRS IN ALARM.

As you enter Nemours coming from Paris, you cross the canal of the Loing, whose banks form a rural rampart to the pretty little town, and afford many picturesque walks. Since 1830, unfortunately, many houses have been built beyond the bridge. If this suburb increases, the aspect of the town will lose much of its attractive originality.

But in 1829 the country on each side of the road lay open,

\*(1)

and the postmaster, a tall, burly man of about sixty, as he sat on the highest point of the bridge one fine morning, could command a view of what he would have called a ribbon-road.

The month of September was lavishing its wealth. The atmosphere quivered with heat above the grass and stones, not a cloud flecked the ethereal blue, of which the vivid transparency was uniform to the very horizon, showing the extreme rarity of the air. Indeed, Minoret-Levrault, the postmaster in question, was obliged to shade his eyes with his hand not to be quite dazzled. Out of patience with waiting, he looked now at the lovely meadows spreading away to the right, where his after-crop was growing apace, and now at the densely wooded hills to the left, stretching from Nemours to Bouron. And in the valley of the Loing, where the noises on the road came back echoed from the hill, he could hear the gallop of his own horses and the cracking of his postillions' whips.

Could any one but a postmaster get out of patience with gazing at a field full of cattle, such as Paul Potter painted, under a sky worthy of Raphael, by a canal overhung with trees, like a picture by Hobbema? Any one who knows Nemours, knows that nature there is as beautiful as art, whose mission it is to spiritualize nature; the landscape there has ideas, and suggests thoughts.

Still, on seeing Minoret-Levrault, an artist would have left his place to sketch this country townsman; he was so original by sheer force of being common. Combine all the characteristics of the brute and you get Caliban, who certainly is a great creation. Where matter predominates, sentiment ends. The postmaster, a living proof of this axiom, had one of those countenances in which the student finds it hard to discern the soul through the violent purple hues of the coarsely developed flesh. His little gored blue cap, with a peak, fitted closely to a head so huge as to prove that Gall's science of phrenology has not yet dealt with the exceptions to his rules. The shining gray hair, which formed a fringe to the cap,

showed that white hairs may be the result of other causes than overworked brains or severe grief. His large ears were almost bursting round the edges from the fulness of too abundant blood, which seemed ready to spurt out after the smallest exertion. His complexion showed purple blotches under a brown pigment, the result of constant exposure to the sun. His gray eyes, restless and deep set, hidden under two black bushes of eyebrow, were like the eyes of the Kalmucks seen in Paris in 1815; if they glistened now and then, it could only be under the influence of a covetous idea. His nose, squat at the base, took a sudden turn up like the foot of a kettle. Thick lips harmonized with an almost disgusting double chin, rough with the stubble of a beard shaved scarcely twice a week, which rubbed a dirty necktie into a state of worn string; a very short neck, in rolls of fat, and puffy cheeks, completed this image of stupid strength, such as sculptors give to their caryatides. Minoret-Levrault was like one of those statues, with the difference, however, that they support something, while he had quite enough to do to support himself.

You will meet with many an Atlas like him. The man's torso was a huge block, a bull standing on his hind legs. Powerful arms terminated in thick, hard hands, broad and strong, apt at wielding the whip, the reins, and the pitchfork, hands which were no joke in the eyes of his postillions. The enormous stomach of this giant rested on legs as thick as the body of a full-grown man, and feet like an elephant's. Rage was no doubt rare in this man, but when it broke out it would be terrible, apoplectic. Though he was violent and incapable of reflection, the man had done nothing to justify the sinister threats of his appearance. When any one trembled before the giant, his post-boys would say, "Oh, he's not a bad fellow!"

The "Master" of Nemours, to make use of an abbreviation common in many countries, wore a shooting jacket of

bottle-green velveteen, trousers of striped green duck, and a vast yellow mohair waistcoat. In the waistcoat pocket an enormous snuff-box was evident, outlined by a black ring. That a snub nose argues a big snuff-box is a rule almost without exception.

Minoret-Levrault, as a son of the Revolution, and a spectator of the Empire, had never concerned himself with politics; as to his religious opinions, he had never set foot in a church but to be married; as to his principles in domestic life, they were contained in the Civil Code. He thought everything permissible that was not forbidden or indictable by law. He had never read anything but the local newspaper and some manuals relating to his business. He was regarded as a skillful agriculturist, but his knowledge was purely empirical.

In Minoret-Levrault, then, the mind did not give the lie to the body. He spoke rarely, and before delivering himself he always took a pinch of snuff to gain time to find, not ideas, but words. If he had been talkative, he would have seemed a failure.

When you think that this sort of elephant, without a trunk and without intelligence, was called Minoret-Levrault, must you not recognize, with Sterne, the occult power of names, which sometimes mask and sometimes label the character of their owners? In spite of these conspicuous disadvantages, in thirty-six years, the Revolution helping, he had made a fortune of thirty thousand francs a year in meadow-land, arable land, and woods.

Though Minoret, who had shares in the Nemours Messageries Company and an interest in the Gatinais Company at Paris, was still hard at work, it was not so much from habit as for the sake of his only son, for whom he wished to prepare handsome prospects. This son, who, in the peasants' phraseology, had become a gentleman, had just ended his studies for the law, and on the reopening of the courts was to be

sworn as a qualified attorney. Monsieur and Madame Minoret-Levrault—for behind the colossus a woman is evident, a wife, without whom such a fortune would have been impossible—had left their son free to choose his career, as a notary at Paris, as public prosecutor in some country town, as receiver-general, stockbroker, or postmaster. What fancy might he not allow himself, to what profession might he not aspire, as the son of a man of whom it was said from Montargis to Essonne, “Father Minoret does not know how much he has?”

This idea had received fresh confirmation when, four years since, after selling his inn, Minoret built himself a splendid house and stables, and removed the posting business from the High Street to the river-side. The new buildings had cost two hundred thousand francs, which gossip doubled for thirty miles round. The posting-stage at Nemours required a great number of horses; it worked as far as Fontainebleau on the Paris side, and beyond the roads to Montargis and Montereau; the relays were long, and the sandy soil about Montargis justified the imaginary third horse, which is always paid for and never seen. A man of Minoret’s build and of Minoret’s wealth, at the head of such a concern, might well be called without abuse of words the Master of Nemours. Though he never gave a thought to God or the devil, and was a practical materialist—as he was a practical agriculturist, a practical egoist, a practical miser—Minoret had hitherto enjoyed unmixed happiness, if a merely material existence may be regarded as happy. On seeing the pad of flesh which covered the man’s top vertebræ and pressed on his occiput, and especially on hearing his shrill, thin voice, which contrasted ludicrously with his bull-neck, a physiologist would have understood at once why this great, coarse, burly countryman adored his only son, and perhaps why he had so long awaited his birth—as the name given to the child, Désiré, sufficiently indicated. In short, if love, as betraying a rich physical

nature, is the promise of great things in a man, philosophers will understand the causes of Minoret's failure.

His wife, whom the son happily resembled, vied with his father in spoiling the boy. No child's nature could hold out against such idolatry. And, indeed, Désiré, who knew the extent of his power, was clever enough to draw on his mother's savings-box and dip his hand in his father's purse, making each of his fond parents believe that he had not applied to the other. Désiré, who played at Nemours a far more grateful part than that of a prince in his father's capital, had indulged all his fancies at Paris just as he did in his little native town, and had spent more than twelve thousand francs a year. But then, for this money, he had acquired ideas which would never have come into his head at Nemours; he had cast his provincial skin, he had learned the power of money, and had seen that the legal profession was a means of rising in the world. During the last year he had spent ten thousand francs more by forming intimacies with artists, journalists, and their mistresses.

A somewhat alarming confidential letter might have accounted, in case of need, for the postmaster's anxious lookout, a letter in which his son asked his sanction for a marriage; but Madame Minoret-Levrault, fully occupied in preparing a sumptuous meal in honor of the success and the return of the fully-fledged lawyer, had sent her husband out on the road, desiring him to ride forward if he saw no signs of the diligence. The diligence by which this only son was to arrive usually reached Nemours at about five in the morning, and it was now striking nine! What could cause such a delay? Had there been an upset? Was Désiré alive? Had he even broken a leg?

Three volleys of cracking whips rattle out, rending the air like the report of firearms; the red waistcoats of the post-boys are just in sight, ten horses neigh at once! The master takes off his cap and waves it; and he is seen. The best

mounted of the postillions, who is returning with two dappled gray post-horses, touches up the beast he is riding, outstripping five sturdy diligence horses, and the Minorets of the stable, three carriage horses, and comes up to the master.

“Have you seen the ‘Ducler?’”

On the high-roads all the coaches have names—fantastical enough: they are spoken of as the “Caillard,” the “Ducler” (the diligence between Nemours and Paris), the “Grand-Bureau.” Every new company’s coach is the “Rival.” At the time when the Lecomtes ran coaches, their vehicles were known as the “Comtesses.”

“The ‘Caillard’ did not overtake the ‘Comtesse,’ but the ‘Grand-Bureau’ caught her skirts, anyhow! The ‘Caillard’ and the ‘Grand-Bureau’ have done for the ‘Françaises’”—the coaches of the Messageries Françaises or royal mails. If you see a post-boy going fit to split, and refusing a glass of wine, question the guard; he will cock his nose and stare into space, and reply, “The Rival is ahead!” “And we cannot even see her!” adds the postillion. “The wretch! he has not given his passengers time to eat!” “As if he had any!” retorts the guard. “Whip up Polignac!” All the worst horses are called Polignac. These are the standing jokes and subjects of conversation between the postillions and the guards on the top of the coaches. In France every profession has its own slang.

“Did you see inside the ‘Ducler?’”

“Monsieur Désiré?” says the postillion, interrupting his master. “Why, you must have heard us! Our whips gave due notice of her. We made sure you would be on the road.”

“Why is the diligence four hours late?”

“The tire of one of the wheels came off between Essonne and Ponthierry. But there was no accident; Cabirole fortunately discovered it as we were going up the hill.”

At this instant a woman in her Sunday best—for the bells of all the churches of Nemours were summoning the inhab-

itants to mid-day mass—a woman of about six-and-thirty, addressed the postmaster.

“Well, cousin,” said she, “you would not believe me! Our uncle is in the High Street with Ursule, and they are going to mass.”

In spite of the license of modern romance in the matter of local coloring, it is impossible to carry realism so far as to repeat the horrible abuse, mingled with oaths, which this news, so undramatic as it would seem, brought from the wide mouth of Minoret-Levrault; his thin voice became a hiss, and his face had the appearance which the country-folk ingeniously refer to as “sunstroke.”

“Are you certain?” he asked after his first explosion of rage.

The postillions as they went by touched three hats to the master, who seemed neither to see nor hear them. Instead of waiting for his son, Minoret-Levrault returned up the High Street with his cousin.

“Did I not always tell you so?” she went on. “When Doctor Minoret has fallen into his dotage, that sanctimonious little slut will make a bigot of him; and as those who rule the mind rule the purse, she will get all our money.”

“But, Madame Massin,” said the postmaster, quite confounded.

“Oh, yes!” cried Madame Massin, interrupting her cousin, “you will say as Massin does: ‘Is a girl of fifteen likely to invent and execute such a plot? To make a man of eighty-three, who never set foot in a church excepting to be married, give up all his opinions? A man who has such a horror of priests that he did not even go to the parish church with the child the day of her first communion.’ But, I say, if Doctor Minoret has such a horror of priests, why, for the last fifteen years, has he spent almost every evening of the week with the Abbé Chaperon? The old hypocrite never fails to give Ursule twenty francs to pay for a taper when she presents the wafer

for the mass. Why, do you not remember the gift Ursule made to the church as a thank-offering to the curé for having prepared her for her first communion? She spent all her money on it, and her godfather gave it back to her doubled. You men pay no heed to anything! When I heard all these details: 'Put away your baskets,' said I, 'the grapes are not for you!' A rich uncle does not behave in that way to a little hussy he has picked out of the gutter unless he means something by it."

"Pooh! cousin," replied the postmaster, "the good man is escorting her as far as the church by mere chance. It is a fine day, and he is going to take a walk."

"I tell you, cousin, our uncle has a prayer-book in his hand; and he looks so smug! However, you will see!"

"They have been playing a very sly game," observed the burly postmaster, "for old Bougival told me that there never was any religious discussion between the doctor and the Abbé Chaperon. Besides, the vicar of Nemours is the best man on earth; he would give his last shirt to a beggar; he is incapable of a mean action, and to filch an inheritance is a——"

"It is robbery!" said Madame Massin.

"It is worse!" cried Minoret-Levrault, exasperated by his voluble cousin's remark.

"I know," she went on, "that the Abbé Chaperon, though he is a priest, is an honest man. But he is capable of anything for the poor. He must have undermined Uncle Minoret, and the doctor has fallen into bigotry. We were easy in our minds, and now he is perverted. A man who never believed in anything, and who had principles! Oh, we are all done for! My husband is dreadfully upset."

Madame Massin, whose speeches were so many arrows that stung her stout cousin, made him walk as briskly as herself in spite of his size, to the great amazement of the people who were going to mass. She wanted to catch up with Uncle Minoret and show him to the postmaster.

On the Gatinais side of Nemours the town is commanded by a hill, along the base of which the river Loing flows, and the road runs to Montargis. The church, on which time has cast a rich mantle of gray, for it was certainly rebuilt in the fourteenth century by the Guises, in whose honor Nemours gave its name to a duchy and peerage, stands at the end of the town beyond a large archway, as in a frame. For buildings, as for men, position is everything. Shaded by trees and shown to advantage by a neat little square, this lonely church has quite an imposing effect. As they came out on to the square, the postmaster could see his uncle giving his arm to the young girl they had called Ursule, each carrying a prayer-book, and just entering the church. The old man took off his hat in the porch, and his perfectly white head, like a summit covered with snow, shone in the soft gloom of the great doorway.

“Well, Minoret, what do you say to your uncle’s conversion?” cried the tax-receiver of Nemours, whose name was Crémère.

“What do you expect me to say?” replied the postmaster, offering him a pinch of snuff.

“Well answered, Father Levrault. You cannot say what you think, if a certain learned writer was correct in saying that a man must necessarily think his words before he can speak his thought,” mischievously exclaimed a young man who had just come up, and who played in Nemours the part of Mephistopheles in “Faust.”

This rascally fellow, named Goupil, was head clerk to Monsieur Crémère-Dionis, the notary of the town. Notwithstanding the antecedents of an almost crapulous career, Dionis had taken Goupil into his office when absolute destitution hindered him from remaining any longer at Paris, where the clerk had spent all the money left him by his father, a well-to-do farmer, who meant him to become a notary. Only to see Goupil was enough to tell you that he had made haste to enjoy

life; for, to procure himself pleasure, he must have paid dearly for it. Though very short, the clerk, at seven-and-twenty, had a form as burly as that of any man of forty. Short, thin legs, a broad face with a mottled, muddy skin, like the sky before a storm, and a bald forehead, gave emphasis to this strange figure. His face looked as if it belonged to a hunchback, whose hump was an internal deformity. A peculiarity of this sour, pale face confirmed the notion of this invisible malformation. His nose, hooked and twisted, as is often the case with hunchbacks, had a crossway slope from right to left, instead of dividing the face down the middle. His mouth, pinched at the corners—the sardonic mouth—was always eager for irony. His thin, reddish hair fell in dank locks, showing the head through here and there. His great hands and clumsy wrists, at the end of overlong arms, were like talons, and very seldom clean. Goupil wore shoes only fit to be thrown into the dust-heap, and rusty-black, spun-silk stockings; his black coat and trousers, rubbed perfectly threadbare, and almost greasy with dirt; his abject waistcoats, with buttons from which the mould had slipped out; the old bandana he wore as a cravat—every part of his dress proclaimed the cynical misery to which his passions condemned him.

This aggregate of sinister details was completed by a pair of goat's eyes, the iris set in yellow rings, at once lascivious and cowardly. No man in Nemours was more feared or more respectfully treated than Goupil. Strong in pretensions which his ugliness allowed, he had the detestable wit that is peculiar to persons who take every liberty, and he made use of it to be revenged for the mortifications of his permanent jealousy. He rhymed satirical couplets such as are sung at the Carnival, he got up farcical demonstrations, and himself wrote almost the whole of the local newspaper gossip. Dionis, a keen, false nature, and therefore a timid one, kept Goupil as much out of fear as on account of his intelligence and his thorough

knowledge of family interests in the neighborhood. But the master so little trusted the clerk that he managed his accounts himself, did not allow him to lodge at his house, and never employed him on any confidential or delicate business. The clerk flattered his master, never showing the resentment he felt at this conduct ; and he watched Madame Dionis with an eye to revenge. He had a quick intelligence, and worked well and easily.

“ Oh you ! You are laughing already at our misfortunes,” said the postmaster to the clerk, who was rubbing his hands.

As Goupil basely flattered every passion of Désiré's, who for the last five years had made him his companion, the postmaster treated him cavalierly enough, never suspecting what a horrible store of evil feeling was accumulating at the bottom of Goupil's heart at each fresh thrust. The clerk having come to the conclusion that he, more than any one, needed money, and knowing himself to be superior to all the good townfolk of Nemours, aimed at making a fortune, and counted on Désiré's friendship to procure for him one of the three good openings in the place—the registrarship of the law courts, the business of one of the ushers, or that of Dionis. So he patiently endured the postmaster's hectoring and Madame Minoret-Levrault's disdain, and played an ignominious part to oblige Désiré, who, for these two years past, had left him to console the Ariadnes he abandoned at the end of the vacation. Thus, Goupil ate the crumbs of the suppers he had prepared.

“ If I had been the old fool's nephew, he should not have made God my co-heir,” retorted the clerk, with a hideous grin that showed his wide-set and threatening black teeth.

At this moment Massin-Levrault, junior, the justice's registrar, came up with his wife, and with him was Madame Crémière, the tax-receiver's wife. This man, one of the crudest natives of the little town, had a face like a Tartar, small, round eyes like sloes under a sloping forehead, crinkled

hair, an oily skin, large flat ears, a mouth almost without lips, and a thin beard. His manners had the merciless smoothness of the usurer whose dealings are based on fixed principles. He spoke like a man who has lost his voice. To complete the picture, he made his wife and his eldest daughter write out the copies of verdicts.

Madame Crémère was a very fat woman, doubtfully fair, with a thickly freckled complexion; she wore her gowns too tight, was great friends with Madame Dionis, and passed as well informed because she read novels. This lady of finance of the lowest type, full of pretensions to elegance and culture, was awaiting her uncle's fortune to assume "a certain style," to decorate her drawing-room, and "receive" her fellow-townsfolk; for her husband refused to allow her clockwork lamps, lithographs, and the trifles she saw in the notary's wife's drawing-room. She was excessively afraid of Goupil, who was always on the watch to repeat her *capsulingies*\*—this was her way of saying *lapsus linguæ*. One day Madame Dionis said to her that she did not know what water to use for her teeth.

"Try gum water," said she.

By this time most of old Doctor Minoret's collateral relations had assembled in the church square, and the importance of the event which had agitated them was so universally understood, that the groups of peasants, men and women, armed with red umbrellas and clad in the bright hues which make them so picturesque on fête-days as they tramp the roads, all had their eyes turned on the doctor's presumptive heirs. In those little towns, which hold a middle rank between the larger villages and the great cities, people who do not attend mass linger in the square. They discuss business.

At Nemours the hour of mass is also that of a weekly money-market, to which come the residents in the scattered

\* Madame Crémère's "capsulingies" are impossible to translate; an equivalent is all that can be attempted.

houses from a mile and a half round. This accounts for the mutual understanding of the peasants as against the masters, on the price of produce in relation to labor.

“And how would you have hindered it?” said the master to Goupil.

“I would have made myself as indispensable to him as the air he breathes. But you did not know how to manage him to begin with. An inheritance needs as much looking after as a pretty woman, and for lack of care both may slip through your fingers. If my master’s wife were here, she would tell you how accurate the comparison is,” he added.

“But Monsieur Bongrand has just told me we need not be uneasy,” said the justice’s registrar.

“Oh! there are several ways of saying that,” replied Goupil, with a laugh. “I should have liked to hear your cunning justice say that! Why, if there were nothing more to be done; if I, like him—for he lives at your uncle’s—knew that the game was up, I should say with him, ‘Don’t be at all uneasy.’”

And as he spoke the words, Goupil smiled in such a comical way, and gave them so plain a meaning, that the inheritors at once suspected the registrar of having been taken in by the justice’s cunning. The receiver of taxes, a fat little man, as insignificant as a tax-collector must be, and as witless as a clever wife could wish, demolished his co-heir Massin with: “Didn’t I tell you so?”

As double-dealers always ascribe their own duplicity to others, Massin looked askance at the justice of the peace, who was at this moment standing near the church with a former client, the Marquis du Rouvre.

“If only I were sure of it!” said he.

“You could nullify the protection he extends to the Marquis du Rouvre, who is within the power of the law, and liable to imprisonment; he is deluging him with advice at this moment,” said Goupil, insinuating an idea of revenge to

the registrar. "But draw it mild with your chief; he is very wide awake; he must have some influence over your uncle, and may yet be able to prevent his leaving everything to the church."

"Pooh! we shall not die of it," said Minoret-Levrault, opening his huge snuff-box.

"You will not live by it either," replied Goupil, making the two women shiver; for they, more rapidly than their husbands, interpreted as privation the loss of the inheritance on which they had counted for comfort. "But we will drown this little grievance in floods of champagne, in honor of Désiré's return, won't we, *gros père*?" he added, tapping the colossus in the stomach, and thus inviting himself for fear of being forgotten.

Before going any farther, the precise reader will perhaps be glad to have here a sort of preamble in the form of a pedigree, which indeed is very necessary to define the degrees of relationship in which the old man, so suddenly converted, stood to the three fathers of families or their wives. These intermarriages of kindred race in provincial life may be the subject of more than one instructive reflection.

At Nemours there are not more than three or four noble families, of no great rank or fame; among them, at the time of our story, shone that of the Portenduères. These exclusive families visit the nobility who possess lands and châteaux in the neighboring country—the D'Aiglemonts, for instance, owners of the fine estate of Saint-Lange, and the Marquis du Rouvre, on whose property, eaten up with mortgages, the townsfolk kept a greedy eye. The nobility who live in the towns have no wealth. Madame de Portenduère's whole estate consisted of a farm, yielding four thousand seven hundred francs a year, and her house in the town. In the opposite scale to this miniature Faubourg St. Germain are half a score of rich citizens, retired millers and tradespeople, in

short, a miniature middle class, below whom struggle the small shopkeepers, the laboring class, and the peasants. This middle class affords here, as in the Swiss cantons and other small communities, the curious phenomenon of the dispersal of a few families native to the soil, perhaps ancient Gaulish clans, settling on a district, pervading it, and making all the inhabitants cousins. At the time of Louis XI., the period when the third estate at last took the by-names they were known by as permanent surnames, some of which presently mingled with those of the feudal class, the citizens of Nemours were all Minoret, Massin, Levrault, or Crémère. By Louis XIII.'s time these four families had given rise to Massin-Crémère, Levrault-Massin, Massin-Minoret, Minoret-Minoret, Crémère-Levrault, Levrault-Minoret-Massin, Massin-Levrault, Minoret-Massin, Massin-Massin, and Crémère-Massin; all further diversified by "junior" and "eldest son;" or by Crémère-François, Levrault-Jacques, and Jean-Minoret, enough to madden a Father Anselme, if the populace ever needed a genealogist.

The changes in this domestic kaleidoscope with four separate elements were so complicated by births and marriages, that the pedigree of the citizens of Nemours would have puzzled even the compilers of the "Almanac de Gotha," notwithstanding the atomic science with which they work out the zigzags of German alliances. For a long time the Minorets held the tanneries, the Crémères were the millers, the Massins went into business, the Levraults remained farmers.

Happily for the country, these four stocks struck out rather than round the trunk, or threw out suckers by the expatriation of sons who sought a living elsewhere: there are Minorets, cutlers, at Melun, Levraults at Montargis, Massins at Orleans, and Crémères who have grown rich at Paris. Very various are the destinies of these bees that have swarmed outside the native hive. Rich Massins employ laboring Massins, just as there are German princes in the service of Austria

or Prussia. In the same department may be seen a Minoret millionaire protected by a Minoret soldier with the same blood in their veins ; but having only their names in common, these four shuttles had unceasingly woven a human web, of which each piece turned out a gown or a clout, the finest lawn or the coarsest lining. The same blood throbbed in their head, feet, or heart, in toiling hands, damaged lungs, or a brow big with genius. The heads of the clan faithfully clung to the little town where the ties of relationship could be relaxed or tightened, as the results of this community of names might dictate.

In every country, with a change of names, you will find the same fact ; but bereft of the poetry with which feudality had invested it, and which Sir Walter Scott has reproduced with so much talent.

Look a little higher, and study humanity in history. All the noble families of the eleventh century, now almost all extinct excepting the royal race of Capet, must have co-operated towards the birth of a Rohan, a Montmorency, a Bauffremont, a Mortemart of the present day ; at last, all would coexist in the blood of the humblest man of really gentle birth. In other words, every citizen is cousin to other citizens, every noble is cousin to other nobles. As we are told in the sublime page of Biblical genealogy, in a thousand years the three families of Shem, Ham, and Japhet could people the whole earth. A family can become a nation ; and, unfortunately, a nation may become one single family. To prove this we have only to apply to a family pedigree—in which the ancestors multiply backwards in geometrical progression—the sum worked out by the sage who invented the game of chess. He claimed, as his reward from the Persian king, an ear of corn for the first square on the board, two for the second, and so on, doubling the number every time, and proved that the whole kingdom could not pay it. This network of the nobility entangled in the network of the middle

class, this antagonism of blood—the one class protected by rigid traditions, the other by the active endurance of labor and the craft of trade instincts—brought about the Revolution of 1789. The two strains, almost united, are to be seen to-day face to face with collaterals bereft of their inheritance. What will they do? Our political future is big with the reply.

The family of the man who, in Louis XV.'s time, was the representative Minoret, was so large, that one of the five—the very Minoret whose coming to church was making such a sensation—went to seek his fortune in Paris, and appeared in his native town only at long intervals, whither he came, no doubt, to acquire his share of the inheritance at the death of his grandparents. After suffering a great deal, as all young men must who are gifted with a strong will and desire a place in the brilliant world of Paris, this son of the Minorets made a career more splendid perhaps than he had dreamed of at the beginning; for he devoted himself to medicine, one of the professions in which both talent and good-luck are needed, and good-luck even more than talent. Supported by Dupont (of Nemours), brought by a happy chance into contact with the Abbé Morellet (whom Voltaire nicknamed *Mords les*), and patronized by the encyclopedists, Doctor Minoret attached himself with fanatical devotion to the great physician Bordeu, Diderot's friend. D'Alembert, Helvétius, Baron d'Holbach, and Grimm, to whom he was a mere boy, ended, no doubt, like Bordeu, by taking an interest in Minoret, who in 1777 had a fine connection among the deists, encyclopedists, sensualists, materialists—call them as you will—the wealthy philosophers of that day. Though he was very little of a quack, he invented a famous remedy, Lelièvre's balsam, which was cried up in the *Mercure de France*, and which was permanently advertised on the last page of that paper, the encyclopedists' organ. The apothecary Lelièvre, a clever man of business, discerned a success where Dr. Minoret had

seen nothing more than a preparation to be included in the pharmacopœia; he honestly divided the profits with the doctor, who was Rouelle's pupil in chemistry, as he was Bordeu's in medicine. It would have needed less to make him a materialist.

In 1778, when Rousseau's "Nouvelle Héloïse" was the rage, and men sometimes married for love, he married the daughter of Valentin Mirouët, the famous harpsichord player, herself a fine musician, but weakly and delicate, who died during the Revolution. Minoret was intimate with Robespierre, to whom he had once caused a gold medal to be awarded for a dissertation on these questions: "What is the origin of the opinion by which part of the shame attaching to the disgraceful punishment of a guilty man is reflected on all his family? Is this opinion generally useful or mischievous? And supposing it to be mischievous, by what means can we avert the disastrous results?" The Academy of Arts and Sciences at Metz, to which Minoret belonged, must still have the original copy of this discourse. Although, thanks to this friendship, the doctor's wife had nothing to fear, she lived in such dread of being sent to the scaffold that this invincible terror aggravated an aneurism due to a too sensitive nature. In spite of all the precautions a man could take who idolized his wife, Ursule met the truck full of condemned victims, and among them, as it happened, Madame Roland. The spectacle caused her death. Minoret, who had spoiled his Ursule, and refused her nothing, so that she had led a life of extravagant luxury, at her death found himself almost a poor man. Robespierre appointed him first physician to a hospital.

Although the name of Minoret had been somewhat famous during the vehement discussions to which mesmerism had given rise, a fame which had recalled him now and then to his relations' memory, the Revolution was so powerful a solvent, and broke up so many family connections, that in 1813 no one at

Nemours knew even of Doctor Minoret's existence, when an unexpected meeting suggested to him the idea of returning, as hares do, to die in his form.

In traveling through France, where the eye is so soon fatigued by the monotony of the wide plains, who has not known the delightful sensation of discerning, from the top of a hill where the road turns or descends, and where he expected to see a dull landscape, a green valley watered by a stream, and a little town sheltered under a cliff, like a hive in the hollow of an old willow-tree? As he hears the postillion's cry of "Come up!" while he walks at his horse's side, the traveler shakes off sleep, and admires as a dream within a dream some lovely scene which is to the stranger what a fine passage in a book is to the reader—a brilliant idea of nature. This is the effect produced by the sudden view of Nemours on the road from Burgundy. It is seen from the height in an amphitheatre of naked rocks, gray, white and black, like those which are scattered throughout the forest of Fontainebleau; and from among them shoot up solitary trees, standing out against the sky, and giving a rural aspect to this sort of tumble-down rampart. This is the end of the long wooded slope which rises from Nemours to Bouron, sheltering the road on one side. At the foot of these cliffs spreads a meadowland, through which the Loing flows, in level pools ending in little waterfalls. This exquisite tract of country, cut through by the Montargis road, is like an elaborate opera scene, the effects seem so carefully worked up, and brought out in strong contrasts.

One morning the doctor, who had been sent for by a rich invalid in Burgundy, and who was hastening back to Paris, not having mentioned at the last change of horses which road he wished to take, was unwittingly brought through Nemours, and between two naps saw once more the landscape familiar to his childhood. The doctor had by this time lost many of his old friends. The disciple of the Encyclopedia had lived

to see La Harpe a convert, had buried Lebrun-Pindare, and Marie-Joseph de Chénier, and Morellet, and Madame Helvétius. He had seen the *quasi* overthrow of Voltaire under the attacks of Geoffroy, Fréron's successor. Hence he was thinking of retiring. And when the post-chaise stopped at the top of the High Street of Nemours, his good feeling prompted him to inquire after his family. Minoret-Levrault himself came out to see the doctor, who recognized in the postmaster his eldest brother's son. This nephew introduced as his wife the only daughter of old Levrault-Crémière, who, twelve years ago, had left her the posting business and the handsomest inn in Nemours.

"Well, nephew," said the doctor, "and have I any other heirs?"

"My Aunt Minoret, your sister, married a Massin-Massin."

"Yes, the intendant at Saint-Lange."

"She died a widow, leaving one daughter, who has lately married a Crémière-Crémière, a very nice fellow, who so far has no appointment."

"To be sure; she is my own niece. Now, as my brother at sea died unmarried, and Captain Minoret was killed at Monte-Legino, and I am here, that is an end of my father's family. Have I any relations on my mother's side? She was a Jean-Massin-Levrault."

"Of the Jean-Massin-Levraults," replied Minoret-Levrault, "only one daughter survived, who married Monsieur Crémière-Levrault-Dionis, a dealer in corn and forage, who died on the scaffold. His wife died of a broken heart, and quite ruined, leaving one girl, married to a Levrault-Minoret, a farmer at Montereau, who is doing well; and their daughter has just married a Massin-Levrault, a notary's clerk at Montargis, where his father is a locksmith."

"So I have no lack of inheritors," said the doctor cheerfully, and he determined to walk round Nemours in his nephew's company.

The Loing meanders through the town, fringed with terraced gardens and neat houses that look as if happiness should inhabit there rather than elsewhere. When the doctor turned out of the High Street into the Rue des Bourgeois, Minoret-Levrault pointed out the property of Monsieur Levrault, a rich ironmaster at Paris, who, he said, was lately dead.

“There, uncle,” said he, “is a pretty house to be sold, with a beautiful garden down to the river.”

“Let us go in,” said the doctor, seeing a house at the farther side of a paved courtyard, shut in by the walls of houses on either side, hidden by clumps of trees and climbing plants.

“It is built on cellars,” said the doctor as he went in, up a high outside stairway, decorated with blue and white earthenware pots in which the geraniums were still in bloom. The house, like most provincial residences, was pierced by a passage down the middle, leading from the courtyard to the garden; to the right was a single sitting-room with four windows, two to the yard, and two to the garden; but Levrault-Levrault had turned one of these into an entrance to a long conservatory built of brick, leading from the room to the river, where it ended in a hideous Chinese summer-house.

“Very good!” said the doctor. “By roofing and flooring this conservatory I could make a place for my books, and turn that amazing piece of architecture into a pretty little study.”

On the other side of the passage, looking on to the garden, was a dining-room, decorated in imitation of lacquer, with a black background and green and gold flowers; this was divided from the kitchen by the staircase. A little pantry behind the lower flight led from the dining-room to the kitchen, which had barred windows looking out on the courtyard. On the first floor were two sets of rooms, and above that wainscoted attics, quite habitable. After a brief inspection of this house, which was covered with green vine-trellis from top to bottom, on the courtyard front as well as on the

garden side, with a terrace to the river edged with earthenware flower-vases, the doctor remarked—

“Levrault-Levrault must have spent a good deal here!”

“Oh, his weight in gold!” replied Minoret-Levrault. “He had a passion for flowers—such folly! ‘What profit do they bring?’ as my wife says. As you see, a painter came from Paris to paint his corridor with flowers in fresco. He put in whole plate mirrors everywhere. The ceilings were done up with cornices that cost six francs a foot. In the dining-room the floor is of the finest inlay—such folly! The house is not worth a penny the more for it.”

“Well, nephew, buy it for me. Let me know when it is settled; here is my address. The rest my lawyer will attend to. Who lives opposite?” he asked as they went out into the street.

“Some *émigrés*,” said the postmaster; “a Chevalier de Portenduère.”

When the house was bought, the distinguished physician, instead of coming to live in it, wrote orders to his nephew to let it. Levrault’s Folly was taken by the notary of Nemours, who sold his business to Dionis his head clerk, and who died two years after, leaving the doctor burthened with a house to let just at the time when Napoleon’s fate was being sealed in the neighborhood. The doctor’s heirs, somewhat taken in, had at first supposed his wish to return to be a rich man’s whim, and were in despair when, as they imagined, he had ties in Paris which kept him there, and would rob them of his leavings. However, Minoret-Levrault’s wife seized this opportunity of writing to the doctor. The old man replied that as soon as peace should be signed, the roads cleared of soldiers, and communications free once more, he meant to live at Nemours. He made his appearance there with two of his clients, the architect to the hospital, and an upholsterer who undertook the repairs, the rearrangement of the rooms, and the removal of his furniture. Madame Minoret-Levrault

proposed to him as caretaker the cook of the departed notary, and this he agreed to.

When the heirs learned that their uncle, or great-uncle Minoret, was really going to live at Nemours, their families were seized by an absorbing but almost legitimate curiosity, in spite of the political events which just then more especially agitated the district of the Gatinais and Brie. Was their uncle rich? Was he economical or extravagant? Would he leave a fine fortune or nothing at all? Had he invested in annuities? All this they at last came to know, but with infinite difficulty, and by means of much backstairs spying.

After the death of his wife Ursule Mirouët, from 1789 to 1813, the doctor, who in 1805 had been appointed consulting physician to the Emperor, must have made a great deal of money, but no one knew how much; he lived very simply, with no expenses beyond a carriage by the year, and a splendid apartment; he never entertained, and almost always dined out. His housekeeper, furious at not being asked to go with him to Nemours, told Zélie Levrault, the postmaster's wife, that to her knowledge he had fourteen thousand francs a year in consols. Now, after practicing for twenty years in a profession which such appointments as head physician to a hospital, as physician to the Emperor, and as member of the institute could not fail to have made lucrative, these fourteen thousand francs a year as dividends on repeated investments argued no more than a hundred and sixty thousand francs in savings! And to have laid by no more than eight thousand francs a year, the doctor must have had many vices or virtues to indulge. Still, neither the housekeeper, nor Zélie, nor any one else could divine the secret of so small a fortune. Minoret, who was greatly regretted in his own neighborhood, was one of the most liberal benefactors in Paris, and, like Larrey, kept his acts of benevolence a profound secret.

So it was with the liveliest satisfaction that his heirs watched the arrival of their uncle's handsome furniture and extensive

library, and knew him to be an officer of the Legion of Honor, and made Chevalier of the Order of Saint-Michael by the King, in consequence, perhaps, of his retirement, which made way for some favorite. But the architect, the painters, and the upholsterers had finished everything in the most comfortable fashion, and still the doctor came not. Madame Minoret-Levrault, who watched the upholsterer and the architect as though her own property were at stake, discovered, through the inadvertence of a young man sent to put the books in order, that the doctor had in his care an orphan named Ursule. This news caused strange dismay in the town of Nemours. At last the old man came home in about the middle of January, 1815, and settled down without any fuss, bringing with him a little girl of ten months and her nurse.

“Ursule cannot be his daughter; he is seventy-one years old!” cried the alarmed expectants.

“Whoever she may be, she will give us plenty of bother,” said Madame Massin.

The doctor's reception of his grandniece on the mother's side was cold enough; her husband had just bought the place of registrar to the justice of the peace, and they were the first to venture on any allusion to the difficulties of their position. Massin and his wife were not rich. Massin's father, an iron-worker at Montargis, had been obliged to compound with his creditors, and worked now, at the age of sixty-seven, as hard as a young man; he would have nothing to leave. Madame Massin's father, Levrault-Minoret, had lately died at Montereau of grief at the results of the fighting—his farmhouse burnt down, his fields destroyed, and his cattle killed and eaten.

“We shall get nothing out of your great-uncle,” said Massin to his wife, who was expecting her second baby.

But the doctor secretly gave them ten thousand francs, with which the registrar, as the friend of the notary and of the usher of Nemours, had begun money-lending; and he made the peasants pay such usurious interest that, at this later day,

Goupil knew him to possess about eighty thousand francs of unconfessed capital.

As to his other niece, the doctor, by his influence in Paris, procured the post of receiver of public moneys at Nemours for Crémère, and advanced the necessary security. Though Minoret-Levrault wanted nothing, Zélie, very jealous of her uncle's liberality to his two nieces, came to see him with her son, then ten years old, whom she was about to send to school in Paris, where, as she said, education was very costly. As physician to Monsieur de Fontanes, the doctor obtained a half-scholarship at the College of Louis le Grand for his grand-nephew, who was placed in the fourth class.

Crémère, Massin, and Minoret-Levrault, all three very common men, were condemned beyond appeal by the doctor during the first two or three months, while they were trying to circumvent their future prospects rather than himself. Persons who act by instinct have this disadvantage as compared with those who have ideas—they are more easily seen through. The inspirations of instinct are too elementary, and appeal too directly to the eye, not to be detected at once; while to penetrate ideas, the devices of the mind, equal intelligence is needed on both sides.

Having thus purchased the gratitude of his heirs, and to some extent stopped their mouths, the wily doctor alleged his occupations, his habits, and the care he gave to little Ursule, so as not to receive their visits, without, however, shutting his door to them: "He liked to dine alone; he went to bed and rose late; he had come back to his native place to enjoy repose and solitude." These whims in an old man seemed natural enough, and his expectant heirs were satisfied to pay him a weekly visit on Sundays between one and four, to which he vainly tried to put a stop by saying—

"Only come to see me when you want me."

The doctor, though he did not refuse his advice in serious cases, especially among the poor, would not become physician

to the little asylum at Nemours, and declared that he would no longer practice.

“I have killed enough people!” said he, laughing, to the Curé Chaperon, who, knowing his benevolence, pleaded for the poor.

“He is quite an oddity.”

This verdict on Doctor Minoret was the harmless revenge of wounded vanity, for the physician formed a little society for himself of persons who deserve to be contrasted with the heirs. Now, those of the town magnates who thought themselves worthy to swell the court circle of a man wearing the black ribbon of Saint Michael, nourished a ferment of jealousy against the doctor and his privileged friends which, unhappily, was not impotent.

By a singularity which can only be explained by the saying that “extremes meet,” the materialist doctor and the priest of Nemours very soon were friends. The old man was very fond of backgammon, the favorite game of the clergy, and the abbé was a match for the physician. This game thus became the first bond between them. Then Minoret was charitable, and the curé of Nemours was the Fénelon of the Gatinais. They were both men of varied information; thus, in all Nemours, the man of God was the only man who could understand the atheist. In order to discuss any matter, two men must understand each other to begin with. What pleasure is there in saying sharp things to any one who does not feel them? The doctor and the priest had too much good taste, and had seen too much good company, not to observe its rules; they could therefore carry on the little warfare that is so necessary to conversation. Each hated the other's opinions, but they esteemed each other's character. If such contrasts and such sympathies are not the essential elements of intimacy, must we not despair of society, since, especially in France, some antagonism is indispensable to it? Contrariety of characters, not antagonism of opinions, is what

gives rise to antipathies. So the Abbé Chaperon was the doctor's first friend at Nemours, and this friendship endured unflinchingly to the last.

This priest, now sixty years of age, had been curé of Nemours ever since the re-establishment of Catholic worship. He had refused promotion to be vicar-general of his diocese out of attachment to his flock. If those who were indifferent to religion thought the better of him for it, the faithful loved him all the more. Thus venerated by his flock, and esteemed by the community, the curé did good without inquiring too closely as to the religious views of those who were unfortunate. His own dwelling, scarcely supplied with furniture enough for the strictest necessities of life, was as cold and bare as a miser's hovel. Avarice and charity betray themselves by similar results; does not charity lay up in heaven the treasure that the miser hoards on earth? The Abbé Chaperon took his servant to task for every expense, more severely than Gobseck ever scolded his—if, indeed, that notorious Jew ever had a servant. The good priest often sold his silver shoe-buckles and breeches-buckles to give the money to some poor wretch he had found destitute. On seeing him come out of church with the tongues of his knee-straps pulled through the buttonholes, the devout ladies of the town would trot off to look for the cure's buckles at the one jeweler's and watchmaker's shop in Nemours, and reproach their pastor as they restored them to him. He never bought himself linen or clothes, and wore them till they were dropping to pieces. His underclothing, thick with darns, fretted his skin like a hair-shirt. Then Madame de Portenduère, or some other good soul, plotted with his housekeeper to replace his old shirts or cloth clothes by new ones while he slept; and the priest did not always immediately perceive the exchange. He dined off pewter, with iron forks and spoons; when, on great occasions, he had to receive his subordinate clergy and other curés, a duty that falls on the head of a dis-

trict, he borrowed silver and table-linen from his friend the atheist.

“My plate is working out its salvation,” the doctor would say.

His good deeds, which were sooner or later found out, and which he always reinforced with spiritual comfort, were carried out with sublime simplicity. And such a life was all the more meritorious because the abbé was full of erudition, as vast as it was various, and a man of superior abilities. In him refinement and elegance, the inseparable attributes of simplicity, added charm to elocution worthy of a prelate. His manners, his character, and his conduct gave to his society the exquisite flavor of all that is at once candid and subtle in a lofty intellect. Enjoying pleasantries, in a drawing-room he was never the priest. Until Doctor Minoret's arrival, this worthy man left his light under a bushel without a regret; but he no doubt liked him the better for calling it into play.

Possessed of a fairly good library and two thousand francs a year when he came to Nemours, in 1829, the curé had nothing left but the income from his church, and that he gave away almost entirely year by year. A man of good judgment in delicate affairs or in misfortune, more than one of those who never went to church in search of consolation went to the priest's house in quest of advice. An anecdote will suffice to complete this portrait of a character. Certain peasants, seldom it is true, but bad folks at any rate, said they were in danger of imprisonment for debt, or had themselves sued falsely, to stimulate the abbé's beneficence. They deceived their wives; and the women, seeing themselves threatened with eviction and their cows seized, by their innocent tears deceived the poor curé, who would find the seven or eight hundred francs demanded, which the peasants would spend on a little plot of ground. When some pious persons, church-wardens, pointed out the fraud, begging the curé to

consult them for the future, that he might not be the victim of greed, he replied—

“ Perhaps those men would have committed some crime to get their acre of land, and is it not a form of good to hinder evil? ”

The reader may perhaps find pleasure in this sketch of a figure, remarkable because science and literature had entered that heart and that capable brain without corrupting them in any way.

At sixty years of age the Abbé Chaperon's hair was perfectly white, so keenly was he alive to the sufferings of others, and so deeply had the events of the Revolution affected him. Twice imprisoned for having twice refused to take certain oaths, he had twice (to use his own expression) said his *In manus*. He was of middle height, neither stout nor thin. His face, deeply furrowed, hollow-cheeked, and colorless, attracted the eye at once by the perfect calm of the lines and the purity of its outline, which looked as if fringed with light. There is a mysterious kind of radiance from the face of a perfectly chaste man. Brown eyes, with bright pupils, gave life to irregular features, under a powerful forehead. His gaze exercised a dominion that may be explained by its sweetness, which did not exclude strength. The arches of his brows were like deep vaults, shadowed by thick gray eyebrows, which frightened no one. As he had lost many teeth, his mouth was shapeless, and his cheeks were hollow; but this ruin was not without charm, and his kindly wrinkles seemed always to be smiling at you.

He walked with difficulty, having very tender feet, without being gouty; so in all weathers he wore soft calf-skin shoes. He thought trousers unsuitable to a priest, and always appeared in stout, black, worsted stockings, knitted by his housekeeper, and black cloth knee-breeches. He did not go out in his priest's gown, but in a brown overcoat and the three-cornered hat he had always bravely worn, even in the

worst times. This fine and noble old man, whose face was always beautified by the serenity of a blameless soul, was destined to have so great an influence on men and things in this narrative that it was necessary to go to the sources of his authority.

Minoret took in three papers—one liberal, one ministerial, and one ultra—some periodical magazines and scientific journals, of which the accumulation swelled his library. These journals, the encyclopedist, and his books were an attraction to a retired captain of the Royal Swedish Regiment, Monsieur de Jordy, a gentleman, a Voltairean, and an old bachelor, who lived on sixteen hundred francs a year, partly pension and partly an annuity. After reading the papers for some days, through the intervention of the curé, M. de Jordy thought it becoming to call and thank the doctor. From his very first visit the old captain, formerly a professor in the military college, won the doctor's good graces, and the visit was promptly returned.

Monsieur de Jordy, a lean, dry little man, but tormented by blood to the head, though he had a very pale face, was striking-looking by reason of a fine forehead, like Charles XII., over which his hair was cropped short like that of the soldier-king. His blue eyes, which would make one think "Love has passed that way," though they were deeply sad, were interesting at first sight, for their gaze betrayed remembrance; but on this point he kept his own secret so completely that his old friends never detected him in any allusion to his past life, nor ever heard one of the exclamations which are sometimes called forth by a similarity in misfortune. He hid the painful mystery of his past under philosophical gaiety; but when he thought himself alone, his movements, weighted by a slowness evidently deliberate rather than senile, bore witness to an ever-present painful thought. The abbé, indeed, had called him "The Christian without knowing it."

Always wearing a blue cloth suit, his somewhat stiff de-

meanor and his style of dress betrayed old habits of military discipline. His voice, soft and musical, spoke to the soul. His fine hands, and the shape of his face, recalling that of the Comte d'Artois, by showing how handsome he must have been in his youth, made the mystery of his life even more impenetrable. It was impossible not to wonder what was the disaster that had stricken a man so handsome, with courage, grace, learning, and all the most delightful qualities of heart which had formerly been united in his person. Monsieur de Jordy always shuddered at the name of Robespierre. He used a great deal of snuff, but, strange to say, he gave it up for little Ursule, who at first showed a dislike to him in consequence of this habit. Whenever he saw the child, the captain would gaze at her with lingering, almost passionate looks. He was so devoted to her games, and took so much interest in her, that this affection drew still tighter his tie to the doctor, who, on his part, never dared say to the old bachelor—

“Have you, too, lost children?”

There are beings, good and patient as he was, who go through life with a bitter memory in their hearts, and a smile, at once tender and sorrowful, on their lips, bearing in them the answer to the riddle, but never allowing it to be guessed—out of pride, or scorn, or perhaps revenge—having none but God to trust in or to comfort them. At Nemours, whither, like the doctor, he had come to die in peace, Monsieur de Jordy visited nobody but the curé, who was always at the service of his parishioners, and Madame de Portenduère, who went to bed at nine o'clock. Thus he, weary of the struggle, had at last taken to going to bed early too, notwithstanding the thorns that stuffed his pillow. Thus it was a happy chance for the doctor, as well as for the captain, to meet a man who had known the same society, who spoke the same language, with whom he could exchange ideas, and who went to bed late. When once Monsieur de Jordy, the Abbé Chaperon,

and Minoret had spent an evening together, they found it so pleasant that the priest and the soldier came in every evening at nine o'clock, when, little Ursule being in bed, the old man was free. And they all three sat talking till midnight, or one o'clock.

Before long the trio became a quartette. Another man, who knew life well, and who had acquired in his profession that large-mindedness, learning, accumulated observation, shrewdness, and power of conversation which the soldier, the physician, and the priest had gained in dealing with souls, with diseases, and with teaching—the judge of the district, Monsieur Bongrand—got wind of the pleasures of these evenings, and made himself acquainted with the doctor.

Before being appointed a justice at Nemours, Monsieur Bongrand had for ten years been attorney at Melun, where he himself had pleaded in court, as is usual (in France) in towns where there is no bar. At the age of forty-five he found himself a widower; but feeling too active to do nothing, he had applied for the appointment as justice of the peace at Nemours, which had fallen vacant some months before the doctor's arrival. The keeper of the seals is always glad to find a practical lawyer, and particularly a well-to-do man, to hold these important posts. Monsieur Bongrand lived very simply at Nemours on his salary of fifteen hundred francs, and could thus devote the rest of his income to his son, who was studying for the bar at Paris, and at the same time working up legal procedure under Derville, the famous attorney.

The elder Bongrand was a good deal like a retired brigadier; his was a face, not naturally pale, but washed out, where business, disappointment, and disgust had left their marks; it was wrinkled by much thought, and also by the pinched look of a man who is constantly forced not to say all he thinks; but it was often illuminated by the smiles peculiar to men who, by turns, believe everything or believe nothing, who are accustomed to see and hear everything without surprise, to sound

the depths which self-interest reveals at the bottom of men's hearts. Under his hair, which was faded rather than gray, and brushed in smooth waves on his head, rose a sagacious brow, its yellow tint harmonizing with that of his thin locks. His face, being rather short, gave him some resemblance to a fox, all the more so because his nose was short and sharp. As he spoke, his wide mouth, like that of all great talkers, sputtered out a spray of white foam-stars, which made his conversation so showery that Goupil used to say, maliciously: "You want an umbrella while you listen to him," or, "The justice of the peace rains decisions."

His eyes seemed keen behind his spectacles, but if he took them off his expression was dulled, and he looked stupid. Though lively, and even jovial, by his manner he gave himself rather too much the airs of a man of importance. His hands were almost always in his trousers' pockets, and he only took them out to settle his spectacles on his nose with a sort of mocking gesture, preliminary to some acute remark or clinching argument. These movements, with his loquacity and his innocent pretentiousness, betrayed the country lawyer; but such slight defects were merely superficial; he made up for them by an acquired geniality, which an exact moralist might define as the indulgence inherent in superiority. And if he had somewhat the look of a fox, he was also supposed to be extremely wily, without being dishonest. His cunning was the exercise of perspicacity. Do we not call folks cunning who can foresee results, and avoid the snares laid for them? The lawyer was fond of whist, a game which the doctor and the captain played, and which the priest soon learned to play with equal proficiency.

This little party created an oasis for themselves in Minoret's drawing-room. The Nemours town doctor, who was not deficient in education or manners, and who respected Minoret as an ornament to the profession, was also admitted; but his business and fatigues, which compelled him to go to bed early

that he might rise betimes, hindered him from being so regular a visitor as the doctor's three friends were.

The meetings of these five superior men, who alone in all the town had enough general culture to understand each other, accounts for Minoret's aversion for his heirs; though he might have to leave them his fortune, he could not admit them to his society. Whether the postmaster, the registrar, and the receiver understood this distinction, or were reassured by their uncle's loyal nature and benefactions, they ceased at any rate to call on him, to his very great satisfaction.

The four old players of whist and backgammon had, within seven or eight months of the doctor's settling at Nemours, formed a compact and exclusive little circle, which came to each of them as a sort of autumnal brotherhood, quite unlooked for, and therefore all the sweeter and more enjoyable. This family party of choice spirits found in Ursule a child whom each could adopt after his manner: the priest thought of her soul, the lawyer made himself her protector, the soldier promised himself that he would be her tutor; as for Minoret, he was father, mother, and doctor in one.

After acclimatizing himself, as it were, the old man fell into habits of life, regulated as it must be in all provincial towns. With Ursule as an excuse, he never received any one in the morning, and asked nobody to dinner; his friends could join him at six o'clock, and remain with him till midnight. The first comers found newspapers on the drawing-room table, and read while waiting for the others, or sometimes went to meet the doctor if he were out walking. These quiet habits were not merely the requirement of old age; they were also a wise and deep-laid precaution on the part of a man of the world to prevent his happiness being troubled by the restless curiosity of his relations, or the petty gossip of a country town. He would concede nothing to the capricious goddess public opinion, whose tyranny—one of the curses of France—was about to be established, and to make

our whole country one single province. So as soon as the little girl was weaned and could walk, he sent away the cook whom his niece, Madame Minoret-Levrault, had found for him, on discovering that she reported to the postmistress everything that went on in his house.

Little Ursule's nurse, the widow of a poor laborer owning no name but that he was christened by, and who came from Bougival, had lost her last baby at the age of six months; and the doctor, knowing her to be an honest creature, engaged her as wet nurse, in pity for her destitution. Having no money, and coming from La Bresse, where her family lived in poverty, Antoinette Patris, widow of Pierre *dit* de Bougival, naturally attached herself to Ursule, as foster-mothers do attach themselves to a sucking child as it grows up. This blind motherly affection was reinforced by domestic attachment. Warned beforehand of the doctor's intentions, La Bougival learned to cook on the sly, made herself tidy, and fell into the old man's ways. She took the greatest care of the furniture and the rooms; in short, she was indefatigable. Not only did the doctor insist that his private life should be screened from the world; he had reasons of his own for keeping all knowledge of his affairs from his heirs. Thus by the time he had been at Nemours a year there was no one in his house but La Bougival, on whose discretion he could absolutely rely, and he disguised his real reasons under the all-powerful plea of economy. To the great joy of his family, he became miserly. Without underhand wheedling, solely as a result of her solicitude and devotedness, La Bougival, who at the time when this drama opens was forty-three years old, was housekeeper to the doctor and his little protégé, the pivot on which the whole house turned, in fact, his confidential servant. She had been named La Bougival in consequence of the impossibility of calling her by her Christian name of Antoinette, for names and faces must follow a law of harmony.

The doctor's avarice was not an empty word; but it was for a purpose. From 1817 he gave up two of his newspapers, and ceased to subscribe to periodical magazines. His annual outlay, which all Nemours could reckon, was not more than eighteen hundred francs. Like all old men, his requirements in linen, clothing, and shoes were a mere trifle. Every six months he made a journey to Paris, no doubt to draw and invest his dividends. In fifteen years he never said a word that had anything to do with his affairs. His confidence in Bongrand was of later date; he never spoke to him of his plans till after the Revolution of 1830. These were the only things in the doctor's life known at that time to the townsfolk and his heirs. As to his political opinions, as his house was rated at no more than a hundred francs in taxes, he never interfered, and would have nothing to say to subscriptions on either the Royalist or the Liberal side. His well-known horror of priests and his deism so little loved demonstrations, that when his nephew, Minoret-Levrault, sent a traveling bookseller to his house to propose that he should buy the "Curé Meslier" and "General Foy's Addresses," he turned the man out of the house. Tolerance on such terms was quite inexplicable to the Liberals of Nemours.

The doctor's three collateral heirs, Minoret-Levrault and his wife, Monsieur and Madame Massin-Levrault, junior, Monsieur and Madame Crémère-Crémère—who shall be called simply Crémère, Massin, and Minoret, since such elaborate distinctions are only needed in the Gatinais—these three families, too busy to create another centre, met constantly, as people only meet in small towns. The postmaster gave a grand dinner on his son's birthday, a ball at the Carnival, and another on the anniversary of his wedding-day, and to these he asked all the townsfolk of Nemours. The tax-receiver also gathered his relations and friends about him twice a year. The justice's registrar being, as he said, too poor to launch out in such extravagance, lived narrowly in a

house half-way down the High Street, of which the ground floor was let to his sister, the mistress of the letter-post—another benefaction of the doctor's. But in the course of the year these three inheritors or their wives met in the town or out walking, at the market in the morning, on their door-steps, or on Sunday, after mass, on the church square, as at this moment, so that they saw each other every day.

Now for the last three years more especially, the doctor's age, his miserliness, and his fortune justified allusions or direct remarks relating to their prospects, which, passing from one to another, at last made the doctor and his heirs equally famous. For these six months not a week had passed without the friends and neighbors of the Minoret family speaking to them with covert envy of the day when the old man's eyes would be closed and his money-boxes opened.

“Doctor Minoret may be a physician, and have come to an understanding with death,” said one; “but only God is eternal.”

“Bah! he will bury us all; he is in better health than we are,” one of the expectant heirs would reply hypocritically.

“Well, if you don't get it, your children will—unless that little Ursule——”

“He will not leave her everything?” another would reply, interrupting the last speaker.

Ursule, as Madame Massin had prognosticated, was the real bugbear of the family, the Damocles' sword; and Madame Crémère's favorite last word, “Those who live will know,” showed plainly enough that they wished her ill rather than well.

The tax-receiver and the registrar, who were poor by comparison with the postmaster, had often, by way of conversation, calculated the doctor's property. As they walked along by the canal or on the high-road, if they saw their uncle coming they looked at each other piteously.

“He has provided himself with some elixir of life, no doubt,” said the one.

“He is in league with the devil,” said the other.

“He ought to leave us the lion’s share, for that fat Minoret wants for nothing.”

“Oh, Minoret has a son who will get rid of a great deal of his money for him!”

“How much, now, do you suppose the doctor’s fortune may run to?” said the registrar.

“Well, at the end of twelve years, twelve thousand francs saved every year come to a hundred and forty-four thousand, and compound interest will have produced at least a hundred thousand francs more; but as, under his Paris lawyer’s advice, he must have turned his money to advantage now and again, and as he would have invested up to 1822 at eight or seven and a half per cent. in government securities, the old fellow must at this time have about four hundred thousand francs to turn over, to say nothing of his fourteen thousand francs at five per cent., worth one hundred and sixteen at the present moment. If he were to die to-morrow and leave Ursule an equal share, we should get seven to eight hundred thousand francs, not to mention the house and furniture.”

“Well, a hundred thousand to Minoret, a hundred thousand to the little girl, and three hundred thousand to each of us. That would be the fair thing.”

“Yes, that would keep us in shoe-leather.”

“If he should do that,” cried Massin, “I would sell my appointment and buy a fine estate. I would try to be made judge at Fontainebleau, and be elected deputy.”

“I would buy a stockbroker’s business,” said the tax-receiver.

“Unfortunately, that little girl on his arm and the curé have so blockaded him that we cannot get at him.”

“At any rate, we are quite certain that he will leave nothing to the church.”

It may now be understood that the heirs were in agonies at seeing their uncle going to mass. The most stupid have wit enough to imagine injury to their interests. Interest is the moving spirit of the peasant as of the diplomat, and on that ground the most stupid in appearance may perhaps prove the sharpest. Hence this terrible argument: "If that little Ursule is able to bring her protector within the pale of the church, she will certainly have power to secure her own inheritance," blazed out in letters of fire in the mind of the most obtuse of the inheritors. The postmaster had forgotten the enigma in his son's letter in hurrying to the square; for if the doctor were really in church following the order of prayer, they might lose two hundred and fifty thousand francs. It must be admitted that their fears were based on the strongest and most legitimate of social sentiments, namely, on family interest.

"Well, Monsieur Minoret," said the mayor—a retired miller who had turned Royalist, a Levrault-Crémière—"when the devil was old, the devil a monk would be! Your uncle, I am told, has come over to us."

"Better late than never, cousin," replied the postmaster, trying to conceal his annoyance.

"How that man would laugh if we were disappointed! He is quite capable of making his son marry that cursed little hussy. May the devil get his tail round her!" cried Crémière, shaking his fist at the mayor as he went in under the porch.

"What on earth is the matter with old Crémière?" said the butcher, the eldest son of a Levrault-Levrault. "Is he not pleased to see his uncle take the road to paradise?"

"Who would ever have believed it?" said the registrar.

"It is never safe to say to the well, 'I will never drink of your water!'" replied the notary, who, seeing the group from afar, left his wife to go on to church alone.

"Now, Monsieur Dionis," said Crémière, taking the

lawyer by the arm, "what do you advise us to do in these circumstances?"

"I advise you," said Dionis, addressing the expectant heirs, "to go to bed and get up at the usual hours, to eat your soup before it gets cold, to put your shoes on your feet and your hat on your head; in short, to go on exactly as if nothing had happened."

"You are a poor comforter!" said Massin with a cunning glance.

In spite of his short, fat figure, and his thick, crushed-looking features, Crémière-Dionis was as slippery as silk. To make a fortune he was in secret partnership with Massin, whom he no doubt kept informed when peasants were in difficulties, and which plots of ground he might devour. So the two men could pick and choose, never letting a good chance escape them, and dividing the profits of this usury on mortgage, which delays, though it cannot hinder, the action of the peasantry on the land. Hence Dionis felt a keen interest in the doctor's will, less on account of Minoret the postmaster and Crémière the tax-receiver than for his friend the registrar's sake. Massin's share would, sooner or later, come to swell the capital on which the partners traded in the district.

"We must try to find out, through Monsieur Bongrand, who has fired this shot," replied the lawyer in a low voice, as a warning to Massin to lay low.

"What are you doing here, Minoret?" was suddenly heard from a little woman who bore down on the group, in the midst of which the postmaster was visible as a tower. "You do not know what has become of Désiré, and you seem to have taken root there on your two feet when I fancied you were on horseback! Good-morning, ladies and gentlemen!"

This spare little woman, pale and fair, dressed in a cotton gown—white, with a large flowered pattern in chocolate-color—in an embroidered cap trimmed with lace, and a small

green shawl over her flat shoulders, was the postmistress, who made the stoutest postillions quake, the servants, and the carters; who kept the till and the books; and managed the house with her finger and eye, as the neighbors were in the habit of saying. Like a true, thrifty housewife, she had not a single article of jewelry. She did not "favor frippery and trash," as she put it; she liked what was durable, and, in spite of its being Sunday, she had on her black silk apron with pockets, in which a bunch of keys jingled. Her shrill voice was ear-splitting. In spite of the sweet blue of her eyes, her hard gaze was in evident harmony with the thin lips of a tightly set mouth, and a high, projecting, and very despotic brow. Her glance was sharp, sharper still were her gestures and words. "Zélie being obliged to have will enough for two, had always had enough for three," Goupil used to say; and it was he who noted the successive reigns of three young post-boys, very neatly kept, whom Zélie had set up after seven years' service. Indeed, the spiteful clerk always called them Postillion I., Postillion II., and Postillion III. But the small influence exerted in the house by these young men, and their perfect obedience, proved that Zélie had simply and purely taken an interest in really good fellows.

"Ay, Zélie values zeal," the clerk would reply to any one who made such a remark.

This piece of scandal was, however, improbable. Since the birth of her son, whom she nursed herself, though it was impossible to see how, the postmistress had thought only of adding to her fortune, and devoted herself without respite to the management of her immense business. To rob her of a truss of straw or a few bushels of oats, to detect her in error in the most complicated accounts, was a thing impossible, though she wrote a cat's scrawl, and knew nothing of arithmetic beyond addition and subtraction. She walked out solely to inspect her hay, her oats, and her after-crops; then she would send her man to fetch in the crops, and her postillions to pack

the hay, and tell them within a hundredweight how much they could get off this or that field. Though she was the soul of the huge body known as Minoret-Levrault, and led him by his idiotically snub nose, she was liable to the frights which more or less constantly agitate those who quell and lead wild beasts, and she quarreled with him frequently. The post-boys knew by the rowings they got from Minoret when his wife had scolded him, for her rage glanced off on to them. But, indeed, Madame Minoret was as shrewd as she was avaricious.

“Where would Minoret be without his wife?” was a by-word in more than one household in the town.

“When you hear what is happening to us you will be beside yourself too,” replied the Master of Nemours.

“Well, what is it?”

“Ursule has taken Doctor Minoret to mass.”

Zélie Levrault’s eyes seemed to dilate; for an instant she was silent, yellow with rage; then crying, “I must see it to believe it,” she rushed into the church. The Host was just elevated. Favored by the general attitude of worship, she was able to look along each row of chairs and benches as she went up past the chapels to the place where Ursule knelt, and by her side she saw the old man bareheaded.

If you can recall the portraits of Barbé-Marbois, Boissy-d’Anglas, Morellet, Helvétius, and Frederick the Great, you will have an exact idea of the head of Doctor Minoret, who in his green old age was a good deal like these famous personages. These heads, struck as it might seem from the same die, for they lend themselves to the medalist’s art, present a severe and almost puritanical profile, cold coloring, a mathematical brain, a certain narrowness of face, as if it had been squeezed, astute eyes, grave lips, and something aristocratic in sentiment rather than in habits, in the intellect rather than in the character. They all have lofty foreheads, receding a little at the top, which betrays a tendency to materialism. You will find all

these leading characteristics of the head, and the look of the face, in the portraits of the encyclopedists, of the orators of the Girondins, and of the men of that time whose religious belief was almost a blank, and who, though calling themselves deists, were atheists. A deist is an atheist with an eye to the off-chance of some advantage.

Old Minoret had a forehead of this type, but furrowed with wrinkles, and it derived a sort of childlike ingenuousness from the way in which his silvery hair, combed back like a woman's at her toilet, curled in thin locks on his black coat; for he persisted in dressing, as in the days of his youth, in black silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, knee-breeches of rich silk, a white waistcoat, across which lay the black ribbon of Saint Michael, and a black coat with the red rosette in the buttonhole. This characteristic head, its cold pallor softened by the ivory-yellow tone of old age, was under the full light from a window. At the moment when the postmistress came in, the doctor's blue eyes, with slightly reddened lids and pathetic lines, were fixed on the altar; new conviction had given them a new expression. His spectacles, laid in his prayer-book, marked the page where he had ceased to read. With his arms folded across his breast, the tall, spare old man, standing in an attitude which proclaimed the full power of all his faculties, and something immovable in his faith, never ceased from gazing at the altar with a humble look, rejuvenescent through hope; not choosing to see his nephew's wife, who stood rooted almost face to face with him, as if to reproach him for this return to God.

On seeing every face turned to look at her, Zélie hastily retired, and came out on to the square again less precipitately than she had gone into the church; she had counted on that inheritance, and the inheritance was becoming problematical. She found the registrar, the tax-receiver, and their wives in even greater consternation than before. Goupil had taken pleasure in tormenting them.

“It is not here, on the square, and under the eyes of the whole town, that we can discuss our private affairs,” said the postmistress; “come to my house. You will not be in the way, Monsieur Dionis,” she added to the lawyer.

So the probable disinheritance of the Massins, the Crémières, and the postmaster was to become the talk of the country.

Just as the heirs and the notary were about to cross the square on their way to the house, the clatter of the diligence arriving at top-speed made a tremendous noise; it stopped at the coach-office, a few yards from the church, at the top of the High Street.

“Why, like you, Minoret, I had forgotten Désiré,” said Zélie. “Let us go to meet him; he is almost a lawyer now, and this business is partly his concern.”

The arrival of a diligence is always a diversion, and when it is behind time something interesting may be expected; so the crowd rushed to see the “Ducler.”

“There is Désiré,” was a general cry.

At once the tyrant and the ringleader of fun in Nemours, Désiré’s visits always brought some excitement to the town. A favorite with the young men, to whom he was liberal, his presence was to them a stimulant; but his pleasures were so much dreaded, that more than one family was glad that his studies for the law should be carried on in Paris. Désiré Minoret, slight, thin, and fair like his mother, with her blue eyes and colorless complexion, smiled at the crowd from the coach door, and jumped out to embrace her. A slight sketch of this youth will explain Zélie’s flattered pride on beholding him.

The young law student wore neat little boots, white English drill trousers with patent-leather straps, a handsome cravat carefully folded, and a still handsomer pin, a smart fancy waistcoat, and in its pocket a flat watch with a dangling chain; a short blue cloth overcoat, and a gray hat. But

vulgar riches were betrayed in the gold buttons to his waistcoat, and a ring worn outside his gloves of purplish kid. He carried a cane with a chased gold knob.

“You will lose your watch,” said his mother as she kissed him.

“It is worn so,” said he, submitting to his father’s embrace.

“Well, cousin, so you will soon be a full-blown lawyer,” said Massin.

“I am to be sworn when the courts reopen,” said he, waving an acknowledgment of the friendly greetings of the crowd.

“Then we shall have some fun?” said Goupil, shaking hands with him.

“Ah! there you are, old ape!” answered Désiré.

“Having worked for your license, you think you may take it, I suppose!” retorted the clerk, mortified at being so familiarly treated before so many people.

“For his lies? Take what?” asked Madame Crémère of her husband.

“You know all my things, Cabirolle!” cried Désiré to the old purple and pimply-faced conductor. “Have them all taken down to the house.”

“Your horses are in a lather,” said Zélie roughly to Cabirolle. “Have you no sense at all that you drive them like that? You are a greater brute than they are.”

“But Monsieur Désiré insisted on getting on as fast as possible, to relieve your anxiety.”

“As there has been no accident, why risk killing your horses?” said she.

Friendly greetings, hand-shaking, and the eagerness of his young acquaintance surrounding Désiré, all the incidents of arrival, and details as to the accident which had occasioned the delay, took up so much time that the party of inheritors, increased by their friends, got back to the church just as mass

was ended. By a trick of chance, which allows itself strange caprices, Désiré saw Ursule under the church porch as he passed, and was quite startled by her beauty. The young man suddenly paused, and necessarily checked the movements of his parents.

Ursule had taken her godfather's arm, which obliged her to hold her prayer-book in her right hand and her parasol in the left; and, in doing so, she displayed the native grace with which graceful women manage to get over the little difficulties of their dainty womanhood. If the mind betrays itself in everything, it may be said that her demeanor expressed her exquisite ingenuousness.

Ursule wore a white muslin dress, shaped loosely like a dressing-gown, with blue bows at intervals; the cape, trimmed with similar ribbon run into a wide hem, and fastened like the dress with bows, suggested the beauty of her figure; her throat, of ivory whiteness, was thrown into charming relief by all this blue—the true cosmetic for fair complexions.

A blue sash, with floating ends, marked a girlish waist and what seemed a pliant figure, one of the most seductive graces of woman. She wore a rice-straw hat, simply trimmed with ribbons to match those on her dress. It was tied with a bow under her chin; and this, while enhancing the excessive whiteness of the hat, did not detract from that of her lovely complexion.

Her fine, bright hair, which she herself dressed in wide plaits, fastened into loops on each side of her face *à la Berthe*, caught the eye by the shining bosses of the crossing tresses. Her gray eyes, soft, though proud, harmonized with a well-moulded brow. A delicate color flushed her cheeks like a rosy cloud, and gave life to a face that was regular without being insipid, for nature had bestowed on her the rare privilege of a pure outline with an expressive countenance.

The virtue of her life was written in the perfect accordance of her features, her movements, and the general expression

of her individuality, which might serve as a model of trustfulness or of modesty.

Her health was excellent, but not coarsely robust, so that she looked elegant. Her light gloves left it to be inferred that she had pretty hands. Her arched and slender feet were shod with dainty little bronze kid boots, trimmed with a fringe of brown silk. Her blue sash, in which a little flat watch made a boss, while a blue purse with gold tassels hung through it, attracted the eye of every woman there, and gave cause for remark.

“He has given her a new watch,” said Madame Crémère, squeezing her husband’s arm.

“Why, it is Ursule!” exclaimed Désiré. “I did not recognize her.”

“Well, my dear uncle, this is an event!” said the postmaster, pointing to where the whole town had fallen into two lines along the old man’s way. “Everybody wants to see you.”

“Is it the Abbé Chaperon or Ursule who has converted you, uncle?” said Massin, bowing with jesuitical obsequiousness to the doctor and his companion.

“It is Ursule,” said the old man curtly, and without stopping, as a man who is annoyed.

The evening before, as he finished his rubber with Ursule, the town doctor, and Bongrand, he had said, “I shall go to mass to-morrow;” and even if the justice had not then replied, “Your heirs will never have another night’s sleep!” a single glance now would have sufficed to enable the sagacious and clear-sighted old man to read the temper of his heirs in the look of their faces. Zélie’s irruption into the church, the flash he had caught in her eye, the meeting of all the interested parties on the square, and the expression of their countenances on seeing Ursule—all revealed freshly revived hatred and sordid fears.

“This is your doing, mademoiselle,” said Madame Cré-

mière, interposing with a low courtesy. "It is no trouble to you to work miracles."

"The miracle is God's, madame," replied Ursule.

"Oh, indeed! God's," exclaimed Minoret-Levrault. "My father-in-law used to say that God was a name for many a dark horse."

"His ideas were those of a horse coper!" said the doctor severely.

"Now, then," said Minoret to his wife and son, "are you not coming to pay your respects to my uncle?"

"I could not contain myself face to face with that sneaking slut!" exclaimed Zélie, leading away her son.

"You would be wise, uncle," said Madame Massin, "not to go to church without a little black velvet cap; the parish church is very damp."

"Pah! niece," said the old man, looking round at his followers. "The sooner I am laid to rest, the sooner you will dance."

He walked on, dragging Ursule with him, and seeming in such haste that they were left to themselves.

"Why do you answer them with such hard words? It is not kind," said Ursule, shaking his arm with a little refractory gesture.

"My hatred for hypocrites has always been the same, before as well as since my conversion. I have done them all kindness, and I do not ask for gratitude; but not one of all those people sent a flower on your birthday, the only day I keep."

At some little distance from the doctor and Ursule, Madame de Portenduère was dragging herself along, overwhelmed, as it seemed, with suffering. She was one of those old women in whose dress we may still trace the spirit of the last century, who wear pansy-colored gowns with tight sleeves of a cut now only to be seen in portraits by Madame Lebrun; black lace scarfs, and bonnets of extinct shapes, in harmony with their

slow and solemn gait ; as if they still walked in hoops, and felt them about them, as those who have had an arm cut off sometimes move the limb they have lost. Their long, pale faces, with deeply shadowed eyes and blighted brows, are not devoid of a certain melancholy grace in spite of a front of dejected curls ; they drape their heads in old lace, which now has no light flutter over their cheeks ; but over the whole mass of ruins predominates an indescribable dignity of manner and look.

This old lady's red and puckered eyes plainly showed that she had wept during the service. She walked like a person in some anxiety, and seemed to be expecting somebody, for she looked back. Now, that Madame de Portenduère should look back was an event as serious as Doctor Minoret's conversion.

"To whom can Madame Portenduère owe a grudge?" said Madame Massin, as she came up with the heirs, who were dumfounded by the doctor's retorts.

"She is looking for the curé," said Dionis, striking his forehead like a man suddenly struck by a remembrance or some forgotten idea. "I have it! I see my way; the inheritance is saved! Come, we will all breakfast cheerfully with Madame Minoret."

The eagerness with which the whole party followed the notary to the posting-house may easily be imagined. Goupil clung to his comrade, taking his arm, saying in his ear with a revolting smile: "There are crayfish!"

"What do I care?" replied the son of the house with a shrug. "I am madly in love with Florine, the most heavenly creature in the world."

"What on earth is Florine without a surname?" asked Goupil. "I am too much your friend to allow you to be made a fool of by hussies."

"Florine is adored by the famous Nathan, and my folly is of no use, for she positively refuses to marry me."

“Girls who are rash with their bodies are sometimes prudent with their brains,” said Goupil.

“If you could but see her, only once, you would not make use of such expressions,” said Désiré languishingly.

“If I saw you destroying your prospects for what can be only a fancy,” retorted Goupil, with a warmth that might perhaps have taken in Bongrand, “I would go and wreck that doll as Varney wrecked Amy Robsart in Kenilworth! Your wife ought to be a d’Aiglemont, a Mademoiselle du Rouvre, and open your way to being a deputy to the Chamber. My future is mortgaged to yours, and I will not allow you to play the fool.”

“I am rich enough to be content with happiness,” replied Désiré.

“Well, what are you two plotting?” said Zélie to Goupil, hailing the two young men, who were standing together in the wide stable-yard.

The doctor turned down the Rue des Bourgeois, and walked on, as briskly as a young man, to his house, where, in the course of the past week, the strange event had taken place which was just now the ruling thought of all the town of Nemours, and of which some account must be given to render this story, and the notary’s singular remark to the heirs, more perfectly intelligible.

The doctor’s father-in-law, the famous harpsichord player and instrument-maker, Valentin Mirouët, one of our most celebrated organists, died in 1785, leaving a natural son, the child of his old-age, whom he had recognized and called by his name, but who was a thorough scapegrace. He had not the consolation of seeing this spoilt child when on his death-bed; Joseph Mirouët, a singer and composer, after coming out in Italian opera under an assumed name, had run away to Germany with a young girl. The old instrument-maker recommended this lad, who was full of talent, to his son-in-law,

explaining that his object in not marrying the boy's mother was to protect the interests of his daughter, Madame Minoret. The doctor promised to give the unfortunate youth half of the property left by the old man, whose stock and business were bought up by Erard.

He set to work diplomatically to find his natural half-brother, Joseph Mirouët; but one evening Grimm told him that, after enlisting in a Prussian regiment, the artist had deserted, and, taking a false name, had escaped all search.

Joseph Mirouët, gifted by nature with an enchanting voice, a fine figure, and a handsome face, being a composer of taste and spirit into the bargain, led for fifteen years the Bohemian existence which Hofmann of Berlin has so well described. But at the age of forty he was reduced to such misery that in 1806 he seized the opportunity of becoming a Frenchman again. He then settled at Hamburg, where he married the daughter of a respectable citizen, who, being music-mad, fell in love with the singer, whose fame was still in the future, and who devoted herself to its attainment. But after fifteen years of penury, Joseph Mirouët's head could not stand the wine of opulence; his extravagant nature reasserted itself; and, though he made his wife happy, in a few years he had spent all her fortune. Misery again came upon them. The household must indeed have been living wretchedly for Joseph Mirouët to come down to enlisting as one of the band in a French regiment.

In 1813, by the merest chance, the surgeon-major of this regiment, struck by the name of Mirouët, wrote to Doctor Minoret, to whom he owed some obligation. The reply came at once. In 1814, before the capitulation of Paris, Joseph Mirouët had found a home there, and there his wife died in giving birth to a little girl whom the doctor named Ursule, after his wife. The bandmaster did not long survive his wife; he, like her, was worn out by fatigue and privation. On his death-bed the hapless musician bequeathed his little girl to the

doctor, who was her godfather, in spite of his repugnance for what he called church mummeries.

After losing every child, either by miscarriage, at the time of its birth, or within the first year of its life, the doctor had anxiously looked forward to their last hope. But when a sickly, nervous, delicate woman begins with a miscarriage, it is common enough to see her successive failures, as in the case of Ursule Minoret, in spite of her husband's care, watchfulness, and learning. The poor man had often blamed himself for their persistent desire to have children. The last of the little ones born to them, after an interval of more than two years, died in 1792, the victim of constitutional nervousness, inherited from its mother, if we may believe the physiologists, who say that, in the inscrutable phenomena of generation, a child takes its blood from the father and its nervous system from the mother. The doctor, compelled to forego the joys of his strongest feelings, no doubt found in benevolence some indemnity for disappointed fatherhood.

All through his married life, so cruelly agitated, he had wished above everything for a little fair girl, one of those flowers which are the delight of a household; so he gladly accepted his half-brother's bequest, and transferred all his vanished hopes and dreams to the little orphan. For two years he watched over the minutest details of Ursule's life, as Cato over Pompey; he would not have her fed, or taken up, or put to bed without his superintendence. His experience and his science were all devoted to this child. After enduring all the pangs, the alternations of fear and hope, the anxieties and joys of a mother, he was so happy as to find vigorous vitality and a deeply sensitive nature in this child of the flaxen-haired German mother and the artistic Frenchman. The happy old man watched the growth of that yellow hair with the feelings of a mother—first pale down, then silk, then light, fine hair, so caressing to the touch of caressing fingers. He would kiss the tiny feet, the toes through whose fine skin

the blood shows pink, making them look like rosebuds. He was crazy over the child.

When she tried to speak, or when she fixed her lovely, soft blue eyes on the objects about her, with the wondering look which would seem to be the dawning of ideas, and which she ended with a laugh, he would sit in front of her for whole hours, and he and Jordy would try to find out the reasons—which to many have seemed mere caprices—concealed under the smallest manifestations of that delightful phase of life when the child is at once flower and fruit, a bewildered intelligence, perpetual motion, and vehement desire. Little Ursule's beauty and sweetness made her so precious to the doctor that for her he would gladly have changed the laws of nature; he would sometimes tell his friend Jordy that he suffered from pain in his teeth when Ursule was cutting hers.

When old men love a child there is no limit to their passion; they adore it. For this tiny creature's sake they silence their pet manias, and recall every detail of their past life. Their experience, their forbearance, their patience, all the acquisitions of life—a treasure so painfully amassed—are poured out for this young life by which they grow young again, and they make up for motherliness by intelligence. Their wisdom, always on the alert, is as good as a mother's intuition; they remember the exquisite care which in a mother is divination, and infuse it into the exercise of a pitifulness whose strength is great, no doubt, in proportion to that excessive weakness. The slowness of their movements supplies the place of maternal gentleness. And then, in them, as in children, life is reduced to the simplest expression; if a mother is a slave from feeling, the negation of all passion and the absence of all self-interest allow the old man to sacrifice himself wholly. Hence it is not uncommon to see children and old men make great friends.

The old officer, the old curé, and the old doctor, happy in Ursule's caresses and caprices, were never tired of answering

her or playing with her. Her childish petulance, far from fretting them, was their delight; and they indulged all her desires, while making everything a subject of instruction. Thus the little girl grew up in the midst of old men, who smiled on her, and were to her like so many mothers, all equally attentive and watchful. Thanks to this learned education, Ursule's soul developed in a congenial sphere. This rare plant found the soil that suited it, inhaled the elements of its true life, and assimilated the flood of its native sunshine.

"In what faith will you bring this child up?" asked the Abbé Chaperon of Minoret, when Ursule was six years old.

"In yours," replied the doctor.

He, an atheist after the pattern of Monsieur de Wolmar in the "*Nouvelle Héloïse*," did not see that he had any right to deprive Ursule of the benefits offered by the Catholic faith.

The physician, just then sitting on a bench outside the window of the Chinese summer-house, felt his hand warmly pressed by that of the curé.

"Yes, curé, whenever she asks me about God, I shall refer her to her friend 'Sapron,'" said he, mimicking Ursule's baby accent. "I wish to see whether religious feeling is innate. So far, therefore, I have done nothing either for or against the tendencies of this young soul; but I have already, in my heart, appointed you her spiritual director."

"It will be accounted to you by God, I trust!" said the curé, gently patting his hands together, and raising them to heaven, as though he were putting up a short mental prayer.

So, at the age of six, the little orphan came under the religious influence of the curé, as she had already under that of her old friend Jordy.

The captain, formerly a professor in one of the old military schools, and interested in grammar and the divergencies of European tongues, had studied the problem of an universal language. This learned man, patient as all old teachers are, made it his pleasure to teach Ursule to read and write, in-

structing her in French, and in so much arithmetic as it was needful that she should know. The doctor's extensive library allowed of a choice of books fit to be read by a child, and adapted to amuse as well as to instruct her. The soldier and the priest left her mind to develop naturally and easily, as the doctor left her body. Ursule learned in play. Religion included reflection.

Thus left to the divine culture of a nature guided by these three judicious teachers into a realm of purity, Ursule tended towards feeling rather than duty, and took as her rule of life the voice of conscience rather than social law. In her, beauty of sentiment and action would always be spontaneous; her judgment would come in to confirm the impulse of her heart. She was fated to do right as a pleasure before doing it as an obligation. This tone is the peculiar result of a Christian education. These principles, quite unlike those to be inculcated in a man, are suited to a woman, the soul and conscience of the family, the latent elegance of home life, the queen, or little less, of the household.

They all three acted in the same manner with this child. Far from being startled by the audacity of childish innocence, they explained to Ursule the purpose of things and their known processes, without ever giving her an inaccurate impression. When in her questioning about a plant, a flower, or a star, she went directly to God, the professor and the doctor alike told her that only the curé could answer her. Neither of them intruded on the ground of the other. Her godfather took charge of her physical progress and the matters of daily life; her lessons were Jordy's affair; morality, metaphysics, and all higher matters were left to the curé.

This excellent education was not counteracted by bad servants, as is sometimes the case in wealthier houses. La Bougival, well lectured on the subject—and, indeed, far too simple in mind and nature to interfere—did nothing to mar the work of these great spirits.

Thus Ursule, a privileged creature, had to nurture her three good genii, who found their task easy and pleasant with so sweet a nature as hers. This manly tenderness, this seriousness tempered by smiles, this freedom without risk, this incessant care of mind and body, had made her, at the age of nine, a delightful and lovely child. Then, unfortunately, the fatherly trio was broken up. In the following year the old captain died, leaving it to the doctor and the curé to carry on his work, after he had achieved the most difficult part of it. Flowers would spring up naturally in a soil so well prepared. The good gentleman had, during these nine years, saved a thousand francs a year, and left ten thousand francs to his little Ursule, that she might have something to remember him by all her life through. In his will, full of pathetic feeling, he begged his legatee to spend the four or five hundred francs a year of interest on this little capital exclusively on dress.

When the justice placed seals on his old friend's possessions, he found, in a closet which no one had ever been allowed to enter, a quantity of toys, most of them broken, and all used; toys of the past, piously treasured, which Monsieur Bongrand himself was to burn, by the poor captain's desire.

Not long after this, Ursule was to take her first communion. The Abbé Chaperon devoted a whole year to instructing the young girl, in whom heart and brain, so early developed, but so wisely dependent on each other, required a specific spiritual nourishment. And this initiation into a knowledge of divine things was of such a nature that from this period, when the soul takes its religious mould, Ursule became a pious and mystical young creature, whose character was always superior to events, and whose heart could triumph over adversity. Then it was that a secret struggle began between infidel old age and fully-believing youth; a struggle of which she who had challenged it was long unaware, but of which the issue had set the town by the ears, while it was destined to have

great influence on Ursule's future life, by unchaining against her the doctor's collateral relations.

During the first six months of the year 1824, Ursule almost always spent the morning at the curé's house. The old doctor divined the abbé's intention; he wanted to make Ursule herself an invincible argument. The unbeliever, beloved by his god-daughter as though she were his own child, would believe in her simplicity, and be attracted by the touching effects of religion in the soul of a girl whose love, like the trees of the tropical forest, was always loaded with flowers and fruit, always fresh, and always fragrant. A beautiful life is more powerful than the most cogent arguments. It is impossible to resist the charm of certain images. And the doctor's eyes filled with tears, he knew not why, when he saw the child of his heart set out for church dressed in a frock of white gauze, with white satin shoes, graced with white ribbons, a fillet of white round her head tied on one side with a large bow, her hair rippling in a thousand waves over her pretty white shoulders, her bodice trimmed with a pleating mixed with narrow bows, her eyes shining like stars, from new hopes, loving her godfather all the more since her soul had risen to God. When he perceived the idea of eternity supplying nourishment to the soul hitherto wrapped in the darkness of childhood, as the sun brings life to the world after the night is past, he felt vexed to remain alone at home, still without knowing why. Seated on the balcony steps, his eyes remained long fixed on the bars of the gate through which his godchild had passed, saying, "Why are you not coming too, godfather? Am I to be happy without you?"

Though shaken to the foundations, the encyclopedist's pride did not once give way. However, he went out to look at the little procession, and saw his little Ursule radiant with exaltation under her veil. She flashed an inspired look at him, which struck to the stoniest corner

of his heart, the spot closed against God. Still the deist was firm. "Mummery!" he said to himself. "To imagine that if a Maker of worlds exists, such an Organizer of infinitude can trouble Himself about this foolish trumpery!"

He laughed, and pursued his walk along the heights which overhang the road through the Gatinais, where the church bells, ringing loud peals, announced the gladness of many a home.

The clatter of backgammon is intolerable to those who do not know the game, one of the most difficult that exist. Not to disturb his little girl—whose extreme delicacy of ear and nerves did not allow of her enduring this rattle and their talk without apparent meaning—the curé, old Jordy during his lifetime, and Dr. Minoret postponed their game till the child was in bed or out walking. It often happened that it was unfinished when she came in again, and she then submitted with the best possible grace, and sat down by the window to sew. She disliked the game, which at the beginning is no doubt dry and dull, to many minds repellent, and so difficult to master, that those who have not become accustomed to it in their youth find it almost impossible to learn in later life.

Now on the evening after her first communion, when Ursule came back to her guardian and found him alone for that day, she set the backgammon board in front of the old man.

"Now whose throw will it be?" said she.

"Ursule," said the doctor, "is it not sinful to make game of your godfather on the very day of your first communion?"

"I am not making game," said she, seating herself. "I must think of your pleasure—you who are always thinking of mine. Whenever Monsieur Chaperon was pleased with me, he gave me a lesson in backgammon, and he has given me so many that I am prepared to beat you. You will not have to

put yourself to inconvenience for me. I have conquered every difficulty, not to interfere with your amusement, and I really like the rattle of the dice.”

Ursule won the game. The curé came in, taking them by surprise, and enjoyed her triumph.

Next day Minoret, who had hitherto refused to allow the girl to learn music, went to Paris, bought a piano, and made arrangements with a mistress at Fontainebleau, submitting to the annoyance which Ursule's constant practicing could not fail to cause him. One of his lost friend Jordy's phrenological prognostics proved true—the girl became an excellent musician. The doctor, proud of his god-daughter, now got an old German named Schmucke, a learned professor of music, to come from Paris once a week, and paid the cost of an art which he had at first contemned as perfectly useless in home life. Unbelievers do not love music, that heavenly language worked out by Catholicism, which found the names of the seven notes in one of its hymns. Each note is called by the first syllable of the seven first lines of the hymn to St. John.

The impression produced on the old man by Ursule's first communion, though vivid, was transient. The calm contentment which acts of resolution and prayer diffused in her young soul were also examples of which he took no account. Minoret, having no subjects for remorse or repentance, enjoyed perfect serenity of mind. Doing all his acts of benevolence without any hope of an eternal harvest, he thought himself superior to the Catholic, who, as he always said, was merely making a profitable bargain with God.

“And yet,” the Abbé Chaperon would say, “if all men went in for this business, you must admit that society might be perfect. There would be no more misery. To be benevolent on your lines, a man must be a great philosopher. You raise yourself to your principles by reason—you are a social exception; now you need only be a Christian to be benevolent on ours. With you it is an effort; with us it is natural.”

“Which is as much as to say, curé, that I think and you feel. That is all.”

Meanwhile, having reached the age of twelve, Ursule, whose womanly tact and shrewdness were brought into play by a superior education, and whose sense, now in its blossom, was enlightened by a religious spirit, fully understood that her godfather believed not in a future life, nor in the immortality of the soul, nor in Providence, nor in God. The doctor, pressed by her innocent questioning, found it impossible any longer to hide the terrible secret. Ursule's naïve consternation at first made him smile; but then, seeing that she was sometimes sad, he understood how great an affection this dejection revealed. Unqualified love has a horror of every kind of discord, even in things which have no connection with itself. The old man would sometimes lend himself, as to a caress, to the arguments of his adopted child, spoken in a gentle and tender voice, and the outcome of the most pure and ardent feeling. But believers and unbelievers speak two different languages, and cannot understand each other. The young girl in pleading the cause of God was hard upon her godfather, as a spoilt child is sometimes hard upon its mother.

The curé gently reproved her, telling her that God reserved to Himself the power of humbling such proud spirits. The young girl answered the abbé by saying that David slew Goliath. These religious differences, these sorrows of the child who longed to lead her guardian to God, were the only griefs of their home-life, so simple and so full, and hidden from the gaze of the inquisitive little town.

Ursule grew up and developed into the modest, Christianly trained maiden whom Désiré had admired as she came out of church. The culture of the flowers in the garden, music, amusing her guardian and all the attentions she paid him—for Ursule had relieved La Bougival by taking care of the old man—all filled up the hours, days, and months of this tranquil

existence. For a year past, indeed, some little ailments of Ursule's had made the doctor anxious; but they did not disturb him beyond making him watchful of her health. Meanwhile, however, the sagacious observer and experienced practitioner fancied he could discern that to her physical disorders there was some corresponding disturbance in her mind. He watched her with a mother's eye, but, seeing no one in their circle worthy to inspire her with love, he made himself easy.

Under these circumstances, just a month before the day when this drama had its beginning, an event occurred in the doctor's intellectual life—one of those incidents which plough into the subsoil, so to speak, of our convictions, and turn up its very depths. But it will first be necessary to give a brief account of some facts of his medical career, which will also lend fresh interest to this narrative.

At the end of the eighteenth century science was as deeply rent by the apparition of Mesmer as art was by that of Gluck. After his rediscovery of magnetism, Mesmer came to France, whither from time immemorial inventors have resorted to find protection for their discoveries. France, thanks to the lucidity of her language, is as it were the trumpeter of the world.

“If homœopathy gets to Paris, it is safe!” said Hahnemann.

“Go to France,” said Metternich to Gall, “and if they laugh at your ‘bumps,’ you are a made man.”

Mesmer, then, had his disciples and his antagonists, as ardent as the Piccinists against the Gluckists. Scientific France was stirred, and a serious debate was set on foot. Until judgment should be pronounced, the faculty of medicine, in a body, proscribed what they called Mesmer's quackery, his tub, his conducting wires, and his theories. But it must be said that the German compromised his splendid dis-

covery by preposterous pecuniary demands. Mesmer failed through unproven facts, through his ignorance of the part played in nature by imponderable fluids not as yet investigated, and through his inability to study all sides of a science which has three aspects. Magnetism has more applications; in Mesmer's hands it was in relation to its future development what a principle is to results. But though the discoverer lacked genius, it is sad for human reason and for France to have to own that a science contemporaneous with the earliest civilization, cultivated in Egypt and Chaldea, in Greece and in India, met in Paris at the high-tide of the eighteenth century with the same fate as the truth embodied in Galileo in the sixteenth; and that magnetism was put out of court by the twofold attainder of religious believers and of materialist philosophers, both equally alarmed. Magnetism, the favorite science of Jesus, and one of the powers conferred on the apostles, seems to have been as little recognized by the church as by the followers of Jean-Jacques and Voltaire, of Locke and Condillac. Neither the encyclopedia nor the priesthood could come to terms with this ancient human force which seemed to them so novel. The miracles of the *convulsionnaires* were smothered by the church and by the indifference of the learned, in spite of the valuable works of Carré de Montgeron; still, they were the first summons to make experiments on the fluids in the human body which supply the power of calling up enough spontaneous forces to nullify the pain caused by an external agency. But it would have necessitated the recognition of fluids that are intangible, invisible, and imponderable, the three negations which science at that time regarded as the definition of a vacuum.

To modern science a vacuum is impossible. Given ten feet of vacuum, and the world is in ruins! To materialists especially the world is absolutely full, everything is closely linked and connected, and acts mechanically.

“The world,” said Diderot, “as a result of mere change

is more intelligible than God. The multiplicity of causes, and the immeasurable number of throws that chance presupposes, sufficiently account for creation. Given the 'Æneid' and all the letters necessary to set it up, if you grant me time and space, by dint of tossing the letters, I should bring out the combination forming the 'Æneid.''' These wretched men, who would deify everything rather than confess a God, shrank no less from the infinite divisibility of matter which is implied in the nature of an imponderable force. Locke and Condillac at that time delayed by fifty years the immense advance which natural science is now making under the conception of unity which we owe to the great Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire.

Some honest minds, devoid of system, convinced by the facts they had conscientiously studied, persisted in holding the doctrine of Mesmer, who discerned the existence in man of a penetrating influence, giving one individual power over another, and brought into play by the will; an influence which is curative when the fluid is abundant, and which acts as a duel between two wills—the evil to be cured and the will to cure it. The phenomena of somnambulism, hardly suspected by Mesmer, were detected by MM. de Puységur and Deleuze; but the Revolution brought a pause in these discoveries, which left the men of learning and the scoffers in possession of the field.

Among the small number of believers were some physicians; these seceders were persecuted by their brethren till the day of their death. The respectable faculty of doctors in Paris turned against the Mesmerists with all the rigor of a religious warfare, and were as cruel in their hatred as it was possible to be in a period of Voltairean tolerance. The orthodox physicians refused to meet in consultation with those who adhered to the Mesmerian heresy. In 1820, these reputed heresiarchs were still the object of this unformulated proscription. The disasters and storms of the Revolution did

not extinguish this scientific hostility. None but priests, lawyers, and physicians can hate in this way. The "gown" is always terrible. But are not ideas certain to be more implacable than things? Doctor Bouvard, a friend of Minoret, accepted the new creed, and to his dying day persisted in the scientific faith to which he sacrificed the peace of his whole life—for he was the pet aversion of the Paris faculty. Minoret, one of the bravest supporters of the encyclopedists, and the most redoubtable adversary of Deslon, Mesmer's chief disciple, since his pen had great weight in this dispute, quarreled beyond remedy with his old comrade; he did worse, he persecuted him. His behavior to Bouvard must have caused him the only repentance that can have clouded the serenity of his declining life.

Since Doctor Minoret's retirement to Nemours, the science of imponderable agents—the only name applicable to magnetism of which the phenomena ally it so closely with electricity and light—had made immense progress, in spite of the unfailing mockery of the Paris world of science. Phrenology and physiognomy, the sciences of Gall and Lavater, twins, of which one is to the other as cause to effect, demonstrated to the eyes of more than one physiologist certain traces of the intangible fluid which is the basis of the phenomena of human will, giving rise to passions and habits, to the forms of the features and of the skull. Magnetic facts too, the miracles of somnambulism, and those of divination and ecstasy, allowing us to enter into the world of spirit, were multiplying. The strange tale of the apparitions seen by Martin, a farmer, which were amply proved, and that peasant's interview with Louis XVIII.; the statements as to Swedenborg's intercourse with the dead, seriously accepted in Germany; Walter Scott's narratives of the results of second-sight; the amazing faculties displayed by some fortune-tellers, who combined into one science chiromancy, card-reading, and horoscopy; the facts of catalepsy, and of the peculiar action of the diaphragm

under certain morbid influences ; all these phenomena, curious, to say the least, and all emanating from the same source, undermined much doubt, and led the most indifferent into the province of experiment. Minoret knew nothing of this movement of mind, vast in Northern Europe, though still small in France, where, nevertheless, certain facts occurred which superficial observers called marvelous, but which fell like stones to the bottom of the sea in the whirlpool of events in Paris.

At the beginning of this year the anti-mesmerist was greatly disturbed by receiving the following letter :

“ MY OLD COMRADE :—Every friendship, even a lost friendship, has rights which it is not easy to set aside. I know that you are still alive, and I remember less of our hostilities than of our happy days in the little dens of Saint-Julien-le-pauvre. Now that I am about to quit this world, I cling to a hope of proving to you that magnetism is destined to be one of the most important of sciences—unless, indeed all science should not be regarded as *one*. I can wreck your incredulity by positive proofs. Perhaps I may gain from your curiosity the happiness of once more clasping your hand as we used to clasp hands before the days of Mesmer. Always yours,

“ BOUVARD.”

The anti-mesmerist, stung as a lion by a gadfly, rushed off to Paris and left his card on old Bouvard, who lived in the Rue Férou, near Saint Sulpice. Bouvard sent a card to his hotel, writing on it, “ To-morrow at nine o’clock, Rue St. Honoré, opposite the Church of the Assumption.”

Minoret, grown young again, did not sleep. He went to call on the old physicians of his acquaintance, and asked them if the world were turned upside down, if there were still a school of medicine, and if the four faculties still existed. The doctors reassured him by telling him that the old spirit

of resistance still survived ; only, instead of persecuting the new science, the academies of medicine and of sciences roared with laughter, and classed magnetic demonstrations with the tricks of Comus, Comte, and Bosco, as jugglery, sleight-of-hand, and what is known as amusing physics.

These speeches did not hinder Minoret from going to the rendezvous appointed by old Bouvard. After forty-four years of alienation the antagonists met again under a courtyard gate in the Rue St. Honoré.

Frenchmen live in too constant a change to hate each other very long. In Paris, especially, events expand space and make life so wide—in politics, in science, and in literature—that men cannot fail to find countries in it to conquer where their demands find room to dwell and rule. Hatred requires so many forces always in arms that those who mean to hate persistently begin with a good supply. And then, only bodies of men can bear it in mind. At the end of forty-four years Robespierre and Danton would fall on each other's neck.

Neither of the two doctors, however, offered to shake hands. Bouvard was the first to say to Minoret (with the familiar *tu* of French good-fellowship)—

“ You are looking very well.”

“ Yes, not so badly ; and you ? ” said Minoret, the ice being broken.

“ I—as you see me.”

“ Has magnetism kept you from dying ? ” asked Minoret in a bantering tone, but not bitterly.

“ No ; but it has almost kept me from living.”

“ You are not rich then ? ” said Minoret.

“ Rich ? ” said Bouvard.

“ Well, but I am rich ! ” cried Minoret.

“ It is not your fortune, but your conviction, that I aim at. Come,” replied Bouvard.

“ Obstinate fellow ! ” exclaimed Minoret.

The believer in Mesmer led his incredulous friend into a

dark stairway, and made him mount cautiously to the fourth floor.

At this time there was in Paris an extraordinary man endowed by faith with stupendous powers, and a master of magnetic forces in every form of their application. Not only did this great unknown, who is still living, cure unaided, and at any distance, the most painful and inveterate diseases—cure them suddenly and radically, as of old did the Redeemer of man—but he also could produce at any moment the most curious phenomena of somnambulism by quelling the most refractory wills. The countenance of the unknown, who, like Swedenborg, declares himself to be commissioned by God and in communion with the angels, is that of a lion; it is radiant with concentrated and irresistible energy. His features, of a singular cast, have a terrible and overwhelming power; his voice, coming from the depths of his being, seems charged with magnetic fluid, and enters the listener by every pore.

Disgusted with the ingratitude of the public after thousands of cures, he had thrown himself into unapproachable solitude, voluntary annihilation. His all-powerful hand, which has restored dying daughters to their mothers, fathers to their weeping children, adored mistresses to lovers crazed with love; which has cured the sick when physicians have given them over, and caused thanksgivings to be sung in the synagogue, in the conventicle, and in the church by priests of different creeds, all brought to the same God by the same miracle; which has mitigated the agony of death to those for whom life was no longer possible—that sovereign hand, the sun of life which dazzled the closed eyes of the sleep-walker, he now would not lift to restore the heir of a kingdom to a queen. Wrapped in the memory of the good he has done as in a luminous shroud he has shut his door on the world, and dwells in the skies.

But, in the early days of his reign, almost startled by his

own powers, this man, whose disinterestedness was as great as his influence, allowed a few inquirers to witness his miracles. The rumor of his fame, which had been immense, and which might revive any day, aroused Doctor Bouvard on the brink of the tomb. The persecuted believer in Mesmer could at last behold the most brilliant manifestation of the science he cherished, like a treasure, in his heart. The old man's misfortunes had touched the great unknown, who granted him certain privileges. So Bouvard, as they climbed the stairs, took his old adversary's banter with malicious satisfaction. He made no reply but, "You will see, you will see," with the little tosses of the head that mark a man sure of his case.

The two doctors entered a suite of rooms of the plainest simplicity. Bouvard went to speak with the master for a moment in a bedroom adjoining the drawing-room, where he left Minoret, whose distrust was now aroused. But Bouvard immediately came back, and led him into the bedroom, where he found the famous Swedenborgian with a woman seated in an armchair. The woman did not rise, and seemed not to observe the arrival of the two old men.

"What, no tub?" said Minoret, with a smile.

"Nothing but the power of God," gravely replied the Swedenborgian, whom Minoret supposed to be a man of about fifty.

The three men sat down, and the stranger made conversation. They spoke of the weather and indifferent matters, to old Minoret's great surprise; he fancied he was being fooled. The Swedenborgian questioned his visitor as to his scientific views, and was evidently taking time to study him.

"You have come here out of pure curiosity, monsieur," he said at length. "I am not in the habit of prostituting a power which, it is my full conviction, emanates from God; if I made a frivolous or evil use of it, it might be taken from me. However, Monsieur Bouvard tells me our aim is to be the conversion of an opinion antagonistic to ours, and the

enlightenment of a man of learning and good faith. I shall therefore satisfy you. The woman, you see there," he went on, pointing to the armchair, "is in a magnetic sleep. From the accounts and revelations of all such somnambulists, the state is one of great beatitude, during which the inner being, set free from the fetters by which visible nature hinders the full exercise of its faculties, wanders through the world which we erroneously call invisible. Sight and hearing are then far more perfectly active than in the state which we call being awake, and independent, perhaps, of the medium of those organs which are but as a sheath to the blades of light that we call sight and hearing. To a man in that condition distance and material obstacles have ceased to exist, or are pierced through by an internal vitality of which our body is the container, the necessary fulcrum, a mere wrapper. Terms are lacking for results so recently rediscovered; for the words imponderable, intangible, invisible have no meaning in relation to the fluid whose action is perceptible through magnetism. Light is ponderable by heat, which, when it penetrates a body, increases its volume; and electricity is only too tangible. We have passed judgment on things instead of blaming the imperfection of our instruments."

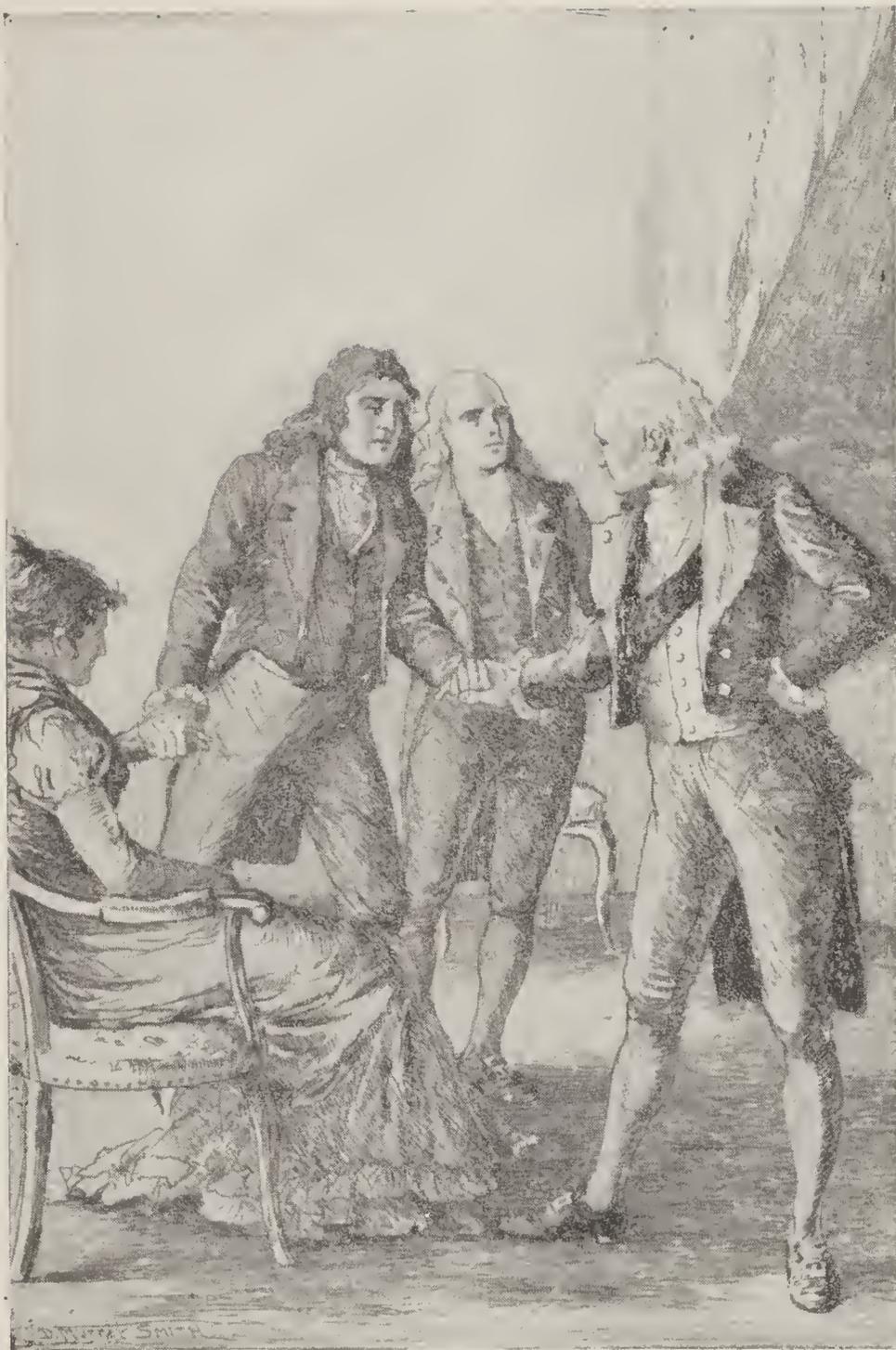
"She is asleep?" asked Minoret, examining the woman, who seemed to him of the lower class.

"Her body is in a certain sense annihilated," replied the Swedenborgian. "Ignorant persons mistake this state for sleep. But she will prove to you that there is a spiritual world, where the spirit does not obey the laws of the physical universe. I will send her to any region whither you may choose that she shall go, twenty leagues away, or as far as China; she will tell you what is happening there."

"Send her only to my house at Nemours," replied Minoret.

"I will not interfere between you," said the mysterious man. "Give me your hand; you shall be at once actor and spectator, cause and effect."





HE TOOK MINORET'S HAND—AND WITH HIS OTHER HAND  
HE TOOK THAT OF THE WOMAN IN THE CHAIR.



He took Minoret's hand, Minoret yielding ; he held it for a minute with an apparent concentration of thought, and with his other hand he took that of the woman in the chair ; then he placed the doctor's hand in the woman's, signing to the old skeptic to sit down by the side of this Pythoness without a tripod. Minoret observed a slight thrill in the excessively calm face of the woman when the Swedenborgian placed them in contact ; but the movement, though marvelous in its results, was in itself extremely simple.

"Obey this gentleman," said the unknown, extending his hand over the head of the woman, who seemed to inhale light and life from him. "And remember that all you do for him will please me. Now, you can speak to her," he said to Minoret.

"Go to Nemours, Rue des Bourgeois, to my house," said the doctor.

"Give her time ; hold her hand till she shows by what she says that she is there," said Bouvard to his old friend.

"I see a river," replied the woman in a low voice, and seeming to be looking attentively within herself, in spite of her closed eyes. "I see a pretty garden."

"Why have you begun by the river and the garden?" asked Minoret.

"Because they are in the garden."

"Who?"

"The young lady and her nurse, of whom you are thinking."

"What is the garden like?" asked Minoret.

"As you go into it by the steps that lead to the river there is a long gallery to the right, built of brick, in which I see books, and at the end there is a little gazebo trimmed up with wooden bells and red eggs. The wall on the left is covered with creepers—Virginia creeper and yellow jasmine. There is a little sun-dial in the middle ; there are a great many pots of flowers. Your ward is looking at the flowers and showing

them to her nurse; she makes holes with a dibble and sows some seeds. The nurse is raking the path. Though the girl is as pure as an angel, there is a dawning of love in her, as faint as the first light of morning."

"For whom?" asked the doctor, who had so far heard nothing that any one might not have told him without being a clairvoyant. He still believed it was a trick.

"You know nothing of it, though you were somewhat anxious not long since as she grew up," said the woman, smiling. "The instincts of her heart followed the development of her nature."

"And it is quite a common woman who speaks thus?" exclaimed the old doctor.

"In this state they all speak with peculiar lucidity," replied Bouvard.

"But who is it that Ursule loves?"

"Ursule does not know that she is in love," answered the woman, with a little shake of her head. "She is too angelically innocent to be conscious of desire, or of love in any kind; but she wonders over him, she thinks of him; she even forbids herself to do so, and returns in spite of her determination to avoid it. Now she is at the piano——"

"But who is he?"

"The son of the lady who lives opposite."

"Madame de Portenduère?"

"Portenduère, did you say?" replied the clairvoyant.

"I daresay. But there is no danger; he is not at home?"

"Have they ever spoken to each other?"

"Never. They have looked at each other. She thinks him charming. And he really is very good-looking, and he has a good heart. She has watched him out of her window, and they have seen each other at church; but the young man thinks no more about it."

"What is his name?"

"I cannot tell you unless I should read it or hear it——"

His name is Savinien ; she has just spoken it ; she likes the sound of it ; she had looked in the calendar for his saint's day, and had marked it with a tiny red spot. Childish ! Oh, she will love very truly, and with a love as pure as it is strong. She is not the girl to love twice ; love will color her whole soul, and fill it so completely, that she will reject every other feeling."

"Where do you see that?"

"I see it in her. She will know how to bear suffering ; she has inherited that power, for her father and mother suffered much."

The last words overset the doctor, who was surprised rather than shaken. It is desirable to note that ten or fifteen minutes passed between each of the woman's statements ; during these her attention became more and more self-centred. He could see that she saw ! Her brow showed peculiar changes ; internal effort was to be seen there ; it cleared or was knit by a power whose effects Minoret had never seen but in dying people at the moment when the prophetic spirit is upon them. She not unfrequently made gestures reminding him of Ursule.

"Oh, question her," said the mysterious master to Minoret. "She will tell you secrets that none but yourself can know."

"Does Ursule love me?" said Minoret.

"Almost as she loves God," replied the sleeper, with a smile. "And she is very unhappy about your infidelity. You do not believe in God, as if you could hinder His being ! His voice fills the world ! And so you are the cause of the poor child's only distress. There ! she is playing her scales ; she wishes to be a better musician than she is, and is vexed with herself. What she thinks is : ' If I only could sing well, if I had a fine voice, when he was at his mother's it would be sure to reach his ears ! '

Doctor Minoret took out a note-book and wrote down the exact hour.

"Can you tell me what seeds she has sown?"

“ Mignonette, sweet peas, balsams——”

“ And lastly ? ”

“ Larkspur.”

“ Where is my money ? ”

“ At your lawyer’s ; but you invest as it comes in without losing a day’s interest.”

“ Yes ; but where is the money I keep at home for the half-yearly housekeeping ? ”

“ You keep it in a large book bound in red, called ‘ The Pandects of Justinian,’ vol. ii., between the two last pages ; the book is above the sideboard with glass doors, in the division for folios. There is a whole row of them. The money is in the last volume at the end next the drawing-room. By the way, vol. iii. is placed before vol. ii. But it is not money—it is in——”

“ Thousand franc notes ? ” asked the doctor.

“ I cannot see clearly ; they are folded up. No, there are two notes for five hundred francs each.”

“ You can see them ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What are they like ? ”

“ One is old, and very yellow ; the other is white, and almost new.”

This last part of the interview left Doctor Minoret thunder-struck. He looked at Bouvard in blank amazement ; but Bouvard and the Swedenborgian, who were accustomed to the astonishment of skeptics, were conversing in an undertone, without showing any surprise or amazement.

Minoret begged them to allow him to return after dinner. The anti-mesmerist wanted to think it over, to shake off his extreme terror, so as to test once more this immense power, to submit it to some decisive experiment, and ask some questions which, if answered, could leave no shadow of a doubt.

“ Be here by nine o’clock,” said the unknown. “ I shall be at your service.”

Minoret was so violently agitated that he went away without taking leave, followed by Bouvard, who called after him—

“ Well? Well? ”

“ I believe I am mad, ” replied Minoret, as they reached the outer door. “ If that woman has told the truth about Ursule, as there is no one on earth but Ursule who can know what the sorceress has revealed—*you are right*. I only wish I had wings to fly to Nemours and verify her statements. But I will hire a post-chaise and start at ten this evening. Oh! I am going crazy! ”

“ What would you think, then, if you had known a man incurable for years made perfectly well in five seconds; if you could see that great magnetizer make a leper sweat profusely; or make a crippled woman walk? ”

“ Let us dine together, Bouvard, and stay with me till nine o'clock. I want to devise some decisive and irrefutable test. ”

“ Certainly, old friend, ” replied the Mesmerian doctor.

The reconciled enemies went to dine at the Palais Royal. After an eager conversation, which helped Minoret to escape from the turmoil of ideas that racked his brain, Bouvard said to him—

“ If you discern in this woman a real power to annihilate space, if you can but convince yourself that she, here, from the Church of the Assumption, can see and hear what is going on at Nemours, you must then admit all other effects of magnetism; they are to a skeptic quite as impossible as these. Ask her, therefore, one single proof that may satisfy you, for you may imagine that we have procured all this information. But we cannot possibly know, for instance, what will happen this evening at nine o'clock in your house, in your ward's bedroom. Remember or write down exactly what the clairvoyant may tell you, and hasten home. Little Ursule, whom I never saw, is not our accomplice; and, if she shall have done or said what you will have written down, bow thy head, proud infidel! ”

The two friends returned to the Swedenborgian's rooms, and there found the woman, who did not recognize Doctor Minoret. Her eyes gently closed under the hand which the master stretched out to her from afar, and she sank into the attitude in which Minoret had seen her before dinner. When his hand and hers were placed in connection he desired her to tell him all that was happening in his house at Nemours at that moment.

“What is Ursule doing?” he asked.

“She is in her dressing-gown; she has finished putting in her curl-papers; she is kneeling on her prie-Dieu in front of an ivory crucifix fastened on to a panel of red velvet.”

“What is she saying?”

“Her evening prayers; she commends herself to God; she beseeches Him to keep her soul free from evil thoughts; she examines her conscience, going over all she has done during the day to see whether she has failed in obedience to His commandments or those of the church; she is stripping her heart bare, poor dear little thing.” There were tears in the clairvoyant's eyes. “She has committed no sin; but she blames herself for having thought too much of Monsieur Savinien,” she went on. “She stops to wonder what he is doing in Paris, and prays to God to make him happy. She ends with you, and says a prayer aloud.”

“Can you repeat it?”

“Yes.”

Minoret took out his pencil and wrote at the woman's dictation the following prayer, evidently composed by the Abbé Chaperon—

“‘O God, if Thou art pleased with Thy handmaid, who adores Thee and beseeches Thee with all love and fervor, who strives not to wander from Thy holy commandments, who would gladly die, as Thy Son died, to glorify Thy name, who would fain live under Thy shadow, Thou to whom all hearts are open, grant me the mercy that my godfather's eyes

may be unsealed, lead him into the way of life, and give him Thy grace, that he may dwell in Thee during his latter days; preserve him from all ill, and let me suffer in his stead! Holy Saint Ursule, my beloved patron saint, and thou, mother of God, queen of heaven, archangels, and saints in paradise, hear me; join your intercessions to mine, and have pity on us! ” ”

The clairvoyant so exactly imitated the child's innocent gestures and saintly aspirations that Doctor Minoret's eyes filled with tears.

“ Does she say anything more ? ” he asked.

“ Yes. ”

“ Repeat it. ”

“ ‘ Dear godfather! Whom will he play backgammon with in Paris ? ’ She has blown out her light, lays down her head, and goes to sleep. She is gone off! She looks so pretty in her little night-cap ! ”

Minoret took leave of the great unknown, shook hands with Bouvard, ran downstairs, and hurried off to a stand of coaches, which at that time existed under the gateway of a mansion since demolished to make way for the Rue d'Alger. He there found a driver, and asked him if he would set out forthwith for Fontainebleau. The price having been agreed on, the old man, made young again, set out that very minute. As agreed, he let the horse rest at Essonne, then drove on till they picked up the Nemours diligence, and dismissed his coachman.

He reached home by about five in the morning, and went to bed amid the wreck of all his former notions of physiology, of nature, and of metaphysics; and he slept till nine, he was so tired by his expedition.

On waking, the doctor, quite sure that no one had crossed the threshold since his return, proceeded to verify the facts, not without an invincible dread. He himself had forgotten the difference between the two bank-notes, and the displace-

ment of the two volumes of "The Pandects." The somnambulist had seen rightly. He rang for La Bougival.

"Tell Ursule to come to speak to me," said he, sitting down in the middle of the library.

The girl came at once, flew to his side, and kissed him; the doctor took her on his knee, where, as she sat, her fine fair tresses mingled with her godfather's white hair.

"You have something to say to me, godfather?"

"Yes. But promise me, on your soul, to reply frankly, unequivocally, to my questions."

Ursule blushed to the roots of her hair.

"Oh! I will ask you nothing that you cannot answer," he went on, seeing the bashfulness of first love clouding the hitherto childlike clearness of her lovely eyes.

"Speak, godfather."

"With what thought did you end your evening prayers last night; and at what hour did you say them?"

"It was a quarter-past nine, or half-past."

"Well, repeat now your last prayer."

The young girl hoped that her voice might communicate her faith to the unbeliever; she rose, knelt down, and clasped her hands fervently; a radiant look beamed in her face, she glanced at the old man, and said—

"What I asked of God last night I prayed for again this morning, and shall still ask till He grants it me."

Then she repeated the prayer with fresh and emphatic expression; but, to her great surprise, her godfather interrupted her, ending it himself.

"Well, Ursule," said the doctor, drawing her on to his knees again, "and as you went to sleep with your head on the pillow, did you not say, 'Dear godfather! Whom will he play backgammon with in Paris?'"

Ursule started to her feet as though the trump of judgment had sounded in her ears; she gave a cry of terror; her dilated eyes stared at the old man with fixed horror.

“Who are you, godfather? Where did you get such a power?” she asked, fancying that as he did not believe in God, he must have made a compact with the angel of hell.

“What did you sow in the garden yesterday?”

“Mignonette, sweet peas, balsams——”

“And larkspurs to end with?”

She fell on her knees.

“Do not terrify me, godfather! But you were here, were you not?”

“Am I not always with you?” replied the doctor in jest, to spare the innocent child’s reason.

“Let us go to your room.” Then he gave her his arm and went upstairs.

“Your knees are quaking, godfather,” said she.

“Yes; I feel quite overset.”

“Do you at last believe in God?” she exclaimed, with innocent gladness, though the tears rose to her eyes.

The old man looked round the neat and simple room he had arranged for Ursule. On the floor was an inexpensive green drugget, which she kept exquisitely clean; on the walls a paper with a pale-gray ground and a pattern of roses with their green leaves; there were white cotton curtains, with a pink border, to the windows looking on the courtyard; between the windows, below a tall mirror, a console of gilt wood with a marble slab, on which stood a blue Sèvres vase for flowers; and opposite the fireplace a pretty inlaid chest of drawers with a top of fine marble. The bed, furnished with old chintz, and chintz curtains lined with pink, was one of the old *duchesse* four-post beds which were common in the eighteenth century, ornamented with a capital of carved feathers to each of the fluted columns at the corners. On the chimney-shelf was an old clock, mounted in a sort of catafalque of tortoise-shell inlaid with ivory; the marble chimney-piece and candelabra, the glass, and the pier, painted in shades of gray, had a remarkably good effect of tone, color,

and style. A large wardrobe, the doors inlaid with landscapes in various kinds of wood, some of them of greenish tint, hardly to be met with in these days, no doubt contained her linen and her dresses.

The atmosphere of this room had a fragrance as of heaven. The careful arrangement of everything indicated a spirit of order, a feeling for the harmony of things, that would have struck any one, even a Minoret-Levrault. It was, above all, easy to see how dear to Ursule were the things about her, and how fond she was of the room which was, so to speak, part of all her life as a child and a young girl.

While looking round at it all as an excuse, the guardian convinced himself that from her window Ursule could see across to Madame de Portenduère's house. During the night he had considered the line of conduct to be taken with regard to the secret he had discovered of her budding passion. To question his ward would compromise him in her eyes; for either he must approve or disapprove of her love; in either case he would be awkwardly situated. He had therefore determined that he would study for himself the relations of young Portenduère and Ursule, to decide whether he should try to counteract her inclination before it had become irresistible. Only an old man could show so much prudence. Still gasping under the shock of finding the magnetic revelations true, he turned about, examining the smallest things in the room, for he wished to glance at the almanac which hung by a corner of the chimney-piece.

"These clumsy candlesticks are too heavy for your pretty little hands," he said, taking up the marble candlesticks, ornamented with brass.

He weighed them in his hands, looked at the almanac, unhooked it, and said—

"This, too, seems to me very ugly. Why do you hang this common calendar in such a pretty room?"

"Oh, leave me that, godfather!"

“No, no; you shall have another to-morrow.”

He went downstairs again, carrying away the convicting document, shut himself into his room, looked for Saint Savinien, and found, as the clairvoyant had said, a small red dot at the 19th of October; he found such another at Saint Denis' day, his own patron saint; and at Saint John's day—that of the curé. And this dot, as large as a pin's head, the sleeping woman had discerned in spite of distance and obstacles. The old man meditated till dusk on all these facts, more stupendous to him than to any other man. He was forced to yield to evidence. A thick wall, within himself, as it were, crumbled down; for he had lived on the double foundation of his indifference to religion and his denial of magnetism. By proving that the senses—a purely physical structure, mere organs whose effects can all be explained—were conterminous with some of the attributes of infinity, magnetism overthrew, or at any rate seemed to him to overthrow, Spinoza's powerful logic: The finite and the infinite, two elements which, according to that great man, are incompatible, existed one in the other. However great the power he could conceive of the divisibility and mobility of matter, he could not credit it with almost divine characters. And he was too old to connect these phenomena with a system, to compare them with those of sleep, of vision, or of light. All his scientific theory, based on the statements of the school of Locke and Condillac, lay in ruins. On seeing his hollow idols wrecked, his incredulity naturally was shaken. Hence all the advantages in this struggle between Catholic youth and Voltairean old age was certain to be on Ursule's side. A beam of light fell on the dismantled fortress in ruins; from the depths of the wreckage rose the cry of prayer.

And yet the stiff-necked old man tried to dispute his own doubts. Though stricken to the heart, he could not make up his mind; he still strove with God. At the same time his mind seemed to vacillate; he was not the same man. He

became unnaturally pensive; he read the "Pensées" of Pascal, Bossuet's sublime "Histoire des Variations;" he studied Bonald; he read Saint Augustine; he also read through the works of Swedenborg and of the deceased Saint-Martin, of whom the mysterious stranger had spoken. The structure raised in this man by materialism was splitting on all sides; a shock alone was needed; and when his heart was ripe for God, it fell into the heavenly vineyard as fruits drop. Several times already in the evening, when playing his game with the priest, his goddaughter sitting by, he had asked questions which, in view of his opinions, struck the Abbé Chaperon as strange; for as yet he knew not of the moral travail by which God was rectifying this noble conscience.

"Do you believe in apparitions?" the infidel suddenly asked his pastor, pausing in his game.

"Cardain, a great philosopher of the sixteenth century, said that he had seen some," replied the curé.

"I know of all those that the philosophers have seen; I have just re-read Plotinus. At this moment I ask you as a Catholic: I want to know whether you think that a dead man can return to visit the living."

"Well, Jesus appeared to His apostles after His death," replied the priest. "The church must believe in the apparition of our Lord. As to miracles, there is no lack of them," added the Abbé Chaperon with a smile. "Would you like to hear of the latest? Some were wrought in the eighteenth century."

"Pooh!"

"Yes; the blessed Maria-Alphonzo de Liguori knew of the pope's death when he was far from Rome, at the moment when the holy father expired, and there were many witnesses to the miracle. The reverend bishop, in a trance, heard the pontiff's last words, and repeated them to several persons. The messenger bringing the news did not arrive till thirty hours later——"

“ Jesuit ! ” said Minoret with a smile ; “ I do not ask you for proofs ; I ask you whether you believe it. ”

“ I believe that the apparition depends greatly on the person seeing it, ” said the curé, still laughing at the skeptic.

“ My dear friend, I am not laying a trap for you. What is your belief on this point ? ”

“ I believe that the power of God is infinite, ” replied the abbé.

“ When I die, if I am at peace with God, I will entreat Him to let me appear to you, ” said the doctor, laughing.

“ That is precisely the agreement made by Cardan with his friend, ” replied the curé.

“ Ursule, ” said Minoret, “ if ever a danger should threaten you, call me—I would come. ”

“ You have just put into simple words the touching elegy called ‘ Néère, ’ by André Chénier, ” replied the curé. “ But poets are great only because they know how to embody facts or feelings in perennially living forms. ”

“ Why do you talk of dying, my dear godfather ? ” said the young girl sadly. “ We shall not die, we who are Christians ; the grave is but the cradle of the soul. ”

“ Well, well, ” said the doctor with a smile, “ we are bound to quit this world ; and when I am no more, you will be very much astonished at your fortune. ”

“ When you are no more, my kind godfather, my only consolation will be to devote my life to you. ”

“ To me—when I am dead ? ”

“ Yes. All the good works I may be able to do shall be done in your name to redeem your errors. I will pray to God day by day to persuade His infinite mercy not to punish eternally the faults of a day, but to give a place near to Himself among the spirits of the blest to a soul so noble and so pure as yours. ”

This reply, spoken with angelic candor and in a tone of absolute conviction, confounded error and converted Doctor

Minoret like another Saint Paul. A flash of internal light stunned him, and at the same time this tenderness, extending even to the life to come, brought tears to his eyes. This sudden effect of grace was almost electrical. The curé clasped his hands and stood up in his agitation. The child herself, surprised at her success, shed tears. The old man drew himself up as though some one had called him, looked into space as if he saw an aurora; then he knelt on his armchair, folded his hands, and cast down his eyes in deep humiliation.

“Great God!” he said, in a broken voice, and looking up to heaven, “if any one can obtain my forgiveness, and lead me to Thee, is it not this spotless creature? Pardon my repentant old age, presented to Thee by this glorious child!”

He lifted up his soul in silence to God, beseeching Him to enlighten him by knowledge after having overwhelmed him by grace; then, turning to the curé, he held out his hand, saying—

“My dear father in God, I am a little child again. I am yours; I give my soul into your hands.”

Ursule kissed her godfather’s hands, covering them with tears of joy. The old man took her on his knee, gaily calling her his godmother. The curé, much moved, recited the *Veni Creator* in a sort of religious transport. This hymn was their evening prayer as the three Christians knelt together.

“What has happened?” asked La Bougival in astonishment.

“At last my godfather believes in God!” cried Ursule.

“And a good thing too; that was all that was wanting to make him perfect!” exclaimed the old peasant-woman, crossing herself with simple gravity.

“My dear doctor,” said the good priest, “you will soon have mastered the grandeur of religion and the necessity for its exercises; and you will find its philosophy, in so far as it is human, much loftier than that of the most daring minds.”

The curé, who displayed an almost childlike joy, then agreed

to instruct the old man by meeting him as a catechumen twice a week.

Thus the conversion ascribed to Ursule and to a spirit of sordid self-interest had been spontaneous. The priest, who for fourteen years had restrained himself from touching the wounds in that heart, though he had deeply deplored them, had been appealed to, as we go to a surgeon when we feel an injury. Since that scene every evening Ursule's prayers had become family prayers. Every moment the old man had felt peace growing upon him in the place of agitation. And viewing God as the responsible editor of inexplicable facts—as he put it—his mind was quite easy. His darling child told him that by this it could be seen that he was making progress in the kingdom of God.

To-day, during the service, he had just read the prayers with the exercise of his understanding; for, in his first talk with the curé, he had risen to the divine idea of the communion of the faithful. The venerable neophyte had understood the eternal symbol connected with that nourishment, which faith makes necessary as soon as the whole, deep, glorious meaning of the symbol is thoroughly felt. If he had seemed in a hurry to get home, it was to thank his dear little goddaughter for having brought him to the Lord, to use the fine old-fashioned phrase. And so he had her on his knee in his drawing-room, and was kissing her solemnly on the brow, at the very moment when his heirs, defiling her holy influence by their ignoble alarms, were lavishing on Ursule their coarsest abuse. The good man's haste to be at home, his scorn, as they thought it, for his relations, his sharp replies as he left the church, were all naturally attributed by each of the family to the hatred for them which Ursule had implanted in him.

While the girl was playing to her godfather the variations on *La dernière Pensée musicale* of Weber, a plot was being hatched in Minoret-Levrault's dining-room, which was des-

tined to bring on to the stage one of the most important actors in this drama. The breakfast, which lasted two hours, was as noisy as a provincial breakfast always is, and washed down by capital wine brought to Nemours by canal, either from Burgundy or from Touraine. Zélie had procured some shell-fish too, some sea-fish, and a few rarer dainties to do honor to Désiré's return.

The dining-room, in its midst the round table of tempting aspect, looked like an inn-room. Zélie, satisfied with the extent of her household offices, had built a large room between the vast courtyard and the kitchen-garden, which was full of vegetables and fruit-trees. Here everything was merely neat and substantial. The example set by Levrault-Levrault had been a terror to the countryside, and Zélie had forbidden the master-builder's dragging her into any such folly. The room was hung with satin paper, and furnished with plain walnut-wood chairs and sideboards, with an earthenware stove, a clock on the wall, and a barometer. Though the crockery was ordinary—plain white china—the table shone with linen and abundant plate.

As soon as the coffee had been served by Zélie, who hopped to and fro like a grain of shot in a bottle of champagne, for she kept but one cook; and when Désiré, the budding lawyer, had been fully apprised of the great event of the morning and its results, Zélie shut the door, and the notary Dionis was called upon to speak. The silence that fell, the looks fixed by each expectant heir on that authoritative face, plainly showed how great is the influence exercised by these men over whole families.

“My dear children,” he began, “your uncle, having been born in 1746, is at this day eighty-three years old; now old men are liable to fits of folly, and this little——”

“Viper!” exclaimed Madame Massin.

“Wretch!” said Zélie.

“We will only call her by her name,” said Dionis.

“Well, then, a thief,” said Madame Crémère.

“A very pretty thief,” added Désiré Minoret.

“This little Ursule,” Dionis went on, “is very dear to him. I have not waited till this morning to make inquiries in the interest of you all as my clients, and this is what I have learned concerning this young——”

“Spoiler!” put in the tax-collector.

“Underhand fortune-hunter,” said the lawyer’s clerk.

“Hush, my friends, or I shall put on my hat and go, and good-day to you.”

“Come, come, old man!” said Minoret, pouring him out a liqueur glassful of rum. “Drink that; it comes from Rome, direct.”

“Ursule is no doubt Joseph Mirouët’s legitimate offspring. But her father was the natural son of Valentin Mirouët, your uncle’s father-in-law. Thus Ursule is the natural niece of Doctor Denis Minoret. As his natural niece, any will the doctor may make in her favor may perhaps be void, and if he should leave her his fortune, you may bring a lawsuit against her; this might be bad enough for you, for it is impossible to say that there is no tie of relationship between the doctor and Ursule; still, a lawsuit would certainly frighten a defenseless girl, and would result in a compromise.”

“The law is so rigorous as to the rights of natural children,” said the newly-hatched lawyer, eager to display his learning, “that by the terms of a judgment of the Court of Appeals of July 7, 1817, a natural child can claim nothing from its natural grandfather, not even maintenance. So, you see, that the parentage of a natural child carries back. The law is against a natural child, even in his legitimate descendants; for it regards any legacies benefiting the grandchildren as bestowed through the personal intermediary of the natural son, their parent. This is the inference from a comparison of Articles 757, 908, and 911 of the Civil Code. And, in fact, the Royal Court of Paris, on the 26th of December, only last year,

reduced a legacy bequeathed to the legitimate child of a natural son by its grandfather, who, as its grandfather, was as much a stranger in blood to his natural grandson as the doctor is to Ursule as her uncle."

"All that," said Goupil, "seems to me to relate only to the question of bequests made by grandparents to their illegitimate descendants; it has nothing to do with uncles, who do not appear to me to have any blood relationships to the legitimate offspring of these natural half-brothers. Ursule is a stranger in blood to Doctor Minoret. I remember a judgment delivered in the Supreme Court at Colmar in 1825, when I was finishing my studies, by which it was pronounced that the illegitimate child being dead, his descendants could no longer be liable to his interposition. Now Ursule's father is dead."

Goupil's argument produced, what in reports of law cases journalists are accustomed to designate by this parenthesis: (*Great sensation*).

"What does that matter?" cried Dionis. "Even if the case of a legacy left by the uncle of an illegitimate child has never yet come before the courts, if it should occur, the rigor of the French law towards natural children will be all the more surely applied, because we live in times when religion is respected. And I will answer for it that, in such a suit, a compromise would be offered; especially if it were known that you were resolved to carry the case against Ursule even to the court of last resort."

The delight of heirs who might find piles of gold betrayed itself in smiles, little jumps, and gestures all round the table. No one observed Goupil's shake of dissent. But, then, this exultation was immediately followed by deep silence and dismay at the notary's next word—

"But——"

Dionis at once saw every eye fixed on him, every face assuming the same angle, just as if he had pulled the wire of

one of those toy theatres where all the figures move in jerks by the action of wheel-work.

“But there is no law to hinder your uncle from adopting or marrying Ursule,” he went on. “As to an adoption, it might be disputed, and you would, I believe, win the case; the high courts are not to be trifled with in the matter of adoption, and you would be examined in the preliminary inquiry. It is all very well for the doctor to display the ribbon of St. Michael, to be an officer of the Legion of Honor, and formerly physician to the ex-Emperor; he would go to the wall. But though you might be warned in case of an adoption, how are you to know if he marries her? The old fellow is quite sharp enough to get married in Paris after residing there for a year, and to secure to his bride a settlement of a million francs under the marriage contract. The only thing, therefore, which really jeopardizes your inheritance is that your uncle should marry the child.” Here the notary paused.

“There is another risk,” said Goupil, with a knowing air. “He may make a will in favor of a third person, old Bongrand for instance, who would be constituted trustee for Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët.”

“If you worry your uncle,” Dionis began again, cutting short his head clerk, “if you are not all as nice as possible to Ursule, you will drive him either into a marriage or into the trusteeship of which Goupil speaks; but I do not think he is likely to have recourse to a trust; it is a dangerous alternative. As to his marrying her, it is easy to prevent it. Désiré has only to show the girl a little attention; she will certainly prefer a charming young fellow, the cock of the walk at Nemours, to an old man.”

“Mother,” said the postmaster’s son in Zélie’s ear, tempted both by the money and by Ursule’s beauty, “if I were to marry her, we should get it all.”

“Are you mad? You who will have fifty thousand francs

a year one of these days and who are sure to be elected deputy! So long as I live you shall never hang a millstone round your neck by a foolish marriage. Seven hundred thousand francs? Thank you for nothing! Why, monsieur, the mayor's only daughter will have fifty thousand a year, and they have already made overtures."

This reply, in which, for the first time in his life, his mother spoke roughly to him, extinguished in Désiré every hope of marrying the fair Ursule, for his father and he could never gain the day against the determination written in Zélie's terrible blue eyes.

"Yes; but, I say, Monsieur Dionis," cried Crémière, whose wife had nudged his elbow, "if the old man took the matter seriously, and let his ward marry Désiré, settling on her the absolute possession of his property, good-by to our chances! And if he lives another five years, our uncle will have at least a million."

"Never," cried Zélie; "never so long as I live and breathe shall Désiré marry the daughter of a bastard, a girl taken in out of charity, picked up in the streets! What next, by heaven? At his uncle's death my son will be the representative of the Minorets; and the Minorets can show five centuries of good citizenship. It is as good as a noble pedigree. Make your minds easy. Désiré shall marry when we see what he is likely to do in the Chamber of Deputies."

This arrogant pronouncement was seconded by Goupil, who added—

"With eighty thousand francs a year, Désiré may rise to be president of a supreme court, or public prosecutor, which leads to a peerage. A foolish marriage would be the ruin of his prospects."

The heirs all began to talk at once, but they were silenced by the blow of his fist that Minoret struck on the table to enable the notary to speak on.

"Your uncle is an excellent and worthy man," said Dionis,

“He believes himself immortal; and, like all clever men, he will allow death to overtake him before he has made his will. My opinion, therefore, for the moment, is that he should be induced to invest his capital in such a way as to make it difficult to dispossess you; and the opportunity now offers. Young Portenduère is in Sainte Pélagie, locked up for a hundred and odd thousand francs of debts. His old mother knows he is in prison; she is weeping like a Magdalen, and has asked the Abbé Chaperon to dinner, to talk over the catastrophe, no doubt. Well, I shall go this evening and suggest to your uncle to sell his stock of consolidated five per cents., which are at a hundred and eighteen, and lend the sum necessary to release the prodigal to Madame du Portenduère on the farm at Bordières and her dwelling-house. I am within my rights as a notary in applying to him on behalf of that little idiot of a Portenduère, and it is quite natural that I should wish him to change his investments; I get the commission, the stamps, and the business. If I can get him to take my advice, I shall propose to him to invest the rest of his capital in real estate. I have some splendid lands for sale in my office. When once his fortune is invested in real estate or in mortgages on land in this neighborhood, it will not easily fly away. It is always easy to raise difficulties in the way of realizing the capital if he should wish to do so.”

The heirs, struck by the soundness of this logic, much more skillful than that of M. Josse, expressed themselves by approving murmurs.

“So settle it among yourselves,” added the notary, in conclusion, “to keep your uncle in this town, where he has his own ways, and where you can keep an eye on him. If you can find a lover for the girl, you will hinder her marrying.”

“But if she were to marry him?” said Goupil, urged by an ambitious instinct.

“That would not be so bad after all; your loss would be set down in plain figures, and you would know what the old

man would give her," answered the notary. "Still, if you set Désiré at her, he might easily play fast and loose with her till the old man's death. Marriages are arranged and upset again."

"The shortest way," said Goupil, "if the doctor is likely to live a long time yet, would be to get her married to some good fellow, who would take her out of the way by settling with her at Sens, or Montargis, or Orleans, with a hundred thousand francs down."

Dionis, Massin, Zélie, and Goupil, the only clear heads of the party, exchanged glances full of meaning.

"He would be a maggot in the pear," said Zélie in Massin's ear.

"Why was he allowed to come?" replied the registrar.

"That would just suit you!" exclaimed Désiré to Goupil; "but how could you ever keep yourself decent enough to please the old man and his ward?"

"You don't think small beer of yourself!" said Minoret, understanding Goupil at last.

This coarse jest was greeted with shouts of laughter. But the lawyer's clerk glared at the laughers with such a sweeping and terrible gaze that silence was immediately restored.

"In these days," Zélie whispered to Massin, "notaries think only of their own interests. What if Dionis, to get his commission, should take Ursule's side?"

"I know he is safe," replied the registrar, with a keen twinkle in his wicked little eyes; he was about to add, "I have him in my power," but he abstained, deeming it the more prudent course.

"I am entirely of Dionis' opinion," he said aloud.

"And so am I," exclaimed Zélie, though she already suspected the notary and Massin to be in collusion for their own advantage.

"My wife has given our vote," said the postmaster, sipping a glass of spirits, though his face was already purple with

digesting the meal and from a considerable consumption of wines and liqueurs.

“It is quite right,” said the tax-collector.

“Then will I call on him after dinner?” asked Dionis, good-naturedly.

“If Monsieur Dionis is right,” said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, “we ought to go to see your uncle, as we used to, every Sunday evening, and do all Monsieur Dionis has just told us.”

“Yes, indeed! To be received as we have been,” exclaimed Zélie. “After all, we have an income of over forty thousand francs; and he has refused all our invitations. We are as good as he is. I can steer my own ship, thank you, though I cannot write prescriptions!”

“As I am far from having forty thousand francs a year,” said Madame Massin, nettled, “I am not anxious to lose ten thousand!”

“We are his nieces; we will look after him; we shall see what is going on,” said Madame Crémière. “And some day, Cousin Zélie, you will be beholden to us.”

“Be civil to Ursule; old Jordy left her his savings,” said the notary, putting his right forefinger to his lip.

“I will mind my P’s and Q’s,” said Désiré.

“You were a match for Desroches, the sharpest attorney in Paris,” said Goupil to his master, as they quitted the house.

“And they dispute our bills,” remarked the notary, with a bitter smile.

The heirs, seeing out Dionis and his head clerk, found themselves at the gate, all with faces heated from the meal, just as the congregation came out from vespers. As the notary had foretold, the Abbé Chaperon had given his arm to old Madame de Portenduère.

“She has dragged him to vespers!” cried Madame Massin, pointing out to Madame Crémière Ursule coming out of the church with her uncle.

“Let us go and speak to him,” suggested Madame Crémère, going forward.

The change which the conclave had produced in all their countenances astonished Doctor Minoret. He wondered what the cause could be of this friendliness to order, and out of curiosity he favored a meeting between Ursule and these two women, who were eager to address her with exaggerated sweetness and forced smiles.

“Uncle, will you allow us to call on you this evening?” said Madame Crémère. “We sometimes think we are in the way; but it is long now since our children have paid their respects to you, and our daughters are of an age to make friends with dear Ursule.”

“Ursule justifies her name,” said the doctor; “she is not at all tame.”

“Let us tame her,” said Madame Massin. “And besides, my dear uncle,” added the prudent housewife, trying to conceal her scheming under a semblance of economy, “we have been told that your charming goddaughter has such a talent for the piano, that we should be enchanted to hear her play. Madame Crémère and I are rather inclined to have her master to teach our girls; for if he had seven or eight pupils he might fix a price for his lessons within our means——”

“By all means,” said the old man; “all the more, indeed, because I am thinking of getting a singing-master for Ursule.”

“Very well; then this evening, uncle; and we will bring your grand-nephew Désiré, who is now a full-fledged attorney.”

“Till this evening,” replied Minoret, who wished to study these mean souls.

His two nieces shook hands with Ursule, saying with affected graciousness, “Till this evening.”

“Oh, dear godfather, you can read my heart, I believe!” cried Ursule, with a grateful look at the old man.

“You have a good voice,” he said. “And I also mean to

give you drawing and Italian lessons. A woman," he added, looking at Ursule as he opened the gate of his own courtyard, "ought to be educated in such a way as to be equal to any position in which she may be placed by marriage."

Ursule blushed as red as a cherry; her guardian seemed to be thinking of the very person she herself was thinking of. Feeling herself on the point of confessing to the doctor the involuntary impulse which made her think of Savinien, and refer all her strivings after perfection to him, she went to sit under the bower of creepers, against which she looked from a distance like a white and blue flower.

"Now you see, godfather, your nieces were kind to me; they were very nice just now," said she, as he followed her, to mislead him as to the thoughts which had made her pensive.

"Poor little thing!" said the old man. He laid Ursule's hand on his arm, patting it gently, and led her along the terrace by the river, where no one could overhear them.

"Why do you say, 'Poor little thing?'"

"Can you not see that they are afraid of you?"

"But why?"

"My heirs are at this moment very uneasy about my conversion; they ascribe it, no doubt, to your influence, and fancy that I shall deprive them of their inheritance to make you the richer."

"But you will not?" said Ursule with simplicity, and looking in his face.

"Ah, divine comfort of my old age," said the old man, lifting her up, and kissing her on both cheeks. "It was for her sake and not for my own, O God, that I besought Thee just now to suffer me to live till I shall have given her into the keeping of some good man worthy of her! You will see, my angel, the farce that the Minorets and the Crémières and the Massins are going to play here. You want to prolong and beautify my life. They! they think of nothing but my death!"

“God forbids us to hate; but if that is true—oh, I scorn them!” cried Ursule.

“Dinner!” cried La Bougival, from the top of the steps which, on the garden side, were at the end of the gallery.

Ursule and the doctor were eating their dessert in the pretty dining-room, painted to imitate Chinese lacquer, which had ruined Levrault-Levrault, when the justice walked in. The doctor, as his most signal mark of intimacy, offered him a cup of his own coffee, a mixture of Mocha with Bourbon and Martinique berries, roasted, ground, and made by his own hands in a silver coffee-pot of the kind patented by Chaptal.

“Well, well,” said Bongrand, putting up his spectacles, and looking at the old man with a sly twinkle, “the town is by the ears! Your appearance at church has revolutionized your relations. You are going to leave everything to the priests and to the poor! You have stirred them up, and they are astir! Oh! I saw their first commotion on the church square; they were as fussy as a nest of ants robbed of their eggs.”

“What did I tell you, Ursule?” exclaimed the old man. “Even at the risk of grieving you, my child, am I not bound to teach you to know the world, and to put you on your guard against undeserved enmity.”

“I wanted to say a few words to you on that subject,” said Bongrand, seizing the opportunity of speaking to his old friend about Ursule’s future prospects.

The doctor put a black velvet cap on his white head, and the justice kept on his hat as a protection against the dew, and they walked together up and down the terrace, talking over the means of securing to Ursule the little fortune the doctor proposed to leave her. Bongrand knew the opinion of Dionis as to the invalidity of any will made by the doctor in Ursule’s favor, for Nemours was too inquisitive as to the Minoret inheritance for this question not to have been dis-

cussed by the wise heads of the town. He himself had decided that Ursule was an alien in blood as regarded Doctor Minoret ; but he was fully aware that the spirit of the law was adverse to the recognition of illegitimate offspring as members of the family. The framers of the Code had only anticipated the weakness of fathers and mothers for their natural children ; it had not been supposed that uncles or aunts might have such tender feelings for an illegitimate relation as to favor his descendants. There was evidently an omission in the law.

“In any other country,” said he to the doctor, after setting forth the state of the law which Goupil, Dionis, and Désiré had just explained to the heirs, “Ursule would have nothing to fear. She is a legitimate child, and her father’s disabilities ought only to affect the money left by Valentin Mirouët, your father-in-law. But in France the bench is unluckily very clever and very logical ; it insists on the spirit of the law. Pleaders will talk of morality, and prove that the omission in the Code arises from the single-mindedness of the framers, who never foresaw such a case, but who nevertheless established a principle. A lawsuit would be lengthy and costly. With Zélie on the other side it would be carried to the court of appeal ; and I cannot be sure that I should be still living when the case was tried.”

“The strongest case is not certain to stand,” cried the doctor. “I can see the documents on the subject already : ‘To what degree of relationship ought the disabilities of natural children in the matter of inheritance to extend?’ and the glory of a clever lawyer is to gain a rotten suit.”

“On my honor,” said Bongrand, “I would not take it upon myself to assert that the judges would not widen the interpretation of the law so as to extend its protection of marriage, which is the everlasting foundation of society.”

Without explaining his intentions, the doctor rejected the idea of a trust. But as to the notion of marrying her, which

Bongrand suggested as a means of securing her his fortune—

“Poor little thing!” cried the doctor. “I may live fifteen years yet. What would become of her?”

“Well, then, what do you propose?” said Bongrand.

“We must think about it. I shall see,” replied the old doctor, evidently at a loss for an answer.

At this instant Ursule came to tell the friends that Dionis wished to see the doctor.

“Dionis already!” exclaimed Minoret, looking at the justice. “Yes,” he said to Ursule; “let him be shown in.”

“I will bet my spectacles to a brimstone match that he is your heirs’ stalking-horse. They breakfasted together at the posting-house, and something has been plotted there.”

The notary, following Ursule, came out into the garden. After the usual civilities and a few commonplace remarks, Dionis begged for a moment’s private conversation. Ursule and Bongrand went into the drawing-room.

“We must think about it! I shall see!” said Bongrand to himself, echoing the doctor’s last words. “That is what clever people think; then death overtakes them, and they leave those who are dearest to them in the greatest difficulties.”

The distrust a man of business feels of a man of talent is extraordinary. He cannot admit that the greater includes the less. But this very distrust, perhaps, implies praise. Seeing these superior minds inhabiting the high peaks of human thought, men of business do not believe them capable of descending to the infinitely small details which, like interest in the world of finance, or microscopic creatures in natural history, at last accumulate till they equal the capital, or constitute a world. It is a mistake. The man of feeling and the man of genius see everything.

Bongrand, nettled by the doctor’s persistent silence, but urged, no doubt, by Ursule’s interests, which he feared were compromised, determined to protect her against her rivals.

He was in despair at not knowing what was going on between the old man and Dionis.

“However pure-minded Ursule may be,” thought he, as he looked at her, “there is one point on which young girls are wont to have their own ideas of jurisprudence and morality. Let us try!” “The Minoret-Levraults,” said he to Ursule, as he settled his spectacles, “are quite capable of proposing that you should marry their son.”

The poor child turned pale. She had been too well brought up, and had too much perfect delicacy, to go and listen to what her uncle and Dionis were saying; but after a short deliberation she thought she might go into the room, thinking that if she were in the way her godfather would make her understand it. The Chinese summer-house, which was the doctor’s private study, had the shutters of the glass door left open. Ursule’s idea was that she would go herself to close them. She apologized for leaving the lawyer alone in the drawing-room; but he smiled and said—

“Do so, do so.”

Ursule went to the steps leading from the Chinese summer-house down to the garden, and there she stood for some minutes slowly closing the Venetian shutters and looking at the sunset. Then she heard this answer spoken by the doctor as he came towards the summer-house—

“My heirs would be delighted to see me possessed of real estate and mortgages. They fancy that my fortune would be much more safely invested. I can guess all they could say; and you, perhaps, are their representative. But, my dear sir, my arrangements are unalterable. My heirs will have the capital of the fortune I brought here with me; they may accept that as a certainty, and leave me in peace. If either of them should make any change in what I believe it to be my duty to do for that child” (and he pointed to his goddaughter), “I will come back from the other world to torment him! So Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère may remain in

prison if his release depends on me," added the doctor. "I shall not sell any of my securities."

As she heard the last words of this speech, Ursule felt the first, the only grief she had ever known. She rested her forehead against the shutter, and clung to it for support.

"Good heavens! what ails her?" cried the old doctor; "she is colorless. Such emotion just after dinner might kill her!"

He put out his arm to hold Ursule, who fell almost fainting.

"Good-evening, monsieur; leave me," he said to the notary.

He carried his goddaughter to a huge easy-chair, dating from Louis XV., which stood in his study, seized a phial of ether from his medicine store, and made her inhale it.

"Go and take my place, my friend," said he to Bongrand, who was alarmed; "I must stay with her."

The justice walked to the gate with the notary, asking him, but without any show of eagerness, "What has come over Ursule?"

"I do not know," said Monsieur Dionis. "She was standing on the steps listening to us; and when her uncle refused to lend the necessary sum to release young Portenduère, who is in prison for debt—for he had not a Monsieur Bongrand to defend him as Monsieur du Rouvre had—she turned pale and tottered. Does she love him? Can there be——?"

"At fifteen!" said Bongrand, interrupting Dionis.

"She was born in February, 1814. In four months she will be sixteen."

"But she has never seen her neighbor," replied the justice. "No, it is just an attack."

"An attack of the heart," said the notary.

Dionis was much delighted by his discovery; it would avert the dreaded marriage by which the doctor might have frustrated the hopes of his heirs, while Bongrand saw his





"WHAT AILS YOU, CRUEL CHILD?" HE SAID.



castles in the air in ruins ; he had long dreamed of a marriage between his own son and Ursule.

“ If the poor child should be in love with that youth, it would be unfortunate for her. Madame de Portenduère is a Bretonne, and crazy about noble birth,” replied the justice, after a pause.

“ Happily—for the honor of the Portenduères,” said the notary, who had nearly betrayed himself.

To do the worthy and honorable lawyer full justice, it must be said that, on his way from the gate to the drawing-room, he gave up, not without regret for his son’s loss, the hope he had cherished of one day calling Ursule his daughter. He intended to give his son six thousand francs a year as soon as he was appointed deputy recorder ; and if the doctor would have settled a hundred thousand francs on Ursule, the young couple should have been patterns of a happy household. His Eugène was a loyal and accomplished young fellow. Perhaps he had a little over-praised Eugène, and perhaps old Minoret’s suspicions had been aroused by that.

“ I will fall back on the mayor’s daughter,” thought Bongrand. “ But Ursule without a penny would be better than Mademoiselle Levraut-Crémière with her million. Now we must see what can be done to get Ursule married to this young Portenduère, if, in fact, she loves him.”

After closing the doors on the side next the library and the garden, the doctor led the girl to the window that looked over the river.

“ What ails you, cruel child ? ” he said. “ Your life is my life. Without your smile what would become of me ? ”

“ Savinien—in prison ! ” answered she, and with these words a torrent of tears burst from her eyes, and she began to sob.

“ Now all will be well,” said the old man to himself, as he stood feeling her pulse with a father’s anxiety. “ Alas ! she has all my poor wife’s nervous sensibility ! ” he thought ; and

he brought a stethoscope, which he placed over Ursule's heart and listened. "Well, there is nothing wrong there," he said to himself. "I did not know, my sweetheart, that you loved him so much already," he went on, as he looked at her. "But think to me as if to yourself, and tell me all that has occurred between you."

"I do not love him, godfather; we have never spoken to each other," she sobbed out; "but to know that the poor young man is in prison, and to hear that you, who are so kind, refuse sternly to help him out——"

"Ursule, my sweet little angel, if you do not love him, why have you put a red dot to the day of Saint Savinien as you have to that of Saint Denis? Come, tell me all the smallest incidents of this love affair."

Ursule colored, and swallowed down a few tears; for a minute there was silence between them.

"Are you afraid of your father, of your friend, your mother, your physician, your godfather, whose heart has within these few days become even more soft and loving than it was?"

"Well, then, dear godfather," said she, "I will open my soul to you. In the month of May, Monsieur Savinien came to see his mother. Till that visit I had never paid the least attention to him. When he went away to live in Paris I was a little child, and I saw no difference, I swear to you, between a young man—and others like you, excepting that I loved you, and never imagined I could love any one better, whoever he might be. Monsieur Savinien arrived by the mail-coach the night before his mother's birthday without our knowing of it. At seven next morning, after saying my prayers, as I opened the window to air my room, I saw the open windows of Monsieur Savinien's room, and Monsieur Savinien himself in his dressing-gown engaged in shaving himself, and doing everything with such grace in his movements—in short, I thought him very nice. He combed his black mustache, and the little tuft on his chin, and I saw his throat white and

round. Oh ! must I say it all ? I noticed that his fresh neck, and his face, and his beautiful black hair were quite unlike yours when I see you shaving yourself ; and something rose up in me from I know not where—like a mist rushing in waves to my heart, to my throat, to my head, and so violently that I had to sit down. I could not stand ; I was trembling. But I longed so much to see him that I pulled myself up on tiptoe ; then he saw me, and for fun he blew me a kiss from the ends of his fingers, and——”

“ And——”

“ And I hid myself,” she went on, “ equally ashamed and happy, without understanding why I was ashamed of my happiness. This feeling, which bewildered my soul while giving it an unexplained sense of power, came over me each time that I saw his young face again in fancy. Indeed, I liked to have that feeling, though it was so painfully agitating. As I went to mass an irresistible force made me look at Monsieur Savinien giving his arm to his mother, and his way of walking, and his clothes—everything about him, to the sound of his boots on the pavement, seemed so pretty. The least thing about him, his hand in its fine kid glove, had a sort of charm for me. And yet I was strong enough not to think of him during the service. As we came out I waited in the church to let Madame de Portenduère go first, so as to walk behind him. I cannot tell you how much I was interested in all these little things. On coming in, as I turned round to shut the gate——”

“ And La Bougival ? ” asked the doctor.

“ Oh, I had let her go to the kitchen,” said Ursule innocently. “ So I could, of course, see Monsieur Savinien standing squarely to look at me. Oh, dear godfather, I felt so proud as I fancied I saw in his eyes a sort of surprise and admiration, and I do not know what I would not have done to give him cause to look at me. I felt as though henceforth I ought to think of nothing but of how to please him. His

look is now the sweetest reward of all I can do right. From that moment I have thought of him incessantly and in spite of myself. Monsieur Savinien went away that evening, and I have not seen him since ; the Rue des Bourgeois has seemed quite empty, and he has taken my heart away with him, as it were, without knowing it."

"And that is all?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, all, godfather," she said with a sigh, in which regret at having no more to tell was lost in the grief of the moment.

"My dear child," said the old man, drawing Ursule on to his knee, "you will soon be sixteen years old, and your life as a woman will begin. You are now between your blissful childhood, which is coming to an end, and the agitations of love, which will make life stormy for you, for you have the highly strung nerves of an excessively sensitive nature. It is love, my child, that has come upon you," said the old man, with a look of deep pathos, "love in its holy simplicity, love as it ought to be, involuntary and swift, coming like a thief that takes all—yes, all! And I was prepared for it. I have studied women carefully, and I know that, though with most of them love does not wholly possess them till after many proofs, many miracles of affection, if such as these do not speak nor yield till they are conquered, there are others who, under the sway of a sympathy which can now be accounted for by magnetic fluids, are vanquished in a moment. I can tell you now: as soon as I saw the lovely woman who bore your name, I felt that I should love her alone and faithfully without knowing whether in our characters or our persons we should prove suitable. Is there a second-sight in love? How can the question be answered, when we see so many unions, which have been sanctioned by such a sacred contract, destroyed afterwards, and giving rise to almost eternal hatred and intense aversion? The senses may be in affinity while minds are discordant, and some persons perhaps live more by

the mind than by the senses. On the other hand, characters are often suited in persons who cannot please each other.

“These two opposite phenomena, which would account for many catastrophes, demonstrate the wisdom of the law which leaves to parents supreme control over the marriage of their children; for a young girl is often the dupe of one of these two hallucinations. And, indeed, I do not blame you. The feelings you experience, the emotional impulse which rushes from its hitherto unknown focus to your heart and to your brain, the joy with which you think of Savinien, are all quite natural. But, my adored child, as our good Abbé Chaperon will have told you, society demands the sacrifice of many natural impulses. The destiny of men is one thing, the destiny of women another. It was in my power to choose Ursule Mirouët for my wife, to go to her and tell her how much I loved her, whereas a young girl is false to her virtue when she solicits the love of the man she loves; a woman is not, as we are, at liberty to follow up in broad daylight the fulfillment of her hopes. Thus, modesty is in women, and especially in you, the insurmountable barrier which guards the secrets of your heart. Your hesitation to confide even to me what your first emotions had been shows me plainly that you would suffer the worst torments rather than confess to Savinien——”

“Oh, yes!” she exclaimed.

“But, my child, you must do more. You must repress these impulses of your heart, you must forget them.”

“Why?”

“Because, my little darling, you must love no man but him who will be your husband; and even if Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère should love you——”

“I had not thought of such a thing.”

“Listen to me. Even if he should love you, even if his mother were to ask me to give him your hand, I would not consent to the marriage till I had subjected Savinien to a long and mature course of proof. His recent conduct has placed

him under a cloud in every good family, and raised such barriers between him and any young girl of fortune as it will be hard to break down."

A heavenly smile checked Ursule's tears, as she said, "Misfortune has its good uses!"

The doctor found nothing to say to her artlessness.

"What has he done, godfather?" she inquired.

"In two years, my darling, he has run into debt in Paris to the sum of a hundred and twenty thousand francs! He has been so clumsy as to let himself be taken and imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie, a blunder which disgraces a young man for ever in these days. A spendthrift who can bring his mother to grief and penury would kill his wife with despair, as your poor father did."

"Do you think he might amend his ways?" she asked.

"If his mother pays his debts, he will be left without a penny, and I know no harder punishment for a nobleman than to be penniless."

This reply made Ursule thoughtful; she wiped away her tears, and said to her godfather—

"If you can save him, do so, godfather. Such a service will give you the right to admonish him; you will remonstrate with him——"

"And then," said the doctor, mimicking her tone, "he may perhaps come here, and the old lady too, and we shall see them, and——"

"At this moment I am thinking only of him," replied Ursule, coloring.

"Think of him no more, my poor child. It is madness," said the doctor gravely. "Never would Madame de Portenduère—a Kergarouët—if she had but three hundred francs a year to live on, consent to see the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, grand-nephew of the late Comte de Portenduère, lieutenant-general of the King's naval forces, and son of the Vicomte de Portenduère, ship's captain, married to—whom?"

Ursule Mirouët, the daughter of a regimental bandmaster, without a fortune ; and whose father—now is the time to tell you—was the bastard son of an organist, my father-in-law.”

“ Yes, godfather, you are right. We are equals only in the eyes of God. I will think of him no more—except in my prayers ! ” she exclaimed through the sobs with which she received this information. “ Give him all you intended to leave me. What can a poor girl like me want of money !—and he, in prison ! ”

“ Lay all your distresses before God, and He perhaps will intervene to help us. ”

For some minutes silence reigned. When Ursule, who dared not look at her godfather, presently raised her eyes to his face, she was deeply moved by seeing tears flowing down his withered cheeks. The tears of an old man are as terrible as those of a child are natural.

“ What, oh, what is the matter with you ? ” she cried, falling at his feet and kissing his hands. “ Do you not trust me ? ”

“ I, who only wish to satisfy your every wish, am compelled to cause the first great sorrow of your life ! I am as much grieved as you are ! I never shed a tear but when my children died and my Ursule. There, I will do anything you like ! ” he exclaimed.

Ursule, through her tears, gave her godfather a look that was like a flash of light. She smiled.

“ Now, come into the drawing-room and contrive to keep your own counsel about all this, my child, ” said the doctor, and he went out, leaving her alone in the study.

The fatherly soul was so weak before this smile that he was about to speak a word of hope which might have deluded his goddaughter.

At this moment Madame de Portenduère, alone with the curé in her chilly little ground-floor drawing-room, had just

finished confiding her woes to the good priest, her only friend. She held in her hand some letters which the abbé had returned to her after reading them, and which had been the crown of her misery. Seated in an armchair, on one side of the square table covered with the remains of the dessert, the old lady looked at the curé, who, on the other, huddled into a deep chair, was stroking his chin with that strange gesture peculiar to the stage valet, to mathematicians, and priests, as betraying meditation on a problem difficult of solution.

The little room, lighted by two windows looking on the street, and lined with wainscoting painted gray, was so damp that the lower panels displayed the geometrical crackle of decaying wood when it is no longer held together by paint. The floor, of red tiles rubbed smooth by the lady's only servant, made little round hempen mats a necessity in front of each chair, and on one of these mats were the abbé's feet. The curtains, of light-green flowered damask, were drawn, and the shutters closed. Two wax-candles lighted the table; the rest of the room was half-dark. Need it be said that between the windows a fine pastel by Latour showed the portrait of the famous Admiral de Portenduère, the rival of Suffren, of Kergarouët, of Guichen, of Simeuse? On the wainscot opposite the chimney might be seen the Vicomte de Portenduère and the old lady's mother, a Kergarouët-Ploëgat.

Savinien, then, was great-nephew to Vice-Admiral Kergarouët and cousin to the Comte de Portenduère, the admiral's grandson, both of them very rich. The vice-admiral lived in Paris, and the Comte de Portenduère at his château of the same name in Dauphiné. The Count, his cousin, represented the elder branch, and Savinien was the only scion of the younger branch of the Portenduères.

The Count, a man of past forty, married to a rich wife, had three children. His fortune, augmented several times by inheritance, brought him in, it was said, sixty thousand francs a

year. He represented the department of the Isère as deputy, spending the winter in Paris, where he had repurchased the mansion of the Portenduères with the indemnity paid him under Villèle's act. The vice-admiral had lately married his niece,\* Mademoiselle de Fontaine, solely to settle his fortune on her. Thus the young Vicomte's errors had perhaps deprived him of the interest of two powerful friends.

Savinien, young and handsome, if he had entered the navy, with his name and the interest of an admiral and of a deputy to back him, might perhaps at three-and-twenty have been already first-lieutenant; but his mother, averse to seeing her only son engage in a military career, had had him educated at Nemours by one of the Abbé Chaperon's curates, and had flattered herself that she might keep her son at her side till her death. She had hoped to marry him very prudently to a demoiselle d'Aiglemont, with twelve thousand francs a year; the name of Portenduère, and the farm-lands of Bordières, justifying his pretensions to her hand. This moderate but judicious scheme, which might have re-established the family in another generation, had been frustrated by events. The d'Aiglemonts were now ruined, and one of their daughters, Hélène, the eldest, had vanished without any explanation being offered by the family.

The tedium of a life devoid of outdoor interests, of purpose, and of action, with nothing to support it but the love of a son for his mother, so wearied Savinien that he burst his bonds, light as they were, and vowed he would never live in a country town; discovering, somewhat late, that his future did not lie in the Rue des Bourgeois. So at one-and-twenty he left his mother to introduce himself to his relations, and try his fortune in Paris.

The contrast between life at Nemours and life in the capital could not fail to be fatal to a youth of one-and-twenty, perfectly free, with no one to contradict him, of course greedy

\* See "Le Bal de Sceaux."

for pleasure, and to whom the name of Portenduère and the wealth of his connections opened every drawing-room. Convinced that his mother had somewhere stored the savings of twenty years, Savinien had soon squandered the six thousand francs she had given him to spend in Paris. This sum did not defray the expenses of the first six months, and by that time he owed twice as much to his lodging-keeper, his tailor, his bootmaker, to a man from whom he hired carriages and horses, to a jeweler, in short, to all the tradespeople who supply the luxury of youth. He had hardly achieved making himself known, had hardly learned to speak, to enter a room, to wear and choose a waistcoat, to order his clothes and tie his cravat, when he found himself possessed of thirty thousand francs of debts, and had not yet gotten farther than trying to find an insinuating phrase in which to declare his passion to Madame de Sérizy, the sister of the Marquis de Ronquerolles, an elegant woman still, whose youth had shone through the empire.

“And how did you fellows get out of the scrape?” said Savinien one day after breakfast to some young men of fashion with whom he was intimate, as even at this day young men become intimate when their pretensions in all respects tend to the same ends, and when they proclaim an impossible equality. “You were no richer than I; you live on without a care, you support yourselves, and I am already in debt.”

“We all began in the same way,” they replied, with a laugh—Rastignac, Lucien de Rubempré, Maxime de Trailles, Emile Blondet, the dandies of that day.

“If de Marsay was rich at beginning life, it was a mere chance!” said their host, a parvenu named Finot, who tried to rub elbows with these young men. “And if he had been any one else,” he added, bowing to Marsay, “his fortune might have been his ruin.”

“You have hit the word,” said Maxime de Trailles.

“And the idea too,” replied Rastignac.

“My dear boy,” said de Marsay gravely to Savinien, “debts are the sleeping partners of experience. A good college education, with masters for the ornamental and the useful, from which you learn nothing, costs sixty thousand francs. If the education the world gives you costs double, it teaches you life, business, and politics; to know men and sometimes women.”

Blondet capped the lecture by a parody on a line of La Fontaine’s—

“The world sells us dear what we fancy it gives!”

But instead of reflecting on the good sense in what the most skilled pilots of the Paris shoals had said, Savinien took it all as a jest.

“Take care, my dear fellow,” said de Marsay, “you have a fine name, and if you cannot acquire the fortune your name demands you may end your days as quartermaster to a cavalry regiment,

“For nobler heads than thine have had a fall,”

he added, quoting Corneille, and taking Savinien’s arm. “It is about six years,” he went on, “since a certain young Comte d’Esgrignon came among us, who did not live more than two years in the paradise of fashion! Alas, his career was as that of the sky-rocket. He rose as high as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and he fell into his native town, where he is now expiating his sins between a snuffling old father and rubbers of whist at two sous a point. Go, then, and frankly explain your position to Madame de Sérizy; do not be ashamed; she will be of great use to you; whereas, if you play a charade of first love, she will pose as a Raphael Madonna, play innocent games, and send you a most expensive excursion round the ‘Pays du Tendre’” (Country of Sentiment).

Savinien, still too young and too sensitive to a gentleman’s

honor, dared not confess the state of his fortunes to Madame de Sérizy. Madame de Portenduère, at a moment when her son knew not which way to turn, sent him twenty thousand francs, all she had, in answer to a letter in which Savinien, taught by his companions the tactics of assault by sons on their parents' strong-boxes, hinted at bills to meet, and the disgrace of dishonoring his endorsements. With this help, he got on to the end of the first year. During the second year, as a captive at the wheels of Madame de Sérizy's car—for she had taken a serious fancy to him, and was teaching him his paces—he availed himself of the perilous aid of money-lenders. A deputy, named des Lupeaulx, who was his friend, and a friend of his cousin de Portenduère, introduced him one miserable day to Gobseck, to Gigonnet, and to Palma, who, being duly and fully informed as to the value of his mother's property, made things easy for him. The money-lenders, by the delusive aid of renewals, gave him a happy life for about eighteen months more. Without daring to neglect Madame de Sérizy, the hapless boy fell desperately in love with the young Comtesse de Kergarouët, a prude, as all young women are who are waiting for the death of an old husband, and who are clever enough to save up their virtue for a second marriage. Savinien, unable to understand that virtue based on reasons is invincible, paid his court to Emilie de Kergarouët with all the display of a rich man; he was never missing from a ball or a theatre if she was to be there.

“ My boy, you have not enough powder to blow up that rock ! ” de Marsay said to him one evening, with a laugh.

This young prince of Paris fashion vainly attempted, out of commiseration, to make the lad understand Emilie de Fontaine's character, only the gloomy light of disaster and the darkness of a prison could enlighten Savinien. A bill of exchange, rashly assigned to a jeweler in collusion with the money-lenders, who did not choose to take the odium of arresting him, led to Savinien de Portenduère being con-

signed to Sainte-Pélagie, unknown to his friends. As soon as the news was known to Rastignac, de Marsay, and Lucien de Rubempré, they all three went to see Savinien, and, finding him absolutely destitute, each offered him a note for a thousand francs. His own servant, bribed by two creditors, led them to the apartment where Savinien lodged in secret, and everything had been seized but the clothes and a few trinkets he had on him.

The three young men, fortified by a capital dinner, while they drank some sherry that de Marsay had brought with him, catechised Savinien as to the state of his affairs, ostensibly to make arrangements for the future, but in reality, no doubt, to pass sentence on him.

“When your name is Savinien de Portenduère,” cried Rastignac, “when you have a future peer of France for your cousin and the Admiral de Kergarouët for your grand-uncle, if you are such a blunderer as to let yourself be sent to Sainte-Pélagie, at any rate you must get out of it, my dear fellow !”

“Why did you say nothing about it to me?” cried de Marsay. “My traveling carriage was at your orders, ten thousand francs, and letters for Germany. We know Gobseck and Gigonnet, and the other beasts of prey ; we would have brought them to terms. To begin with, what has brought you to drink of these poisoned waters ?” asked de Marsay.

“Des Lupeaulx.”

The three young men looked at each other, communicating the same thought, a suspicion, but without speaking it.

“Explain your resources ; show us your hand,” said de Marsay.

When Savinien had described his mother and her cap and bows, her little house with its three windows fronting on the Rue des Bourgeois, with no garden but a yard with a well, and an outhouse to hold fire-logs ; when he had estimated the value of this dwelling, built of rough stone set in reddish cement, and that of the farm of Bordières, the three dandies

exchanged glances, and, with a look of deep meaning, quoted the word spoken by the abbé in Alfred de Musset's play "Les Marrons du feu"—for his "Contes d'Espagne" had just come out—

"Dismal!"

"Your mother would pay in response to a skillful letter?" said Rastignac.

"Yes; but after——?" cried de Marsay.

"If you had only been put into the hackney coach," said Lucien, "the King's government would give you a berth in a foreign mission; but Sainte-Pélagie is not the anteroom to an embassy."

"You are not up to the mark for life in Paris," said Rastignac.

"Let's see," de Marsay began, looking at Savinien from head to foot as a horse-dealer examines a horse. "You have good blue eyes well set, you have a well-shaped white forehead, splendid black hair, a neat little mustache which looks well on your pale skin, and a slight figure; your foot bespeaks a good breed, shoulders and chest strong, and not too like a coal-heaver's. I should call you a good specimen of a dark man. Your face is in the style of that of Louis XIII.; not much color, and a well-shaped nose; and you have besides the thing that appeals to woman, the indescribable something of which men themselves are never conscious, which is in the air, the walk, the tone of voice, the flash of the eyes, the gesture, a hundred little things which women see, and to which they attach a meaning which eludes us. You do not know yourself, my dear fellow. With a little style, in six months you could fascinate an Englishwoman with a hundred thousand francs, especially if you use the title of Vicomte de Portenduère to which you have a right. My charming mother-in-law, Lady Dudley, who has not her equal for skewering two hearts together, will discover the damsel for you in some alluvial district of Great Britain. But then you must be able

to stave off your debts for ninety days, and know how to do it by some skillful stroke of high finance. Oh! why did you say nothing of it to me? At Baden these money-lenders would have respected you, have served you perhaps; but after clapping you in prison they despise you. The money-lender is like society, like the mob—on his knees to a man who is clever enough to take advantage of him, and pitiless to a lamb. In the eyes of a certain set, Sainte-Pélagie is a demon which takes the shine off a young man's soul to a terrible extent. Will you have my opinion, my dear boy? I say to you as I did to little d'Esgrignon: Pay your debts cautiously, keeping enough to live on for three years, and get married in the country to the first girl who has thirty thousand francs a year. In three years you will be sure to have found some suitable heiress who will gladly hear herself called Madame de Portenduère. These are the words of wisdom. Let us have a drink. I propose a toast: 'To the girl with money!'

The young men did not leave their ex-friend till the official hour of parting, and on the threshold of the gate they said to each other, "He is not game! He is very much crushed! Will he pick himself up again!"

The next day Savinien wrote to his mother, a general confession covering twenty-two pages. Madame de Portenduère, after crying for a whole day, wrote first to her son, promising to get him out of prison, and then to the Comtes de Portenduère and de Kergarouët.

The letters the curé had just read, and which the poor mother now held in her hand, moist with her tears, had reached her that morning, and had almost broken her heart.

“PARIS, *September*, 1829.

“To Madame de Portenduère.

“MADAME:—You cannot doubt the great interest which the admiral takes in your troubles. The news you write to M. de Kergarouët distresses me all the more because my house

was open to your son ; we were proud of him. If Savinien had had more confidence in the admiral, we would have taken him in charge, and he would now have a suitable appointment ; but the unhappy boy told us nothing ! The admiral could not possibly pay a hundred thousand francs ; he is himself in debt, and has involved himself for me, for I knew nothing of his pecuniary position. He regrets it all the more because Savinien, by allowing himself to be arrested, has for the moment tied our hands. If my handsome nephew had not felt for me some foolish passion which smothered the voice of relationship in the arrogance of a lover, we might have sent him to travel in Germany while his affairs here were being arranged. M. de Kergarouët might have asked for a place for his grand-nephew in the naval department ; but imprisonment for debt cannot fail to paralyze the admiral's efforts. Pay off Savinien's debts, let him go into the navy ; he will then make his way like a true Portenduère ; he has their fire in his fine black eyes, and we will all help him.

“So do not despair, madame ; you still have friends, among whom I beg to be accounted one of the sincerest, and I send you my best wishes with every respect. From your very devoted servant,

“EMILIE DE KERGAROUËT.”

“PORTENDUÈRE, *August*, 1829.

“To Madame de Portenduère.

“MY DEAR AUNT:—I am as much vexed as pained by Savinien's scapegrace doings. Married, as I am, the father of two sons and a daughter, my fortune, moderate indeed in comparison with my position and expectations, does not allow of my reducing it by such a sum as a hundred thousand francs to ransom a Portenduère captive to the Lombards. Sell your farm, pay his debts, and come to Portenduère ; you will here find the welcome due to you from us, even if our hearts were not wholly yours. You will live happy, and we will find a

wife for Savinien, whom my wife thinks charming. This disaster is nothing; do not let it distress you; it will never be heard of in our remote district, where we know several girls with money—nay, very rich—who will be enchanted to belong to us.

“My wife joins me in assuring you how happy you would make us, and begs you to accept her hopes that this plan may be carried out, with the assurance of our affectionate respect.

“LUC-SAVINIEN, COMTE DE PORTENDUÈRE.”

“What letters to write to a Kergarouët!” cried the old Bretonne, wiping her eyes.

“The admiral does not know that his nephew is in prison,” said the Abbé Chaperon presently. “Only the Countess has read your letter, and she alone has answered it. But something must be done,” he added after a pause, “and this is the advice I have the honor to offer you. Do not sell your farm. The present lease is nearly out; it has been running four-and-twenty years; in a few months you can raise the rent to six thousand francs, and demand a premium equal to two years’ rent. Borrow from some honest man—not from the townspeople, who make a traffic of mortgages. Your neighbor, now, is a worthy man, a man of the world, who knew the upper classes before the Revolution, and who from being an atheist has become a Catholic. Do not feel any repugnance for coming to call on him this evening; he will be deeply sensible of your taking such a step; forget for one moment that you are a Kergarouët.”

“Never!” said the old mother in a strident tone.

“At any rate, be an amiable Kergarouët. Come when he is alone; he will only take three-and-a-half per cent., perhaps not more than three, and he will do you the service in the most delicate manner. You will be quite satisfied with him. He will go himself to release Savinien, for he will be obliged to sell some securities, and he will bring him home to you.”

“Do you mean that little Minoret?”

“Little Minoret is eighty-three years of age,” replied the abbé with a smile. “My dear lady, have a little Christian charity; do not hurt his feelings, as he may be useful to you in more ways than one.”

“How, may I ask?”

“Well, he has living with him an angel, the heavenliest young girl——”

“Yes, that little Ursule. Well, and what then?”

The poor curé dared say no more as he heard this inflected interrogation.

“Well, what then?” Its harsh severity cut short beforehand the proposal he had been about to make.

“Doctor Minoret is, I believe, exceedingly rich——”

“So much the better for him.”

“You have already been the indirect cause of your son’s present misfortunes by giving him no opening in life. Beware for the future,” said the abbé sternly. “Shall I announce your proposed visit to your neighbor?”

“But why, if he were told that I want him, should he not come to me?”

“Well, madame, if you go to him, you will pay three per cent., and if he comes to you, you will pay five,” said the abbé, hitting on this argument to persuade the old lady. “And if you should be forced to sell your farm through Dionis the notary, or Massin the clerk, who would refuse to advance money in the hope of profiting by your disaster, you would lose half the value of Les Bordières. I have not the smallest influence over the Dionis, the Massins, the Levraults, rich country folks who covet your farm, and know that your son is in prison.”

“They know it! They know it!” she cried, throwing up her hands. “Oh, my poor friend, you have let your coffee get cold. Tiennette! Tiennette!”

Tiennette, an old Brittany peasant of sixty, in the jacket

and cap of her province, hastened in and took the curé's coffee to heat it again.

"Wait a minute, Monsieur le Recteur," said she, seeing that the curé was about to drink it. "I will heat it in a bain-marie, and it will be none the worse."

"Very well, then," the priest began again, in his persuasive voice, "I will give the doctor notice of your intended visit, and you will come."

The old lady still would not give in till at the end of an hour's discussion, during which the curé was forced to repeat his arguments ten times over. And even then the haughty daughter of the Kergarouëts only yielded to these last words—

"Savinien would go!"

"Then it had better be I," said she.

Nine o'clock was striking when the little door in the great gate was closed behind the curé, who forthwith rang eagerly at the doctor's entrance. The Abbé Chaperon escaped Tiennette to fall on La Bougival, for the old nurse said to him—

"You are very late, Monsieur le Curé." Just as Tiennette had said, "Why have you left madame so early when she is in trouble?"

The curé found a large party in the doctor's green and brown drawing-room; for Dionis had been to reassure his heirs on his way to see Massin, and repeat to him his uncle's words.

"Ursule," said he, "has I suspect a love in her heart which will bring her nothing but sorrow and care. She seems to be romantic"—the word applied by notaries to a sensitive nature—"and she will long remain unmarried. So do not be suspicious; pay her all sorts of little attentions, and be the humble servants of your uncle, for he is sharper than a hundred Goupils," added the notary, not knowing that Goupil is a corrupt form of the Latin *vulpes*, a fox.

So Mesdames Massin and Crémère, their husbands, the postmaster and Désiré, with the town doctor and Bongrand,

formed an unwonted and turbulent crowd at the old doctor's. As the abbé went in he heard the sound of a piano. Poor Ursule was ending Beethoven's sonata in A. With the artfulness permissible to the innocent, the girl, enlightened by her godfather, and averse to the family, had selected this solemn music, which must be studied to be appreciated, to disgust these women with their wish to hear her. The finer the music, the less the ignorant enjoy it. So, when the door opened, and the Abbé Chaperon put in his venerable head, "Ah! here is Monsieur le Curé!" they all exclaimed, delighted to have to rise and put an end to their torment.

The exclamation found an echo at the card-table, where Bongrand, the town doctor, and the old man himself were victims to the audacity with which the tax-collector, to court his great-uncle, had proposed to take the fourth hand at whist. Ursule came away from the piano. The doctor also rose as if to greet the priest, but in fact to put a stop to the game. After many compliments to their uncle on his goddaughter's proficiency, the heirs took their leave.

"Good-night, friends," cried the doctor, as the gate shut.

"So that is what costs so dear!" said Madame Crémière to Madame Massin, when they had gone a little way.

"God forbid that I should pay any money to hear my little Aline make such a noise as that in the house!" replied Madame Massin.

"She said it was by Beethoven, who is supposed to be a great composer," said the tax-collector. "He has a great name."

"My word! not at Nemours," cried Madame Crémière.

"I believe my uncle arranged it on purpose that we should never go there again," said Massin. "For he certainly winked as he pointed out the green volume to that little minx."

"If that is the only tune they care to dance to, they are wise to keep themselves to themselves," said the postmaster.

“The justice must be very fond of his game to listen to those rigmarole pieces,” said Madame Crémière.

“I shall never be able to play to people who do not understand music,” said Ursule, taking her seat near the card-table.

“In persons of a rich organization feeling can only express itself among congenial surroundings,” said the curé. “Just as a priest can give no blessing in the presence of the evil one, and as a chestnut tree dies in a heavy soil, so a musician of genius feels himself morally routed when he is among ignorant listeners. In the arts we need to receive from the souls in which our souls find their medium as much power as we can impart. The axiom, which is a law of human affections, has given rise to the proverbs: ‘We must howl with the wolves;’ ‘Like to like.’ But the discomfort you must have felt is known only to tender and sensitive natures.”

“Ay, my friends,” said the doctor, “and a thing which might only annoy another woman could kill my little Ursule. Ah! when I am no more, raise up between this tender flower and the world such a sheltering hedge as Catullus speaks of—*Ut flos*, etc.”

“And yet the ladies were flattering in their remarks to you, Ursule,” said the lawyer, smiling.

“Coarsely flattering,” observed the town doctor.

“I have always felt such coarseness in insincere praise,” replied Monsieur Minoret. “And why?”

“A true thought has its own refinement,” said the abbé.

“Did you dine with Madame de Portenduère?” said Ursule, questioning the Abbé Chaperon, with a glance of anxious curiosity.

“Yes; the poor lady is in much distress, and it is not impossible that she may call on you this evening, Monsieur Minoret.”

“If she is in trouble and needs me, I will go to her,” said the doctor. “Let us finish the first rubber.”

Ursule pressed her uncle's hand under the table.

"Her son," said the justice, "was rather too simple to live in Paris without a mentor. When it came to my knowledge that inquiries were being made of the notary here about the old lady's farm, I guessed that he was borrowing on his reversion."

"Do you think him capable of that?" said Ursule, with a terrible flash at Monsieur Bongrand, who said to himself, "Yes, alas! she is in love with him."

"Yes and No," said the town doctor. "There is good in Savinien, and the proof of it is that he is in prison. A thorough rogue never gets caught."

"My friends," said old Minoret, "enough of this for this evening. We must not leave a poor mother to weep for a minute longer when we can dry her tears."

The four friends rose and went out. Ursule accompanied them as far as the gate, watched her godfather and the curé while they knocked at the door opposite; and when Tiennette had admitted them, she sat down on one of the stone piers in the courtyard, La Bougival standing near her.

"Madame la Vicomtesse," said the curé, going first into the little room, "Doctor Minoret could not allow you to have the trouble of going to his house——"

"I am too much of the old school, madame," the doctor put in, "not to know what is due from a man to a person of your rank, and I am only too happy to think, from what Monsieur le Curé tells me, that I may be of some service to you."

Madame de Portenduère, on whom the arrangement she had agreed to weighed so heavily, that, since the abbé had quitted her, she had thought of applying rather to the notary, was so surprised by Minoret's delicate feeling, that she rose to return his bow, and pointed to an arm-chair.

"Be seated, monsieur," said she, with a royal air. "Our dear curé will have told you that the Vicomte is in prison for

debt—a young man's debts—a hundred thousand francs. If you could lend him the sum, I would give you as security my farm at Bordières."

"We can talk of that, madame, when I shall have brought you back your son, if you will allow me to represent you in these circumstances."

"Very good, monsieur," replied the old lady, with a bow, and a glance at the curé, which was meant to convey: "You are right; he is a man of good breeding."

"My friend, the doctor, as you see, madame, is full of devotion to your family."

"We shall be grateful to you, monsieur," said Madame de Portenduère, with a visible effort, "for at your age to venture through Paris on the tracks of a scapegrace's misdeeds——"

"Madame, in '65, I had the honor of seeing the illustrious Admiral de Portenduère at the house of the worthy Monsieur de Malesherbes, and at that of the Comte de Buffon, who was anxious to question him as to various curious facts in his voyages. It is not impossible that Monsieur de Portenduère, your late husband, may have been there too. The French navy was then in its glory; it held its own against England, and the captain contributed his quota of courage to the game. How impatiently, in '83 and '84, did we await news from the camp of Saint-Roch! I was very nearly joining as surgeon to the King's forces. Your grand-uncle, Admiral de Kergarouët, who is still living, fought his great battle at that time, for he was on board the 'Belle Poule.'"

"Ah! if he knew that his grand-nephew was in prison?" replied Madame de Portenduère.

"The Vicomte will no longer be there two days hence," said old Minoret, rising.

He put out his hand to take the old lady's, who allowed him to do so; he kissed it respectfully, bowed low, and went out; but he came in again to say to the curé—

“Will you, my dear abbé, secure a place for me in the diligence for to-morrow morning?”

The curé remained another half-hour to sing the praises of the doctor, who had intended to conquer the old lady, and had succeeded.

“He is wonderful for his age,” said she. “He talks of going to Paris and settling my son’s affairs as if he were no more than five-and-twenty. He has moved in good society.”

“In the best, madame; and at this day, more than one son of an impoverished peer of France would be very happy to marry his ward with a million of francs. Ah, if such a notion should enter Savinien’s brain, times are so altered that the chief difficulties would not be raised on your side after your son’s conduct!”

It was the intense amazement with which the old lady heard this speech that allowed the priest to finish it.

“You have lost your wits, my dear Abbé Chaperon.”

“Think it over, madame; and God grant that henceforth your son may behave in such a way as to acquire that old man’s esteem!”

“If it were not you, Monsieur le Curé,” said Madame de Portenduère; “if it were any one else who spoke to me in these terms——”

“You would never see him again,” said the abbé, smiling. “We must hope that your dear son may enlighten you as to what is doing in Paris in the matter of marriages. You will consider Savinien’s happiness, and, after compromising his future, you will surely not interfere with his making himself a position?”

“And it is you who say this to me!” responded Madame de Portenduère in amazement.

“If I did not, who would?” cried the priest, rising and beating a prompt retreat.

The curé saw Ursule and her godfather walking up and

down the little courtyard. The submissive doctor had been so teased by his ward that he had at last yielded ; she wanted to go to Paris, and had found a thousand pretexts. He called the curé, who joined them, and the doctor begged him to engage the coupé of the diligence for that very night if the coach-office were still open.

At six o'clock on the following afternoon the old man and the young girl reached Paris, and the doctor went, the same evening, to consult his lawyer. Political events looked threatening. The justice at Nemours had been telling the doctor the day before, several times in the course of their conversation, that he would be nothing less than mad to keep a penny in the funds so long as the quarrel between the Court and the Press should remain unsettled. Minoret's notary approved of the advice indirectly given by Bongrand. So the doctor took advantage of his visit to Paris to sell out his commercial investments and state securities, which were all at a premium, and to deposit his capital in the bank. The lawyer also advised his old client to sell the shares left to Ursule by Monsieur Jordy, which, as a good trustee, he had invested. He promised to set to work, with the help of a very knowing agent, to come to terms with Savinien's creditors ; but, to achieve every success, it was necessary that the young man should spend yet a few days in prison.

“ Hurrying on these matters costs at least fifteen per cent.,” said the lawyer to the doctor. “ And at any rate you cannot get at your money for seven or eight days.”

When Ursule learned that Savinien would be in prison at least a week longer, she entreated her guardian to let her go there with him, if only for once. Old Minoret refused. The uncle and niece were lodging at an hotel in the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, where the doctor had taken a suitable set of rooms ; and knowing his ward's religious honor, he made her promise never to go out while he was absent on business. The kind old man took her for walks about Paris, showing

her the arcades, the shops, the Boulevards—but nothing interested or amused her.

“What do you want?” asked he.

“To see Sainte-Pélagie,” she persistently replied.

Then Minoret hired a hackney coach, and took her to the Rue de la Clef, where the vehicle drew up in front of the squalid building—an ancient convent turned into a prison. The sight of the high gray walls, where every window was closely barred, of the low door, not to be entered without stooping—dreadful lesson!—the gloomy mass standing in a neighborhood full of poverty, where it rises in the midst of deserted streets, itself the supreme misery; the whole combination of dismal ideas choked Ursule, and made her shed tears.

“How is it,” said she, “that young men can be imprisoned for money? How is it that a debt gives to a money-lender such power as the King himself does not possess? And *he* is there!” she exclaimed. “Where, godfather?” she added, looking from one window to another.

“Ursule,” said her godfather, “you make me commit follies. This is not forgetting him!”

“But,” said she, “even if I must give him up, must I feel no interest in him? I may love him, and marry no one.”

“Oh!” cried the old man, “there is so much method in your madness, that I repent of having brought you.”

Three days later the old man had the receipts in due form, the title-deeds, and all the documents which were necessary to liberate Savinien. The liquidation, including the agent’s commission, had been effected for the sum of eighty thousand francs. The doctor had in hand eight hundred thousand francs, which, by his lawyer’s advice, he placed in treasury notes, so as not to lose too much interest. He kept twenty thousand in bank-notes for Savinien.

The doctor himself went to release him on Saturday at two o’clock, and the young Vicomte, already informed by a letter

from his mother, thanked his deliverer with sincere effusiveness of feeling.

“You must not delay in coming home to see your mother,” said old Minoret.

Savinien replied, in some confusion, that even in prison he had contracted a debt of honor; and he told the doctor of the visit of his three friends.

“I suspected you might have some personal debts,” said the doctor with a smile. “Your mother has borrowed a hundred thousand francs, but I have paid no more than eighty thousand; here is the remainder, use it with thrift, monsieur, and regard what is left as your stake on the green cloth of fortune.”

During the past week Savinien had reflected on the times he lived in. Competition on all sides demands severe labor from those who hope to make a fortune. Illegal methods require more talent and underhand manœuvres than enterprise under the light of day. Success in the gay world, far from securing a position, absorbs time and a great deal of money. The name of Portenduère, omnipotent according to his mother, was nothing in Paris. His cousin the deputy, the Comte de Portenduère, cut but a small figure in the midst of the elective Chamber in comparison with the peerage and the court, and had no more influence than enough for himself. Admiral Kergarouët existed only in the person of his wife. He had seen orators, men who had risen from a social rank beneath the nobility or the simple gentry, become personages of importance. In short, money was the pivot, the only means, the only motor of a society which Louis XVIII. had tried to form in imitation of that of England.

On his way from the Rue de la Clef to the Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, the young gentleman summed up his meditations, and laid them before the old doctor, in accordance with de Marsay’s advice.

“I must let myself be forgotten,” said he, “for three or

four years, and try to find a career. Perhaps I may make a name in political diplomacy or in moral statistics, by some treatise on one of the great questions of the day. At any rate, while finding some young person whom I may marry, and whose position may qualify me for election, I shall work in silence and obscurity."

The doctor studied the young man's countenance, and saw in it the fixed purpose of a man who, having been wounded, hopes for revenge. He greatly approved this scheme.

"My young neighbor," said he, "if you have cast the skin of the old nobility—which is not found to be good wear nowadays—after three or four years of a steady industrious life, I will undertake to find you a superior girl, pretty, amiable, pious, and with a fortune of seven or eight hundred thousand francs, who will make you happy, and of whom you may be proud, though she has no nobility but that of the heart."

"Eh, doctor!" cried the young man, "there is no nobility left—only an aristocracy."

"Go and pay your debts of honor, and return here. I will go to engage the coupé of the diligence, for my ward is with me," said the old man.

That evening, at six o'clock, the three travelers set out from the Rue Dauphine by the "Ducler." Ursule, who wore a veil, spoke not a word. After blowing her the kiss in an impulse of trivial flirtation, which had upset Ursule as much as a whole book of love, Savinien had totally forgotten the doctor's ward in the torments of his debts; and, indeed, his hopeless adoration of Emilie de Kergarouët did not suffer him to bestow a remembrance on the glances he had interchanged with a mere little girl at Nemours. So he did not recognize her when the old man made her get first into the coach and sat next her, dividing her from the young Vicomte.

"I have accounts to settle with you," said the doctor to the youth; "I have all your papers here."

“I was within an ace of not getting away,” said Savinien. “I had to order clothes and linen; the Philistines have robbed me of everything, and I am in the state of the prodigal son.”

However interesting the subjects of conversation between the old man and the young one, however pertinent some of Savinien’s remarks, the young girl sat in silence till it was dark, her green veil hiding her face, and her hands folded over her shawl.

“You do not seem to have found Paris very delightful, mademoiselle,” said Savinien at last, somewhat piqued.

“I am glad to return to Nemours,” she replied, in an agitated voice, putting up her veil.

In spite of the gloom, Savinien now recognized her by her thick plaits of hair and brilliant blue eyes.

“And, for my part, I can leave Paris without regret to bury myself at Nemours, since I there shall find so fair a neighbor,” said he. “I hope, Monsieur le Docteur, that you will allow me to visit you; I am fond of music, and I remember hearing Mademoiselle Ursule’s piano.”

“I hardly know, monsieur,” said the doctor gravely, “whether your mother will be pleased that you should come to see an old man who is obliged to have a mother’s care of this dear child.”

This measured reply gave Savinien much to think about; he now recollected that kiss, so lightly wafted.

It was now night; the heat was oppressive; the doctor and Savinien were the first to fall asleep. Ursule, who remained a long time awake, her head full of plans, succumbed about midnight. She had taken off her little hat of coarse straw plait. Her head, in a little cap of embroidered muslin, presently dropped on to her godfather’s shoulder. At day-break, near Bouron, Savinien woke the first. He saw Ursule in the untidy state produced by the jolting of the coach; her cap was tumbled and askew; her hair had come unpinned,

and the plaits fell about her face, which was rosy with the heat; but in this disorder, which is horrible in a woman to whom dress is indispensable, youth and beauty are triumphant. The sleep of innocence is always lovely. Her parted lips showed pretty teeth; her shawl, thrown back, allowed him to observe, without offense to Ursule, the grace of her figure under the folds of a full bodice of flowered muslin. And through the countenance shone the purity of the maiden's soul, all the more visible because no other expression mingled with it. Old Minoret, who presently woke, arranged her head against the corner of the coach to make her more comfortable; and she did not even feel what he did, so soundly was she sleeping, after spending so many nights in thinking of Savinien's misfortunes.

"Poor little thing!" said he to his companion, "she sleeps like a child—as she is."

"You should be proud of her," said Savinien, "for she seems to be as good as she is pretty."

"Ah! she is the light of the house! If she were my daughter, I could not love her better. She will be sixteen on the 5th of February next. God grant I may live to see her married to a man who will make her happy! I wanted to take her to the play in Paris, where she had never been before; she would not go; the curé at Nemours had forbidden it. 'But,' said I, 'when you are married, if your husband wishes to take you?' 'I shall do whatever my husband desires,' said she. 'If he should ask me to do anything wrong, and I should be so weak as to obey him, he will be held responsible before God; but I should find strength to resist—in his interest, of course.'"

As they reached Nemours, at five in the morning, Ursule woke up, quite ashamed of her untidiness, and of meeting Savinien's gaze of frank admiration. During the hour which the diligence took to drive from Bouron, where it had stopped a few minutes, the young man had fallen in love with Ursule.

He had studied the innocence of her soul, the beauty of her person, the whiteness of her complexion, the delicacy of her features, and the sweet voice which had spoken the brief expressive phrase in which the poor child had told everything while intending to tell nothing. In short, I know not what presentiment led him to think of Ursule as the wife the doctor had suggested to him, set in a gold frame by the magical words—"Seven or eight hundred thousand francs."

"In three or four years she will be twenty; I shall be twenty-seven. The good man spoke of struggles, of work, of good behavior. However cunning he may be, he will end by telling me his secret."

The neighbors parted before their respective houses, and Savinien put much meaning into his leave-taking, with a glance at Ursule full of imploring invitation.

Madame de Portenduère left her son to sleep till noon. The doctor and Ursule, in spite of their fatiguing journey, went to high mass.

Savinien's release, and his return in the doctor's company, had explained the object of his journey to the parochial politicians and to his heirs, who had met in council in the church square, as they had done a fortnight since. To the great surprise of all parties, on coming out of church, Madame de Portenduère stopped old Minoret, who offered her his arm, and conducted her home. The old lady wished to invite him and his ward to dinner that same day, telling him that the curé would be her other guest.

"He wanted to let Ursule see Paris," said Minoret-Levrault.

"Damnation! The old man cannot stir a step without his little housekeeper," cried Crémière.

"There must have been some very private transactions between them, for Mother Portenduère to take his arm," observed Massin.

"It has not occurred to you that your uncle has sold his investments and taken the young 'un out of quod!" cried

Goupil. "He refused my master, but he did not refuse his madame—— Ah! your goose is cooked! The Vicomte will propose a marriage-contract instead of a promise to pay, and the doctor will make the husband settle on his god-daughter all the money he will have to give her to secure such a match."

"It would not be such a bad stroke of business to marry Ursule to Monsieur Savinien," said the butcher. "The old lady is having them to dine with her to-day; Tiennette came over to me at five in the morning to secure a fillet of beef."

"Well, Dionis, this is a pretty piece of work!" said Massin, hurrying to meet the notary, who came out on to the square.

"Why, what's wrong?" said the notary. "All is well; your uncle has sold his securities, and Madame de Portenduère has asked me to go to her house to witness a deed acknowledging a loan of a hundred thousand francs from your uncle on a mortgage of her estates."

"Yes; but if the young folks were to marry each other?"

"You might as well say if Goupil were to be my successor," said the notary.

"Neither case is impossible," said Goupil.

On returning from mass, the old lady sent Tiennette to desire her son to come to her room.

The little house had three rooms on the ground floor. Those of Madame de Portenduère and of her deceased husband were on the same side of the house, divided by a dressing-room with a borrowed light, and a small anteroom opening on to the stairs. The window of the third room, which had always been Savinien's, looked out on the street, as did that of his father's. The staircase lay behind it in such a way as to leave space for a little dressing-room adjoining, with a small round window to the courtyard.

Madame de Portenduère's room, the gloomiest in the house,

also looked on the yard ; but the widow spent her life in the sitting-room on the ground floor, which communicated by a passage with the kitchen built on the farther side of the courtyard ; so that this room did duty both as drawing-room and dining-room.

The room that had been Monsieur de Portenduère's remained in the state in which it had been left on the day of his death ; the dead man alone was missing. Madame de Portenduère herself had made the bed, and laid upon it the captain's uniform, with her husband's sword, red ribbon, orders and hat. The gold snuff-box out of which the Vicomte had taken his last pinch of snuff was on the table by the bed, with his prayer-book, his watch, and the cup he used to drink out of. His white hair, arranged in a frame in a single thick curl, hung above the crucifix and holy-water cup over the bed. Finally, the trifling objects of his daily use were all in their place—his papers, furniture, Dutch spittoon, and field-glass hanging over the fireplace. The widow had stopped the antique clock at the hour of his death, which it thus recorded in perpetuity. The scent of his powder and snuff still hung in the air. The hearth was as he had left it. To go into the room was like seeing him again, on finding all the things that thus spoke of his habits. His tall cane with its gold knob still lay where he had left it, and his large doeskin gloves close beside it. On the console stood a vase of solid gold, coarsely executed, but worth a thousand crowns, a present from the port of Havana, which he had protected during the war of American Independence from an attack of the English, holding his own against a superior force, after getting the vessels under his convoy safe into harbor. As a reward the King of Spain had made him Knight of the Spanish Orders. For this achievement he was promoted on the first opportunity to the command of a squadron, and received the order of the Legion of Honor.

Then, on his next leave, he married his wife, with a for-

tune of two hundred thousand francs. But the Revolution stopped all further promotion, and Monsieur de Portenduère emigrated.

“Where is my mother?” asked Savinien of Tiennette, on making his appearance.

“She is waiting for you in your father’s room,” said the old Bretonne.

Savinien could not repress a little shudder. He knew how rigid were his mother’s principles, her worship of honor, her loyalty, her faith in noble blood, and he foresaw a scene. So he went as if to lead a forlorn hope, his heart beating and his face almost pallid. In the twilight that filtered through the Venetian shutters he saw his mother dressed in black, and wearing a solemn mien in harmony with this chamber of the dead.

“Monsieur le Vicomte,” she said, rising as he entered and taking his hand to lead him to the bedside, “there your father died—a man of honor; died without having anything to reproach himself with. His spirit is above. He must indeed have groaned there to see his son disgraced by imprisonment for debt. Under the old monarchy you would have been spared this mud-stain, by craving a *lettre de cachet*, by which you would have been shut up for a few days in a state prison. However, you now stand before your father, who can hear you. You, knowing all you had done before being taken to that squalid prison, can you swear to me, before that shade, and before God who sees all things, that you have done no dishonorable action, that your debts were the consequence of a young man’s follies—in short, that your honor is unspotted? If your blameless father were there, alive, in that armchair, if he could call you to account for your conduct, would he, after hearing you, embrace you still?”

“Yes, mother,” said the young man, with the most respectful gravity.

She opened her arms and clasped her son to her heart, shedding a few tears.

“Then let all be forgotten,” said she; “we have lost nothing but the money. I will pray to God that it may be restored to us; and since you still are worthy of your name, kiss me, for I have suffered greatly.”

“I swear to you, my dear mother,” said he, holding out his hand over the bed, “never again to give you the least trouble of the same kind, and to do all in my power to repair my past errors.”

“Come to breakfast, my child,” she said, and she left the room.

If the laws of the stage are to be applied to narrative, Savinien’s arrival, by introducing at Nemours the only actor as yet missing from the personages of this little drama, here completes the prologue.



## II.

### THE MINORET PROPERTY.

The action began with a scene so hackneyed in literature, whether old or new, that no one would believe in its effect in 1829 if the principal figure were not an old lady of Brittany, a Kergarouët, and an *émigrée*. But it must at once be made clear that in 1829 the nobility had reconquered in society some of the ground it had lost in political influence. Moreover, the feeling which governs grandparents when matrimonial suitability is in question, is imperishable; it is closely implicated with the existence of civilized society, and founded in family spirit. It is supreme at Geneva as at Vienna, and as at Nemours, where Zélie Levrault had refused her consent to her son's marrying the daughter of a bastard.

Still, every social law has its exceptions. Savinien proposed trying to bend his mother's pride before Ursule's innate nobility. The battle began forthwith. As soon as he was seated at table his mother began to tell him of the dreadful letters, as she called them, written to her by the Kergarouëts and the Portenduères.

“The family has ceased to exist, my dear mother,” replied Savinien. “Nothing is left but the individual. The nobility no longer forms a compact body. Nowadays no one asks if you are a Portenduère, or if you are brave, or a statesman; all that any one inquires is, ‘How much do you pay in rates and taxes?’”

“And the King?” asked the old lady.

“The King stands between the two Chambers, like a man between his lawful wife and his mistress. So I must contrive to marry some rich girl whatever her family may be—a peasant's daughter if she has a million of francs, and if she is

fairly well brought up; that is to say, if she comes from a convent-school."

"This is quite another matter!" said the old lady.

Savinien knit his brows over this reply. He knew that granite will, called Breton obstinacy, which characterized his mother; and was anxious to know, as soon as possible, what her views were on this delicate subject.

"And so," said he, "if I should fall in love with a girl—say, for instance, our neighbor's ward, little Ursule—you would oppose my marrying her?"

"To my dying day," said she. "After my death you alone will be responsible for the honor and the blood of the Portenduères and the Kergarouëts."

"Then you would leave me to die of hunger and despair for the sake of a chimera which, in these days, can only become real by acquiring the splendor of wealth."

"You can serve France and trust in God."

"You will postpone my happiness till the day after your death."

"It will be horrible on your part, that is all," calmly replied his mother.

"Louis XIV. was very near marrying Mazarin's niece—a parvenu."

"Mazarin himself opposed it."

"And the widow Scarron?"

"She was a d'Aubigné! Besides, the marriage was secret. But I am a very old woman, my son," she added, shaking her head. "When I am gone, you can marry to please your own fancy."

Savinien loved and respected his mother; but at once, though in silence, he set against the obstinacy of the daughter of the Kergarouëts, an obstinacy equal to her own, and determined never to have any wife but Ursule, to whom this opposition gave all the charm of a forbidden joy—as always happens in such cases.

When, after vespers, Doctor Minoret, with Ursule, dressed in pink and white, entered the chilly sitting-room, the poor child was seized with nervous trembling, just as if she had found herself in the presence of the Queen of France, and had some favor to ask of her. Since her talk with the doctor, the little house had assumed, to her, the proportions of a palace, and the old lady all the social importance that a duchess must have had in the eyes of a villein's daughter in the middle ages. Never had Ursule measured more hopelessly the distance which divided a Vicomte de Portenduère from the daughter of a bandmaster, a singer in the opera, the natural son of an organist, herself living on the bounty of a physician.

“What ails you, child?” said the lady, making her sit down by her side.

“Madame, I am overcome by the honor you condescend to pay me.”

“Why, child,” replied Madame de Portenduère in her most vinegary accent, “I know how much your guardian loves you, and I wish to do what is agreeable to him, for he has brought home the prodigal son.”

“But, my dear mother,” said Savinien, for it went to his heart to see Ursule's deep blushes, and the terrible effort by which she repressed her tears, “even if you were under no obligation to Monsieur Minoret, it seems to me we might be gratified by the pleasure mademoiselle is good enough to do us by accepting your invitation.” And the young man pressed the doctor's hand with meaning as he added—

“You, monsieur, wear the order of Saint Michael, the oldest French order, which in itself confers nobility.”

Ursule's great beauty, to which her almost hopeless love had, within the last few days, given the depth of expression which the greatest painters have always stamped on those portraits in which the soul is made strongly visible, had suddenly struck Madame de Portenduère, and led her to suspect

some ambitious interest under the doctor's generosity. And the speech to which Savinien had replied was uttered with a pointedness that wounded the old man in what was dearest to him. Still, he could not forbear from smiling as he heard himself addressed as "Chevalier" by Savinien, and discerned in this audacious exaggeration a lover's fearlessness of the ridiculous.

"The order of Saint Michael, to obtain which so many follies were committed of old, is fallen, Monsieur le Vicomte," replied the old court physician. "Fallen, like so many other privileges! It is no longer bestowed on any but doctors and poor artists. And so kings have done well to unite it to that of Saint Lazarus, a saint who was, I believe, an unhappy wretch brought back to life by a miracle! Viewed in this light, the order of Saint Michael and Saint Lazarus to us may be symbolical."

After this reply, full of irony and dignity, silence reigned, no one caring to break it; and it was becoming uncomfortable, when a knock was heard.

"Here is our good curé," said the old lady, rising, and leaving Ursule to herself, while she went forward to receive the priest—an honor she had not paid to Ursule or the doctor.

Minoret smiled as he looked from his ward to Savinien. To complain or to take offense at Madame de Portenduère's bad manners was a rock on which a small mind might have run aground; but the old man had too much breeding not to avoid it. He began talking to the Vicomte of the danger Charles X. was in at that time, after intrusting the direction of his policy to the Prince de Polignac. When a long enough time had elapsed to obviate any appearance of retaliation on the old lady by speaking of business matters, he handed to her, almost jestingly, the documents of the prosecution and the receipted bills which proved the accounts drawn up by the lawyer.

"My son acknowledges them?" she asked with a glance

at Savinien, who bowed in reply. "Well, then, they can be handed to Dionis," and she pushed away the papers, treating the affair with the contempt due in her eyes to money matters.

To look down on wealth was, in Madame de Portenduère's opinion, to enhance nobility, and leave the middle class without a foot to stand on.

A few minutes later Goupil called on behalf of his master, to ask for the accounts as between Savinien and Monsieur Minoret.

"And what for?" asked the old lady.

"To serve as a basis for the mortgage deed; there is no direct payment of money," replied the clerk, looking insolently about him.

Ursule and Savinien, who looked in this odious person's face for the first time, felt such a sensation as is produced by a toad, aggravated by a sense of ill omen. They both had that indefinable and vague anticipation of the future which has no name in speech, but which might be accounted for by an impulse of that inner self of which the Swedenborgian had spoken to Doctor Minoret. A conviction that this venomous Goupil would be fatal to them made Ursule quake; but she got over her agitation as she perceived with unspeakable joy that Savinien shared her feelings.

"Monsieur Dionis' clerk is not a handsome man," said Savinien, when Goupil shut the door.

"What can it matter whether people of that class are ugly or handsome?" said Madame de Portenduère, with an elevation of her eyebrows.

"I have no objection to his ugliness," said the curé, "but only to his malignity, which is unbounded, and he adds to it by villainy."

In spite of his wish to be amiable, the doctor grew cold and dignified, the lovers were uncomfortable. But for the simple good-humor of the Abbé Chaperon, whose gentle

cheerfulness made the dinner lively, the position of the doctor and his ward would have been almost intolerable.

At dessert, seeing Ursule turn pale, he said to her, "If you do not feel well, my child, there is only the street to cross."

"What ails you, my dear?" said the old lady to the girl.

"Unfortunately, madame," said the doctor severely, "her soul feels chilled, accustomed as she is to see nothing but smiles."

"A bad education, monsieur," said Madame de Portenduère. "Do you not think so, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Yes, madame," Minoret put in, with a glance at the curé, who could not say a word. "I have, I see, made life impossible to this seraphic nature if she were to be cast on the world; but before I die, I will find means to protect her from coldness, indifference, and hatred——"

"Godfather! I beg of you—that is enough. I feel nothing unpleasant here," she said, ready to meet Madame de Portenduère's eye rather than lend too much meaning to her words by looking at Savinien.

"Whether Mademoiselle Ursule is uncomfortable I know not, madame," said Savinien to his mother, "but I know that you are torturing me."

On hearing this speech, wrung from the generous young man by his mother's behavior, Ursule turned pale; she begged Madame de Portenduère to excuse her, rose, took her guardian's arm, courtesied, and went out. Then, as soon as she was at home, she rushed into the drawing-room, and, sitting down by the piano, hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"Why will you not leave it to my long experience to guide your feelings, cruel child?" cried the doctor in despair. "The nobility never think themselves under any obligation towards us of the middle class. In serving them, we do no more than our duty, that is all. Besides, the old lady perceived that Savinien looked at you with pleasure; she is afraid lest he should fall in love with you."

“At any rate, he is safe!” she said. “But to try to set down such a man as you are——!”

“Wait till I come back, my child.”

When the doctor returned to Madame de Portenduère’s he found Dionis there, and with him Monsieur Bongrand, and Levrault the mayor, the witnesses required by law to give validity to acts drawn up in communes where there is no official above a notary. Minoret led Dionis aside and spoke a word in his ear, after which the notary read the deed of mortgage; Madame de Portenduère pledged all her property until the hundred thousand francs loaned by the doctor to the Vicomte should be repaid, with the interest, calculated at five per cent. When reading this clause, the curé looked at Minoret, who answered the abbé by an approving nod. The good priest went to speak a few words to the lady in a low voice, and she replied quite audibly—

“I do not choose to owe anything to people of that kind.”

“My mother leaves the pleasantest part to me,” said Savinien to the doctor. “She will pay you all the money, and leave it to me to be grateful.”

“But you will have to find eleven thousand francs the first year,” observed the curé, “to pay the law costs.”

“Monsieur,” said Minoret to Dionis, “as Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère are not in a position to pay for the registration, add the costs to the capital sum, and I will pay them.”

Dionis made some calculations, and the whole sum was fixed at a hundred and seven thousand francs. When all the documents were signed, Minoret pleaded fatigue, and withdrew at the same time as the notary and the witnesses.

“Madame,” said the abbé, who remained with the Vicomte, “why affront that excellent Minoret, who has saved you at least twenty-five thousand francs in Paris, and who had the good feeling to leave twenty thousand in your son’s hands for his debts of honor?”

“Your Minoret is a sly fox,” said she, taking a pinch of snuff. “He knows very well what he is about.”

“My mother fancies that he wants to force me to marry his ward by swallowing up our farm, as if a Portenduère and the son of a Kergarouët could be made to marry against his will.”

An hour later Savinien made his appearance at the doctor's, where the heirs had come together, moved by curiosity. The arrival of the young Vicomte produced a great sensation, all the more because in each person it proceeded from a different emotion. Mesdemoiselles Crémère and Massin whispered together, and stared at Ursule, who blushed. The mothers murmured to Désiré that Goupil was very likely in the right as regarded the marriage. The eyes of all were then centred on the doctor, who did not rise to greet the young nobleman, but merely gave him a curt bow, without setting down his dice-box, for he was playing backgammon with Monsieur Bongrand. The doctor's cold manner surprised them all.

“Ursule, my dear,” he said, “give us a little music.

The young girl was only too happy to have some occupation ; and on seeing her hurry to the piano and turn over the green-bound volumes, the expectant heirs resigned themselves with expressions of pleasure to the torment and silence about to be inflicted on them, so eager were they to detect what was going on between their uncle and the Portenduères.

It happens not unfrequently that a piece, poor enough in itself, but played by a young girl under the stress of deep feeling, may produce more impression than a grand overture pompously given by a fine orchestra. In all music there lies, besides the idea of the composer, the soul of the performer, who, by a privilege peculiar to this art alone, can lend purpose and poetry to phrases of no great intrinsic value. Chopin, in our day, proves the truth of this fact on the piano, a thankless instrument, as Paganini had already done on the violin. This great genius is not so much a musician as a soul, which

becomes incarnate, and which could express itself in any form of music, even in simple chords.

Ursule, by her exquisite and perilous organization, belonged to this school of rare genius; but old Schmucke, the master who came to her every Saturday, and who, during her stay in Paris, had gone to her every day, had developed his pupil's gifts to the utmost perfection. "Rousseau's Dream," the piece Ursule now selected, one of Hérold's youthful compositions, is not lacking in a certain fullness which the player can bring out; Ursule gave it a variety of agitated feeling which justified the title of *Caprice*, which the fragment bears. By her playing, at once mellifluous and dreamy, her soul spoke to the soul of the young man, and wrapped him, as it were, in a cloud of almost visible thoughts. He, seated at the end of the piano, his elbow resting on the top, and his head supported by his left hand, gazed in admiration at Ursule, whose eyes, fixed on the wainscot beyond, seemed to be questioning some mystic world. A man might have fallen desperately in love for less.

True feelings have a magnetic power, and Ursule intended to reveal her soul to some extent, as a coquette dresses herself to attract. Savinien was admitted to that beautiful realm, carried away by her heart, which, in order to express itself, borrowed the power of the only art which speaks to the mind through the mind, without the aid of words, of color, or of form. Candor has the same power over men as childhood has, the same charms and irresistible attractions; and Ursule had never been more candid than at this moment, when she was waking to a new life.

The curé came to snatch the young man from his dreams by asking him to take the fourth hand at whist. Ursule went on playing; the heirs left, with the exception of Désiré, who remained to investigate the intentions of his uncle, of the Vicomte, and of Ursule.

"You have as much talent as feeling, mademoiselle," said



*HE GAZED IN ADMIRATION AT URSULE.*





Savinien, when the young girl closed the piano, and came to sit down by her godfather. "Who is your master?"

"A German who lives quite close to the Rue Dauphine, on the Quai-Conti," said the doctor. "If he had not been giving Ursule a lesson every day during our stay in Paris, he would have been here this morning."

"He is not only a great musician," said Ursule, "but a man of the most adorable simplicity."

"Such lessons must cost very dear!" cried Désiré.

The players exchanged ironical glances. When the game was ended, the doctor, who had been thoughtful all the evening, turned to Savinien with the expression of a man grieved to fulfill a painful duty.

"Monsieur," he said, "I am much gratified by the feeling which has prompted you to call on me so immediately; but your mother ascribes to me a double purpose of an ignoble kind, and I should give her the right to do so if I did not beg of you to come here no more, in spite of the honor your visits do me, and the pleasure I should take in cultivating your society. My honor and my peace of mind require that we should give up all neighborly intercourse. Pray tell your mother that if I do not request her to honor us—my ward and myself—by dining with us next Sunday, it is because I am perfectly certain that on that day she would be indisposed."

The old man offered his hand to the Vicomte, who pressed it respectfully, and merely said, "You are right, monsieur."

He went away, not without bowing to Ursule with an expression of regret rather than of disappointment. Désiré left the room at the same moment, but he could not speak a word with him, for Savinien rushed home.

For two days the coolness between the Portenduères and the doctor was the sole subject of conversation among the heirs, who did justice to the acumen of Dionis, and believed that the inheritance was safe. And thus, in an age when ranks are leveled, when the mania for equality puts all

individuals on the same footing, and threatens every institution, even military discipline—the last entrenchment of power in France ; when, consequently, passion finds no obstacles to be overcome but personal antipathies or inequality of fortune, the obstinacy of an old woman and the dignity of Doctor Minoret had raised between these two lovers barriers which, as usual, were fated to strengthen rather than to destroy their love. To an impassioned man a woman is worth just what she costs him ; now Savinien, foreseeing a struggle, efforts, and suspense, which already made the young girl precious to him, was determined to win her. Perhaps our feelings obey the law of nature as to the duration of all her creations—a long life has a long childhood.

Next morning, on waking, Ursule and Savinien had the same idea. This community of feeling would give birth to love if it were not the most delightful proof of its existence. When the young girl opened her curtains a little way, so as to give her eyes exactly space enough to look across to Savinien's room, she saw her lover's face above the window-fastening opposite. When we remember the immense service done to lovers by windows, it seems quite natural that they should be taxed. After thus protesting against her godfather's hard-heartedness, Ursule let the curtains fall to again, and opened the window to close the venetians, through which she could see without being seen. She went up to her room at least seven or eight times in the course of the day, and always saw the young Vicomte writing, tearing up papers, and writing again—to her, no doubt !

Next morning, when La Bougival woke Ursule, she handed her the following letter :

“ To Mademoiselle Ursule.

“ *MADemoiselle*:—I am under no misapprehension as to the suspicion of which a young man must be the object when he has placed himself in the position from which your guar-

cian rescued me. I henceforth must offer better guarantees than another man; hence, mademoiselle, it is with the greatest humility that I throw myself at your feet to avow my love. This declaration is not prompted by passion; it is based on a certainty which will last my life through. A mad passion for my young aunt, Madame de Kergarouët, brought me to imprisonment; will you not regard as a mark of the sincerest love the complete effacement of every memory, the substitution for that image in my heart of your own? From the moment when I saw you asleep, and so lovely in your childlike slumbers, at Bouron, you have filled my soul as a queen holds possession of her realm. I will have no wife but you. You have every perfection I can look for in the woman who is to bear my name. The education you have received and the dignity of your soul qualify you for the highest position. But I am too diffident of myself to attempt to paint you to yourself; I can only love you. After hearing you play last night, I remembered these lines, which seem to have been written on you:

“ ‘Made to attract the heart and charm the eye, at once gentle and intellectual, witty and reasonable, as polished as though she had spent her life at courts, as simple as the recluse who has never seen the world, the fire of her soul is tempered in her eyes by divine modesty.’

“I have felt the value of the beautiful soul which reveals itself in you by the smallest things. This is what gives me the courage to ask you—if as yet you love no one—to allow me to prove to you, by my care and my conduct, that I am worthy of you. My life depends on it; you cannot doubt that all my powers shall be employed not merely to please you, but yet more to merit your esteem, which will to me outweigh that of all the rest of the world. In this hope, Ursule, if you will permit me so to name you in my heart as one I worship, Nemours will be my paradise, and the most difficult undertakings will only bring me joys which I shall

lay at your feet, as we lay all at the throne of God. Tell me, then, that I may call myself  
YOUR SAVINIEN."

Ursule kissed this letter ; then, after reading it again, and clasping it with rapturous gestures, she dressed to go and show it to her godfather.

"Gracious heaven ! I was on the point of going without saying my prayers !" she exclaimed, turning back and kneeling down on her *prie-Dieu*.

A few minutes later she went down to the garden, where she found her guardian, to whom she gave Savinien's letter to read. They sat down together on a bench under the clump of creepers facing the Chinese pavilion. Ursule waited for the old man to speak, and he sat meditating much too long a time for an impatient girl. Finally, the outcome of their secret conference was the following letter, which the doctor had no doubt dictated in part :

"MONSIEUR:—I cannot fail to be much honored by the letter in which you offer me your hand ; but at my age, and in accordance with the rules I have been brought up in, I had to lay it before my guardian, who constitutes my whole family, and whom I love as both a father and a friend. These, then, are the painful objections he has raised, and which must serve as my reply.

"I, Monsieur le Vicomte, am but a poor girl, whose future fortune depends entirely not only on my godfather's good-will, but also on the doubtful issue of the measures he can take to evade the ill-will towards me of his next-of-kin. Though I am the legitimate child of Joseph Mirouët, bandmaster to the 45th Infantry Regiment, as he was my guardian's illegitimate half-brother, a suit, however unreasonable, may be brought against a young girl, who will then be defenseless. You see, monsieur, that my slender prospects are not the worst of my misfortunes. I have many reasons for humility. It is for

your sake, and not for my own, that I lay before you these considerations, which often weigh but lightly on loving and devoted hearts. But you must take into consideration the fact that if I did not represent them to you, I might be suspected of wishing to induce your affection to overlook obstacles which the world, and, above all, your mother, would think insurmountable. In four months I shall be sixteen. You will perhaps acknowledge that we are, both of us, too young and too inexperienced to struggle with the penury of a life begun on no fortune but what I possess through the kindness of the late Monsieur de Jordy. Besides, my guardian wishes that I should not marry before the age of twenty. Who can tell what fate may have in store for you during these four years, the best of your life? Do not spoil it for the sake of a poor girl.

“Having thus explained to you, monsieur, the reasons given by my dear guardian, who, far from opposing my happiness, desires to contribute to it with all his power, and who hopes to see his protection—which will soon be but feeble—replaced by an affection equal to his own, it only remains for me to say how deeply I am touched by your offer and the warm compliments you have added to it. The prudence which dictates this answer is that of an old man who knows life well; but the gratitude I must express is that of a young girl whose soul no other emotion has as yet entered.

“I can therefore in all truth sign myself your faithful servant,  
URSULE MIROUËT.”

Savinien did not reply. Was he trying to influence his mother? Had her letter extinguished his love? A thousand such questions, all unanswerable, tortured Ursule, and by reflex action the doctor, too, for he suffered under the slightest agitation that disturbed his dear child. Ursule often went up to her room and looked across at Savinien, whom she could see seated at his table, deep in thought, and often turning to

glance at her windows. It was not till the end of the week that she received this letter from Savinien, whose delay was explained by an increase of his love :

“To Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët.

“DEAR URSULE :—There is something of the Breton in me, and when once I have made up my mind, nothing can make me alter it. Your guardian—whom may God long preserve!—is perfectly right. But am I to blame, then, for loving you? And all I ask is to know whether you love me. Tell me, if only by a sign, and then these four years will indeed be the best of my life!

“A friend of mine has conveyed to my uncle, Admiral de Kergarouët, a letter, in which I asked his influence to get me into the navy. The kind old man, touched by my mishaps, has answered that the King’s nomination would be contrary to rule if I wished to take rank. However, after three months of study at Toulon, the minister can place me in a ship as foreman of the steerage; then, after a cruise against Algiers, with whom we are at war, I can pass an examination and become a naval cadet. If I should distinguish myself in the expedition to be sent against Algiers, I should certainly be made sub-lieutenant; but how soon? No one can tell. But, at any rate, the regulations will be made as elastic as possible to reinstate the name of Portenduère on the navy-list.

“I can win you only through your guardian, I see, and your respect for him makes you the dearer to my heart. So, before replying, I will seek an interview with him; on his answer my whole future must depend. Come what may, believe me that, rich or poor, the daughter of a bandmaster or of a king, you are to me her whom the voice of my heart has chosen.

“Dear Ursule, we live at a time when prejudice, which of old would have parted us, has no longer power enough to hinder our marriage. All the feelings of my heart are yours,

and to your uncle I will give such guarantees as may assure him of your happiness. He does not know that I have loved you more in a few minutes than he has loved you in fifteen years! Till this evening."

"See here, godfather!" said Ursule, holding out the letter with an impulse of pride.

"Ah! my child," cried the doctor, after reading the letter, "I am more glad than you are. By this determination the Vicomte has made up for all his misdeeds."

After dinner, Savinien called upon the doctor, who was just then walking with Ursule by the balustrade of the river-terrace. The Vicomte had received his clothes from Paris, and the lover had not omitted to enhance his personal advantages by dressing as carefully, as elegantly, as though it were to charm the handsome and haughty Comtesse de Kergarouët. On seeing him advance from the outside steps, the poor child clung to her uncle's arm exactly as if she were trying to save herself from falling into an abyss, and the doctor heard the deep, hollow throbbing of her heart; it made him shudder.

"Leave us, my child," he said to his ward, who went to sit down on the steps of the pavilion after suffering Savinien to take her hand and kiss it respectfully.

"Monsieur, will you give that dear creature to a ship's captain?" said the young Vicomte to the doctor in a low voice.

"No," said Minoret with a smile, "we might have too long to wait; but—to a ship's lieutenant."

Tears of joy stood in the young man's eyes, and he grasped the old man's hand very warmly.

"Then I shall go," he said, "to study, and try to learn in six months what the pupils of the naval college learn in six years."

"Go?" cried Ursule, flying towards them from the steps.

“ Yes, mademoiselle, to deserve you. So, the more haste I put into it, the more affection I shall show for you.”

“ To-day is the 3d of October,” said she, looking at him with infinite tenderness. “ Start after the 19th.”

“ Yes,” said the old man ; “ we will keep the feast of Saint-Savinien.”

“ Then, good-by,” exclaimed the youth. “ I must spend this week in Paris to take the preliminary steps, make my preparations, and buy the books and the mathematical instruments I need ; to make my way, too, in the minister’s good graces, and win the most favorable conditions possible.”

Ursule and her godfather went with Savinien to the gate. After seeing him go into his mother’s house, they saw him come out again, followed by Tiennette, carrying a little port-manteau.

“ Why, if you are rich, do you compel him to serve in the navy ? ” said Ursule to the doctor.

“ I believe you will soon think it was I who contracted his debts ! ” said her uncle, smiling. “ I do not compel him. But, my darling, a uniform and the cross of the Legion of Honor won in battle will wipe out many a smirch. In four years he may rise to command a ship, and that is all I ask of him.”

“ But he may be killed,” she said, showing the doctor a white face.

“ Lovers, like drunkards, have a Providence of their own,” replied the doctor lightly.

The poor child, unknown to her godfather, cut off at night enough of her beautiful long fair hair to make a chain ; then, two days later, she persuaded her music-master, old Schmucke, to promise that he would see that the hair was not changed, and that the chain should be finished for the following Sunday.

On Savinien’s return, he informed the doctor and his ward that he had signed his papers ; he was to be at Brest by the

25th. As the doctor invited him to dinner on the 18th, he spent almost the whole of two days at his house ; and, in spite of the most prudent warnings, the lovers could not hinder themselves from betraying their mutual understanding to the curé, the justice, the town doctor, and La Bougival.

“Children,” said the old man, “you are risking your happiness by not keeping your secret to yourselves.”

At last, on the fête day, after mass, during which they had exchanged glances, Savinien, watched for by Ursule, crossed the street and came into the little garden, where they found themselves almost alone. To indulge them, the good man sat reading his paper in the Chinese pavilion.

“Dear Ursule,” said Savinien, “will you give me a greater boon than my mother could if she were to give me life a second time ?”

“I know what you would ask me,” said Ursule, interrupting him. “Here, this is my answer,” she added, as she took out of the pocket of her apron the chain made of her hair, and gave it him with a nervous trembling that betrayed her excessive joy. “Wear this for my sake,” she said. “May my gift avert from you every peril by reminding you that my life is one with yours !”

“Ah, the little rogue! she is giving him a chain of her hair,” said the doctor to himself. “How could she do it? Cut her beautiful fair hair! Why, she would give him my blood !”

“And will you think it very odious of me if I ask you, before we part, to give me your formal promise that you will never have any husband but me ?” said Savinien, kissing the chain, and looking at Ursule, while he could not restrain one tear.

“If I have not told you so too plainly already—I who went to gaze at the walls of a prison when you were inside,” she answered with a deep blush, “I repeat it now, Savinien. I shall never love any one but you, and will never marry any one else.”

Seeing that Ursule was half-hidden among the creepers, the young man could not resist the pleasure of clasping her to his heart and kissing her forehead; but she gave a low scream and dropped on to the bench; and when Savinien sat down by her, imploring her pardon, he saw the doctor standing in front of them.

“My good fellow,” said he, “Ursule is a sensitive plant; a hard word might kill her. For her sake you should moderate the expression of your love. Ah! if you had loved her for fifteen years, you would have taken her word,” he added, in revenge for the last words of Savinien’s letter.

Two days later Savinien left. In spite of the letters he wrote regularly to Ursule, she was a victim to a malady that had no evident cause. Like a fine fruit attacked by a maggot, one thought was eating her heart out. She lost her appetite and her bright color. When her godfather first asked her how she was feeling—

“I want to see the sea,” she said.

“It is difficult to take you to a seaport in the month of December?” said the old man.

“Then shall I go?” said she.

If the wind was high, Ursule was in agonies, believing, in spite of the learned observations of her godfather, the curé, and the justice, that Savinien was warring with a hurricane. The justice made her happy for a few days with a print representing a naval cadet in his uniform. She read the newspapers, believing that they would give her news of the cruise in which Savinien was engaged. She devoured the seafaring novels of Cooper, and learned the meaning of sea words. These proofs of a fixed idea, so often affected by other women, were so perfectly natural in Ursule that she foresaw in a dream every letter from Savinien, and never failed to predict their arrival by relating the premonitory dream.

“Now,” said she to the doctor, on the fourth occasion

when this had happened without the doctor and the curé being at all surprised ; “ now, I am easy ; however far away Savinien may be, if he were wounded, I should feel it at the same moment.”

The old physician sat plunged in deep meditation, which, to judge from the expression of his face, the justice and the curé thought must be sorrowful.

“ What is wrong ? ” they asked him, when Ursule had left them together.

“ Will she live ? ” replied the old doctor. “ Can so frail and tender a flower withstand the anguish of her heart ? ”

Meanwhile the “ little dreamer,” as the curé called her, worked indefatigably ; she understood the importance to a woman of the world of extensive information ; and when she was not studying singing, harmony, or composition, she spent her time in reading the books chosen for her in her godfather’s extensive library.

While leading this busy life she suffered much, but she did not complain. Sometimes she would sit for hours gazing at Savinien’s window opposite. On Sunday, as she came from church, she followed Madame de Portenduère, watching her tenderly, for in spite of her sternness she loved her as being Savinien’s mother. Her piety was doubled ; she went to mass every morning, for she firmly believed that her dreams were a special grace from God.

Alarmed by the ravages of this nostalgia of love, on Ursule’s birthday her godfather promised to take her to Toulon to see the departure of the fleet for Algiers without announcing their purpose to Savinien, who was sailing with it. The justice and the curé kept the secret of the doctor’s intentions with regard to this journey, which seemed to be undertaken for the benefit of Ursule’s health, and which puzzled the heirs very greatly.

After having seen Savinien once more in his uniform, and after going on board the fine flagship of the admiral, to whom

the minister had especially recommended young Portenduère, Ursule, at her friend's desire, went to inhale the soft air of Nice, and traveled along the Mediterranean coast as far as Genoa, where she had news of the arrival of the fleet before Algiers and a good report of the landing. The doctor would gladly have continued the journey across Italy, as much to divert Ursule's mind as to complete her education and enlarge her ideas by comparing manners and scenery, and by the delights of a land where the greatest works of art are to be seen, and where so many civilizations have left glorious traces ; but the news of the opposition to the throne shown by the electors of the famous Chamber of 1830 called him back to France, whither he brought his ward home in a blooming state of health, and happy in the possession of a small model of the ship on which Savinien was serving.

The elections of 1830 gave cohesion to the Minoret heirs ; for, by the advice of Goupil and of Désiré Minoret, they formed a committee at Nemours, by whose efforts the Liberal candidate was returned for Fontainebleau. Massin exerted immense influence over the country voters. Five of the postmaster's farmers also had votes. Dionis represented more than eleven votes. By meeting at the notary's, Crémère, Massin, the postmaster, and their adherents got into a habit of assembling there. On the doctor's return, Dionis' room had thus become their camping ground.

The justice and the mayor, who then combined to resist the Liberals of Nemours, were beaten by the Opposition in spite of the efforts of the gentry in the neighborhood, and their defeat bound them very closely together. When Bongrand and the Abbé Chaperon told the doctor of the result of this antagonism, which had divided Nemours, for the first time, into two parties, and had given importance to his next-of-kin, Charles X. was actually leaving Rambouillet for Cherbourg. Désiré Minoret, whose opinions were those of the Paris bar, had invited fifteen of his friends, with Goupil at their head,

to come from Nemours ; the postmaster gave them horses to hurry to Paris, where they joined Désiré on the night of the 28th of July. Désiré and Goupil led this little troop to assist in the seizure of the Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall).

Désiré Minoret received the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, and was appointed deputy to the public prosecutor at Fontainebleau. Goupil won the cross of July. Dionis was elected mayor of Nemours, in the place of the Sieur Levrault, and the town council was then composed of Minoret-Levrault, deputy-mayor, of Massin, Crémère, and all the followers of Dionis.

Bongrand only kept his appointment as justice by the influence of his son, who was made public prosecutor at Melun, his marriage with Mademoiselle Levrault seeming at that time probable.

When three per cents. were down to forty-five, the doctor set out by post to Paris, and invested five hundred and forty thousand francs in certificates to the bearer. The rest of his fortune, amounting to about two hundred and seventy thousand francs, placed likewise in the funds, yielded nominally fifteen thousand francs a year. He invested in the same way the money left to Ursule by the old professor, as well as the eight thousand francs of nine years' accumulated interest, which, with the help of a small addition on his part to make it up to a round sum, brought in fourteen hundred francs a year to his ward. In obedience to her master's advice, La Bougival also would get three hundred and fifty francs a year by investing in the same way her five thousand and odd francs of savings. These prudent steps, as planned by the doctor and his friend Bongrand, were taken in perfect secrecy under favor of the political excitement. When calm was more or less restored, the doctor purchased a little house adjoining his own, and pulled it down, as well as the wall of his courtyard, to construct on the ground a coach-house and stables. That he should spend capital bearing a thousand

francs interest seemed to all the Minoret heirs pure insanity. This supposed craziness was the beginning of a new era in the doctor's life; at a moment when horses and carriages were being almost given away, he brought from Paris three fine horses and a chariot.

The first time the old man came to mass in a carriage, on a rainy day at the beginning of November, 1830, and got out to give his hand to Ursule, all the townfolk rushed to the square, as much to see the doctor's carriage and cross-question the coachman, as to comment on his ward, to whose excessive ambition Massin, Crémère, and the postmaster ascribed their uncle's follies.

“A chariot! heh, Massin?” cried Goupil. “Your inheritance promises well, hein!”

“You asked good wages, I suppose, Cabirolle?” said the postmaster to the son of one of his guards, who took charge of the horses, “for it is to be hoped that you will not see many horseshoes worn through in the service of a man of eighty. How much did those horses cost?”

“Four thousand francs. The chariot, though second-hand, cost him two thousand; but it is a good one. The wheels have the patent axle-box.”

“What do you call it, Cabirolle?” asked Madame Crémère.

“He says they have latent axle-hocks,” replied Goupil. “It is an English notion; they invented those wheels. Look how neat it is; all covered up, nothing to be seen, nothing to catch, no ugly square iron peg projecting beyond the axle.”

“What does axer-hock mean, then?” asked Madame Crémère very innocently.

“Surely,” said Goupil, “you need hardly axe that.”

“Ah! I understand,” said she.

“No, no; you are a good soul,” said Goupil. “It is a shame to take you in. The real word is patent axe-locks, because you must axe how it is fastened.”

“That’s it, madame,” said Cabirolle, who was himself taken in by Goupil’s explanation, the clerk spoke with such gravity.

“It is a handsome carriage, at any rate,” said Crémère, “and he must be rich to set up in such style.”

“She is going ahead, that little girl!” remarked Goupil. “But she is right; she is showing you how to enjoy life. Why have you not fine horses and chariots—you, Father Minoret? Will you submit to be humiliated? In your place I would have a coach like a prince’s.”

“I say, Cabirolle,” said Massin, “is it the little girl who puts my uncle up to all this luxury?”

“I don’t know,” replied Cabirolle, “but she is, so to speak, mistress of the whole place. And now master after master comes from Paris. She is to learn to paint, they say.”

“I will take the opportunity of having my likeness done,” said Madame Crémère. Country folks still speak of having a likeness done instead of a portrait taken.

“But the old German is not dismissed,” said Madame Massin.

“No, he is here to-day,” replied Cabirolle.

“There is safety in numbers,” observed Madame Crémère, making everybody laugh.

“You need no longer count on the inheritance,” cried Goupil. “Ursule is nearly seventeen; she is prettier than ever; traveling forms the youthful mind, and she knows the length of your uncle’s foot. The coach brings her five or six parcels a week, and dressmakers and milliners are always coming to try her gowns and things. My mistress is furious, I can tell you. Just wait till Ursule comes out, and look at her little neckerchief—a real India square, that must have cost six hundred francs.”

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst, it could not have produced a greater effect on the group of inheritors than this speech from Goupil, who rubbed his hands.

The doctor's old green drawing-room was redecorated by an upholsterer from Paris. Judged by the prodigality of his outlay, the doctor was accused first of having concealed the amount of his fortune and of having sixty thousand francs a year, and then of spending his capital to humor Ursule. He was regarded alternately as a millionaire and a spendthrift. "He is an old fool!" summed up the opinion of the neighbors. The misguided verdict of the little town had this advantage: it deceived the next-of-kin, who never suspected Savinien's love for Ursule, which was the real cause of the doctor's expenditure, for he was enchanted to accustom his goddaughter to play her part as a vicomtesse; and having an income now of fifty thousand francs, he indulged himself in the pleasure of beautifying his idol.

In the month of February, 1832, on the day when Ursule was seventeen, as she rose in the morning she saw Savinien at his window in his sub-lieutenant's uniform.

"How is it that I knew nothing about it?" she asked herself.

After the taking of Algiers, where Savinien had distinguished himself by a deed of valor that had won him the cross, the corvette on which he sailed having remained at sea for many months, he had been quite unable to send a letter to the doctor, and he did not choose to retire from the service without consulting him. The new government, wishing to keep so illustrious a name on the navy-list, had taken advantage of the general scramble of July to promote Savinien. Having obtained a fortnight's leave, the young lieutenant had come by mail from Toulon in time for Ursule's birthday, and to ask the doctor's advice at the same time.

"He is come!" cried the girl, rushing into her godfather's room.

"That is well," he replied. "I can guess his reason for quitting the service; he can now remain at Nemours."

“This is my birthday treat! It is all in those words!” she exclaimed, throwing her arms around the doctor’s neck and kissing him.

In reply to a signal she made him, Savinien came across at once. She wanted to admire him; he seemed to her changed for the better. In fact, military discipline gives to a man’s gestures, gait, and demeanor a mixture of gravity and decision, a certain rectitude, which enables the most superficial observer to recognize a soldier under a civilian’s coat; nothing can more clearly prove that man is made to command. Ursule loved Savinien all the more for it, and felt a child’s delight in walking arm in arm with him in the little garden, while she made him tell her the part he had played “in his capacity of naval cadet” in the siege of Algiers. Evidently it was Savinien who had taken Algiers. She saw everything red, she declared, when she looked at Savinien’s decoration. The doctor, who, while dressing in his room, watched the pair, presently joined them. Then, without telling the Vicomte everything, he explained to him that in the event of Madame de Portenduère’s consenting to his marriage with Ursule, his goddaughter’s fortune was such as to make his pay superfluous in any rank he might be promoted to.

“Alas!” said Savinien, “it will take a long time to overcome my mother’s opposition. Before I left, when she had the alternative of keeping me near her if she would agree to my marrying Ursule, or of seeing me only at long intervals, and knowing that I was exposed to the risk of my profession, she let me go——”

“But, Savinien, we shall be together,” said Ursule, taking his hand and shaking it with a kind of irritation.

That they should see each other and never part was to her the sum-total of love; she saw nothing beyond; and her pretty impatience and the petulance of her tone expressed such perfect innocence that the doctor and Savinien were touched.

Savinien, after his consultation with the doctor, sent in his letter of resignation, and Ursule's birthday was crowned with joy by her lover's presence.

A few months later, by the beginning of May, Doctor Minoret's home life had settled into calm regularity again, but with another constant visitor. The young Vicomte's assiduity was at once interpreted as that of a future bridegroom; all the more so since, whether at mass or out walking, his manner and Ursule's plainly betrayed the mutual understanding of their hearts. Dionis remarked to the heirs that the old man never claimed interest from Madame de Portenduère, who already owed it for three years.

"She will be forced to give in, to consent to her son's marrying beneath him," said the notary. "If such a misfortune should happen, it is probable that the larger part of your uncle's fortune will prove, as Basile says, an irresistible argument."

When the expectant heirs understood that the old man's preference for Ursule was too great for him not to secure her happiness at their expense, their wrath became as cunning as it was deep. Every evening since the revolution of July had seen them meet at Dionis' house, and there they cursed the lovers; and the evening hardly ever ended without their having tried in vain to hit on some way of thwarting the old man. Zélie, who had, no doubt, like the doctor, taken advantage of the fall in the funds to invest her enormous savings, was the most furious against the orphan and the Portenduères. One evening, when Goupil—who, however, as a rule, took care not to spend his evenings too dully—had come in to pick up some information as to the affairs of the town, which were under discussion, Zélie had a recrudescence of hatred. She had that morning seen the doctor, with Ursule and Savinien, returning from a drive in the neighborhood, with an appearance of intimacy that told all.

"I would give thirty thousand francs, gladly, if only God

would take our uncle to Himself before that Portenduère and that little minx could be married," said she.

Goupil walked home with Monsieur and Madame Minoret ; and when they were in the middle of their vast courtyard, he said, looking suspiciously about him to make sure that they were alone :

" Will you give me money enough to buy Dionis out of his business, if I will see that the marriage of Monsieur de Portenduère is broken off? "

" How? " asked the colossus.

" Do you think I am fool enough to tell you my plan? " replied the clerk.

" Well, my boy, make them quarrel, and we will see," said Zélie.

" I am not going to plunge into such a job on the strength of ' we will see.' The young gentleman is hot-headed, and might kill me ; and I must be well rough-shod, and his match with the rapier and pistol. Set me up in life, and I will keep my word."

" Stop the marriage, and I will set you up," retorted the postmaster.

" For nine months now you have been debating whether you will lend me a wretched fifteen thousand francs to buy Lecœur's business—the usher's—and you expect me to take your word? Get along ! You will lose your uncle's fortune ; and serve you right ! "

" If it were only a matter of fifteen thousand francs and Lecœur's business, I should not say no," replied Zélie ; " but to be security for fifty thousand crowns——! "

" But I will repay you," said Goupil, with a fascinating leer at Zélie, which the postmistress met with an imperious stare.

It was like vitriol on steel.

" We will wait," said Zélie.

" Possessed by the genius of evil ! " thought Goupil. " If

ever I get hold of these two," said he to himself as he went away, "I will squeeze them like lemons!"

Savinien, while cultivating the society of the doctor, the justice, and the curé, showed them the excellence of his character. The young man's love for Ursule, so absolutely disinterested, so constant, appealed so strongly to the three friends that they no longer separated the two young people in their thoughts. Before long the monotony of this patriarchal life, and the confidence the lovers felt in their future, had given their affection a fraternal aspect. The doctor often left Savinien and Ursule together. He had rightly estimated the admirable young man who kissed Ursule's hand when he entered, and would never have asked such a privilege when alone with her, so deep was his respect for the innocence and candor of the child; and the extreme sensitiveness which she had often betrayed had taught him that a harsh word, a cold look, or alternations of gentleness and roughness might kill her. The utmost boldness of the lovers always showed itself in the presence of the old men in the evening.

Two years, full of secret delight, thus slipped away, unbroken by any event but the useless efforts of the young man to obtain his mother's consent to his marriage with Ursule. He would sometimes talk for the whole morning, his mother listening to his entreaties and arguments, but making no reply but by the obstinate silence of a Bretonne or by curt refusals.

At nineteen, Ursule, elegant, well educated, and an excellent musician, had nothing more to learn; she was perfection. And she had a reputation for beauty, grace, and information which reached far and wide. One day the doctor had to refuse the proposals of the Marquise d'Aiglemont, who would have married her to her eldest son. Six months later, in spite of the absolute silence preserved by Ursule, by her guardian, and by Madame d'Aiglemont, Savinien heard by chance of this affair. Touched by such delicate conduct, he spoke of it

as an argument to overcome his mother's aversion, but she would only say—

“If the d'Aiglemonts choose to marry beneath them, is that any reason why we should?”

In the month of December, 1834, the worthy and pious old man was visibly breaking. As they saw him come out of church, his face pinched and yellow, his eyes dim, all the town began to speak of his approaching end, for the good man was now eighty-eight years of age.

“Now you will know where you stand,” they said to the heirs.

The doctor's death had, in fact, the fascination of a problem. But the old man did not think that he was ill; he had illusions on the subject, and neither poor Ursule, nor Savinien, nor Monsieur Bongrand, nor the curé, could, in decency, explain his danger to him; the town doctor of Nemours, who came to see him every evening, dared prescribe nothing more. Old Minoret felt no pain; he was gently burning out. In him the intellect remained clear, strong, and exact. In old men of this stamp the soul is potent over the body, and gives it strength to die standing. To postpone the fatal hour, the curé granted his parishioner a dispensation from attending mass at church, and allowed him to read prayers at home, for the doctor carefully fulfilled all his religious duties; the nearer he was to the grave, the more he loved God.

At the New Year, Ursule persuaded him to sell his carriage and horses, and dismiss Cabirolle. The justice, whose uneasiness as to Ursule's prospects was far from being lulled by the old man's half-confidences, touched on the delicate question of his fortune, explaining to him one evening the necessity for making Ursule independent by law, by declaring her to be of age. She would then be competent to receive an account of his guardianship and possess property; this would enable him to leave her money. In spite of this

opening, the old man, though he had formerly consulted the justice, did not confide to him what his purpose was with regard to Ursule; however, he formally declared her of age. The more eager the lawyer showed himself to know what steps his old friend had taken to provide for Ursule, the more suspicious the doctor became. In short, Minoret was actually afraid to confide to the justice the secret of the thirty-six thousand francs in bonds payable to the bearer on demand.

“Why,” said Bongrand, “set chance against you?”

“Of two chances,” replied the doctor, “one must avoid the most risky.”

Bongrand carried through the matter of the “emancipation” so briskly that Mademoiselle Mirouët was legally independent on the day when she was twenty. This anniversary was destined to be the last festival kept by the old doctor, who, feeling no doubt some presentiment of his approaching end, celebrated the occasion magnificently by giving a little ball, to which he invited the young people of the four families of Dionis, Crémière, Minoret, and Massin. Savinien, Bongrand, the curé and his two assistant priests, the town doctor, Mesdames Zélie Minoret, Massin, and Crémière, with old Schmucke, were his guests at a grand dinner before the dance.

“I feel that I have not long to stay,” said the old man to the notary towards the end of the evening. “I beg you to come to-morrow to draw up the report and accounts I have to hand over to Ursule as her guardian, so as to avoid all complications after my death. Thank God, I have not robbed my heirs of a sou, and have spent nothing but my income. Messieurs Crémière, Massin, and my nephew Minoret are the family trustees appointed for Ursule, and they must be present at the auditing of the account.”

These words, overheard by Massin, and repeated in the ballroom, filled the three families with joy, after they had

spent three years in constant alternations of feeling, believing themselves sometimes rich and sometimes disinherited.

“It is a lamp flying out,” said Madame Crémière. (She meant dying out.)

When, at about two in the morning, no one remained in the room but Savinien, Bougrand, and the Abbé Chaperon, the old doctor said, as he pointed to Ursule, lovely in her ball-dress, having just said good-night to the young Crémière and Massin girls—

“I place her in your hands, my friends. In a few days I shall no longer be here to protect her; stand between her and the world until she is married—I am afraid for her——”

These words made a painful impression. The account drawn up and read a few days later in the presence of a family council proved that Doctor Minoret was indebted to Ursule in the sum of ten thousand six hundred francs, partly as arrears of the shares bearing interest to the amount of fourteen thousand francs, which was accounted for by the investment of Captain de Jordy's legacy, and partly as a small capital of five thousand francs derived from certain gifts made to his ward during the last fifteen years, on their respective birthdays or namedays.

This authenticated schedule of the account had been advised by the justice, who feared what might be the result of the old man's death; and, unhappily, not without reason. The day after the account was passed which made Ursule the mistress of ten thousand six hundred francs in shares and of fourteen hundred francs a year, the doctor had an attack of weakness which compelled him to keep his bed.

In spite of the caution which shrouded the house, a rumor spread in the town that he was dead, and the heirs flew about the streets like the beads of a rosary of which the thread is snapped. Massin, who came to inquire, heard from Ursule herself that the old man was in bed. Unfortunately, the town doctor had prognosticated that when Minoret took to

his bed he would die at once. From that moment the whole family stood posted in the street, in the square, or on their front doorsteps, in spite of the cold, absorbed in discussing the long-expected event, and waiting for the moment when the curé should carry to the old man the last sacraments with all the ceremony usual in provincial towns. Hence, when two days later the Abbé Chaperon crossed the High Street, accompanied by his curate and the choir boys, the inheritors followed him to take possession of the house and prevent anything being removed, and to clutch with greedy hands all the imaginary treasure. When the doctor saw, beyond the clerics, all his heirs on their knees, and, far from praying, watching him with gleaming eyes as bright as the twinkling tapers, he could not repress a mischievous smile. The curé looked round, saw them, and read the prayers very slowly. The postmaster was the first to rise from his uncomfortable attitude, his wife followed his example; Massin, fearful lest Zélie and her husband should lay a hand on some little possession, went after them to the drawing-room, and there, a few minutes later, all the party had assembled.

“He is too honest a man to steal extreme unction,” said Crémère; “so we may be easy.”

“Yes; we shall each have about twenty thousand francs a year,” replied Madame Massin.

“I have gotten it into my head,” said Zélie, “that for the last three years he has not been investing; he liked to hoard the money——”

“The treasure is in his cellar no doubt?” said Massin to Crémère.

“If we are so lucky as to find anything at all!” observed Minoret-Levrault.

“But after what he said at the ball,” cried Madame Massin, “there can be no doubt.”

“Whatever there may be,” said Crémère, “how shall we proceed? Shall we divide? Or put it into the lawyer’s

hands? Or distribute it in lots? For, after all, we are all of age."

A discussion, which soon became acrid, arose as to the method of procedure. At the end of half an hour a noise of loud voices, above them all Zélie's shrill tones, rang across the courtyard out into the street.

"He must be dead," said the curious crowd that had collected there.

The uproar reached the doctor's ears, who could hear these words—

"But there is the house; the house is worth thirty thousand francs!" shouted, or rather bellowed, by Crémière.

"Very well, we will pay for it as much as it is worth," retorted Zélie sharply.

"Monsieur le Curé," said the old man to the abbé, who had remained with his friend after the sacrament, "let me die in peace. My heirs, like those of Cardinal Ximenes, are capable of pillaging my house before I am dead, and I have no monkey to make restitution. Go and explain that I will have no one in the house."

The curé and the physician went downstairs and repeated the dying man's orders, adding, in their indignation, some severe words of reproof.

"Madame Bougival," said the town-doctor, "shut the gate, and let no one in; a man cannot even die quietly, it would seem. Make a cup of mustard, to apply plasters to Monsieur Minoret's feet."

"Your uncle is not dead; he may live some time yet," said the abbé to the family who had brought all their children. "He desires perfect silence, and will have no one near him but his ward. What a difference between that young creature's conduct and yours!"

"Old hypocrite!" cried Crémière. "I will keep guard. It is quite possible that he may plot something against our interests."

The postmaster had already disappeared into the garden, intending to watch over his uncle with Ursule, and to gain admission into the house as her assistant. He came back on tiptoe without his boots making a sound, for there were carpets in the passages and on the stairs. He thus came close to his uncle's door without being heard. The curé and the physician had left; La Bougival was preparing the mustard plasters.

“Are we quite alone?” said the old man to his ward.

Ursule stood on tiptoe to look out on the courtyard.

“Yes,” said she, “Monsieur le Curé shut the gate as he went out.”

“My darling child,” said the dying man, “my hours, my minutes are numbered. I have not been a doctor for nothing; the mustard plasters recommended by the apothecary will not carry me through till to-night. Do not cry, Ursule,” he said, finding himself interrupted by his ward's sobs, “but listen to me: the point is that you should marry Savinien. As soon as La Bougival comes up with the sinapism, go down to the Chinese pavilion; here is the key; lift up the marble top of the Boule cabinet, and under it you will find a letter addressed to you; take it, and come up and show it to me, for I shall not die easy unless I know that it is in your hands. When I am dead, do not at once announce the fact; first send for Monsieur de Portenduère, read the letter together, and swear to me in his name and in your own that you will obey my last injunctions. When he has done what I desire, you can announce my death, and then the comedy of the inheritance will begin. God grant that those monsters may not ill-use you.”

“Yes, godfather.”

The postmaster did not wait for the end of the scene; he took himself off on tiptoe, remembering that the locked door of the pavilion opened from the book-gallery. He himself had been present at the time of a discussion between the

architect and the locksmith, who had insisted that if there were to be a way into the house through the window looking out on the river there must be a lock to the door leading into the book gallery, the pavilion being a sort of summer-house.

Minoret, his eyes dim with greed and his blood singing in his ears, unscrewed the lock with a pocket-knife as dexterously as a thief. He went into the pavilion, took the packet of papers without stopping to open it, replaced the lock and restored order, and then went to sit in the dining-room, waiting till La Bougival should be gone upstairs with the mustard plaster, to steal out of the house. This he achieved with all the greater ease because Ursule thought it more necessary to see that the mustard was applied than to obey her godfather's injunctions.

"The letter, the letter," said the old man in a dying voice. "Do as I bid you—there is the key. I must see the letter in your hands."

He spoke with such a wild look that La Bougival said to Ursule: "Do as your godfather tells you, at once, or you'll be the death of him."

She kissed his forehead, took the key, and went down, but was immediately recalled by a piercing cry from La Bougival, and ran back. The old man glanced at her, saw that her hands were empty, sat up in bed, and tried to speak—and then died with a last fearful gasp, his eyes staring with terror.

The poor child, seeing death for the first time, fell on her knees, and melted into tears. La Bougival closed the old man's eyes and laid him straight. Then, when she had "dressed the corpse," as she said, she went to call Monsieur Savinien; but the heirs, who were prowling at the top of the street, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, exactly like a flock of crows waiting till a horse is buried to come and scratch up the earth, and ferret with beak and claws, came running in with the swiftness of birds of prey.

The postmaster, meanwhile, had gone home to master the contents of the mysterious packet. This was what he read :

“ To my dear Ursule Mirouët, daughter of my illegitimate brother-in-law, Joseph Mirouët, and of his wife, Dinah Grollman.

“ NEMOURS, *January 15, 1830.*

“ MY LITTLE ANGEL :—My fatherly affection, which you have so fully justified, is based not merely on the promise I swore to your poor father to fill his place, but also on your likeness to Ursule Mirouët, my late wife, of whom you constantly remind me by your grace and nature, your artlessness and charm.

“ Your being the child of my father-in-law’s natural son might lead to any will in your favor being disputed——”

“ The old rascal ! ” exclaimed the postmaster.

“ My adopting you would have given rise to a lawsuit. Again, I have always been averse to the notion of marrying you myself to leave you my fortune, for I might have lived to a great age and spoilt your future happiness, which is delayed only by the life of Madame de Portenduère. Having regard to the difficulties, and wishing to leave you a fortune adequate to a handsome position——”

“ The old wretch, he thought of everything ! ”

“ Without doing any injury to my heirs——”

“ Miserable Jesuit ! As if we had not a right to his whole fortune ! ”

“ I have put aside for you the sum-total of my savings for the last eighteen years, which I have regularly invested by my lawyer’s assistance, in the hope of leaving you as happy as money can make you. Without wealth your education and superior ideas would be a misfortune ; besides, you ought to bring a good dowry to the excellent young man who loves you. So look in the middle of the third volume of the

'Pandects,' in folio, bound in red morocco, the last volume on the lower shelf above the library cupboard, in the third division on the drawing-room side, and you will find three certificates to bearer of three per cent. consols, each for 12,000 francs."

"What a depth of villainy!" cried the postmaster. "Ah, God will not permit me to be thus thwarted!"

"Take them at once, with the small savings left at the moment of my death, which are in the next volume. Remember, my darling child, that you are bound to obey blindly the wish that has been the joy of my whole life, and which will compel me to appeal for help to God if you should disobey me. But to guard against any scruple of your dear conscience, which is, I know, ingenious in tormenting you, you will find with this a will in due form, bequeathing these certificates to Monsieur Savinien de Portenduère; so, whether you own them, or they are the gift of your lover, they will be legitimately yours. Your godfather

"DENIS MINORET."

Subjoined to this letter, on a sheet of stamped paper, was the following document:

"THIS IS MY WILL.

"I, DENIS MINORET, Doctor of Medicine, resident at Nemours, sound in mind and body, as the date of this will proves, dedicate my soul to God, beseeching Him to forgive my long errors in favor of my sincere repentance. Then, having discerned in the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère a sincere affection for me, I bequeath to him thirty-six thousand francs in perpetual consols at three per cent., to be paid out of my estate as a first charge.

"Made and written all by my own hand at Nemours, January 11, 1831.

"DENIS MINORET."

Without a moment's hesitation the postmaster, who, to make sure of being alone, had locked himself into his wife's room, looked about for the tinder-box; he had two warnings from heaven by the extinction of two matches which would not light. The third blazed up. He burnt the letter and the will on the hearth, and took the needless precaution of burying the ashes of the paper and wax in the cinders. Then, licking his lips at the idea of having thirty-six thousand francs unknown to his wife, he flew back to his uncle's house, spurred by one idea—the single fixed idea that his dull brain could master. On seeing his uncle's dwelling invaded by the three families, at last in possession of the stronghold, he quaked lest he should be unable to carry out a project which he gave himself no time to think over, considering only the obstacles in the way.

“What are you doing here?” he said to Massin and Crémère. “Do you suppose that we are going to leave the house and papers to be pillaged? There are three of us; we cannot encamp on the spot. You, Crémère, go at once to Dionis and tell him to come and certify the death. Though I am an official, I am not competent to draw up the death certificate of my own uncle. You, Massin, had better ask old Bongrand to seal up everything. You,” he added to his wife, Madame Massin, and Madame Crémère, “you should sit with Ursule, ladies, and so nothing can be taken. Above all, lock the gate, so that no one can get out.”

The women, who felt the weight of this advice, went at once to Ursule's room, where they found the noble girl, already the object of such cruel suspicions, on her knees in prayer, her face bathed in tears.

Minoret, guessing that they would not remain long with Ursule, and suspicious of his co-heirs' want of trust in him, hastened to the library, saw the volume, which he opened, took out the three certificates, and found in the other thirty bank-notes. Notwithstanding his base nature, the big man

fancied a whole chime was ringing in each ear, the blood hissed in his brain, as he achieved the theft. In spite of the cold weather, his shirt was wet with perspiration down his back; and his legs shook to such a degree that he dropped into an armchair in the drawing-room as if he had been struck on the head with a sledge-hammer.

“Dear me, how glib the idea of a fortune has made old Minoret!” Massin had said, as they hurried through the town. “Did you notice it?” he observed to Crémière. ‘Come here, and go there!’ How well he knows the game, and how to play it!”

“Yes, for a fat-head he had a style——”

“I say,” said Massin in alarm, “his wife is with him. They are two too many. Do you run the errands; I will go back again.”

So just as the postmaster had seated himself, he saw the registrar’s hot face at the gate, for he had run back with the nimbleness of a ferret.

“Well, what is it?” asked the postmaster, as he let in his co-heir.

“Nothing; I came back to witness the sealing,” replied Massin, glaring at him like a wildcat.

“I wish it were done, and that we could all go quietly home,” said Minoret.

“And we will put some one in charge,” said the registrar. “La Bougival is capable of anything in the interest of that little minx. We will put in Goupil.”

“Goupil!” cried Minoret; “he would find the hoard, and we should see nothing but smoke.”

“Let us see,” replied Massin; “this evening they will watch by the dead. We shall have everything sealed up in an hour, so our wives will be on guard themselves. The funeral must be to-morrow at noon. The inventory cannot be made till after a week.”

“But,” said the colossus smiling, “we can turn out that

minx, and we will engage the mayor's drummer to stop in the house and guard the property."

"Very good," said the registrar, "see to that yourself; you are the head of the Minorets."

"Now, ladies, ladies, be so good as to wait in the drawing-room. You cannot be off to dinner yet; we must witness the affixing of the seals for our common interest."

He then took Zélie aside to impart to her Massin's idea about Ursule. The women, whose hearts were full of vengeance, and who longed to turn the tables on "the little hussy," hailed the idea of turning her out of the house with glee.

When Bongrand arrived he was indignant at the request made to him, as a friend of the deceased, by Zélie and Madame Massin, to desire Ursule to leave the house.

"Go yourselves and turn her out of the home of her father, her godfather, her uncle, her benefactor, her guardian! Go—you who owe your fortunes to her nobility of character—take her by the shoulders—thrust her into the street in the face of the whole town! You think her capable of robbing you? Well, then, engage a guardian of the property; you have a perfect right to do so. But understand clearly that I will put seals on nothing in her room; it is her own, all that is in it is her property; I shall inform her what her rights are, and advise her to place everything there that belongs to her.—Oh! in your presence!" he added, hearing a murmur of disapproval.

"What?" cried the tax-receiver to the postmaster and the women, who were struck speechless at Bongrand's angry address.

"A pretty magistrate!" said Minoret.

Ursule, on a low chair, half-fainting, her head thrown back, her hair undone, was sobbing from time to time. Her eyes were heavy, their lids swollen; in short, she was in a state of moral and physical prostration, which might have touched the heart of the fiercest creatures excepting heirs.

“Ah, Monsieur Bongrand, after my happy fête, here are death and despair,” she said, with the unconscious poetry of a sweet nature. “You know what he was. In twenty years he never spoke an impatient word to me! I thought he would live to a hundred! He was a mother to me,” she cried, “and a kind mother!”

The utterance of her broken ideas brought on a torrent of tears, broken by sobs, and she fell back half-senseless.

“My child,” said the justice, hearing the inheritors on the stairs, “you have the rest of your life to weep in, and only a moment for business. Bring into your own room everything in the house that belongs to you. The heirs insist on my affixing seals——”

“Oh, his heirs may take everything!” cried Ursule, starting up in a spasm of fierce indignation. “I have here all that is precious to me!” and she struck her bosom.

“What? what?” asked the postmaster, who, with Massin, now showed his horrible face.

“The memory of his virtues, of his life, of all his words, the image of his heavenly mind,” she replied, her eyes and cheeks flaming as she raised her hand with a proud gesture.

“Ay, and you have a key there too,” cried Massin, going on all fours like a cat to seize a key which slipped out of the folds of her bodice as she lifted her arm.

“It is the key of his study,” she said, coloring. “He was sending me there just when he died.”

The two men exchanged a hideous smile, and turned to the justice with a look that expressed a blighting suspicion. Ursule saw and interpreted the look, malignant on Minoret’s part, involuntary on Massin’s, and drew herself up, as pale as if all her blood had ebbed; her eyes glistened with the lightnings that can only flash at the cost of vitality, and in a choking voice she said—

“Ah, Monsieur Bongrand, all that is in this room is mine only by my godfather’s kindness; they may take it all; I have

nothing about me but my clothes; I will go out of it and never come in again."

She went into her guardian's room, and no entreaties could bring her forth—for the heirs were a little ashamed of their conduct. She desired La Bougival to engage two rooms at the Old Posting Inn till she should find some lodging in the town, where they might stay together. She went into her room only to fetch her prayer-book, and remained all night with the curé and another priest and Savinien, weeping and praying. Savinien came in after his mother had gone to bed, and knelt down without speaking by Ursule, who gave him the saddest smile, while thanking him for coming so faithfully to share in her sorrows.

"My child," said Monsieur Bongrand, bringing in a large bundle, "one of your uncle's relations has taken out of your wardrobe all that you need, for the seals will not be removed for some days, and you will then have everything that belongs to you. In your own interest I have placed seals on your things too."

"Thank you," she said, pressing his hand. "Come and look at him once more. You would think he was sleeping."

The old man's face had at this moment the transient bloom of beauty which is seen on the face of those who have died without pain; it seemed radiant.

"Did he not give you anything privately before he died?" asked the justice of Ursule in a whisper.

"Nothing," she replied. "He only said something about a letter——"

"Good! that will be found," said Bongrand. "Then it is lucky for you that they insisted on the seals."

At daybreak Ursule bade adieu to the house where her happy childhood had been spent, and above all to the room where her love had had its birth, and which was so dear to her that in the midst of her deep grief she had a tear of regret for this peaceful and happy nook. After gazing for the last time

on her windows and on Savinien in turn, she went off to the inn, accompanied by La Bougival, who carried her bundle; by the justice, who gave her his arm; and by Savinien, her kind protector.

And so, in spite of every precaution, the suspicious lawyer was in the right; Ursule would be bereft of fortune, and at war with the heirs-at-law.

Next day the whole town followed Doctor Minoret's funeral. When they heard of the conduct of the next-of-kin to Ursule, most people thought it natural and necessary; there was an inheritance at stake; the old man was miserly; Ursule might fancy she had rights; the heirs were only protecting their property; and, after all, she had humiliated them enough in their uncle's time—he had made them as welcome as a dog among ninepins. Désiré Minoret, who was doing no great things in his office, said the neighbors who were envious of the postmaster, came for the funeral. Ursule, unable to attend, was in bed, ill of a nervous fever, brought on as much by the insults offered her as by her deep grief.

“Just look at that hypocrite in tears,” said some of the faction, pointing to Savinien, who was in great sorrow for the doctor's death.

“The question is whether he has any good cause for tears,” remarked Goupil. “Do not laugh too soon; the seals have not yet been removed.”

“Pooh!” said Minoret, who knew more than he did, “you have always frightened us for nothing.”

Just as the procession was starting for the church, Goupil had a bitter mortification; he was about to take Désiré's arm, but the young man turned away, thus denying his comrade in the eyes of all Nemours.

“It is of no use to be angry,” said the clerk to himself; “I should lose all chance of revenge,” and his dry heart swelled in his bosom like a sponge.

Before breaking the seals and making the inventory, they

had to wait for the public prosecutor's commission, as public guardian of all orphans, to be issued to Bongrand as his representative. Then the Minoret property, of which every one had talked for ten days, was released, and the inventory was made and witnessed with every formality of the law. Dionis made a job of it; Goupil was glad to have a finger in any mischief; and as the business was a paying one, they took their time over it. They generally breakfasted on the spot. The notary, the clerks, heirs, and witnesses drank the finest wines in the cellar.

In a country town, where every one has his own house, it is rather difficult to find lodgings; and when any business is for sale, the house commonly goes with it. The justice, who was charged by the court with the guardianship of the orphan girl, saw no way of housing her out of the inn but by buying for her, in the High Street, at the corner of the bridge over the Loing, a small house, with a door opening into a passage; on the ground floor was a sitting-room with two windows on the street, and a kitchen behind it, with a glass door looking into a yard of about a hundred square feet. A narrow stair, with a borrowed light from the river-side, led to the first floor, containing three rooms, and to two attics above.

Monsieur Bongrand borrowed two thousand francs of La Bougival's savings to pay the first installment of the price of this house, which was six thousand francs, and he obtained a delay for the remainder. To make room for the books which Ursule wished to buy back, Bongrand had a partition pulled down between two of the first-floor rooms, having ascertained that the depth of the house was sufficient to hold the bookshelves. He and Savinien hurried on the workmen, who cleaned, painted, and restored this little dwelling with such effect, that, by the end of March, Ursule could move from the inn and find in the plain little house a bedroom just like that from which the heirs had ejected her, for it was full of

the furniture brought away by the justice at the removal of the seals. La Bougival, sleeping overhead, could be brought down at the call of a bell which hung by her young mistress' bed.

The room intended for the library, the ground-floor sitting-room, and the kitchen, as yet unfurnished, were colored, repapered, and painted, awaiting the purchases the young girl might make at the sale of her godfather's household goods.

Though they well knew Ursule's strength of character, the justice and the curé both dreaded for her the sudden transition to a life so devoid of the elegance and luxury to which the doctor had always accustomed her. As to Savinien, he fairly wept over it; and he had secretly given the workmen and the upholsterer more than one gratuity in order that Ursule should find no difference, in her own room at least, between the old and the new. But the young girl, who found all her happiness in Savinien's eyes, showed the sweetest resignation. In these circumstances she charmed her two old friends, and proved to them, for the hundredth time, that only grief of heart could give her real suffering. Her sorrow at her godfather's death was too deep for her to feel the bitterness of her changed fortunes, which, nevertheless, raised a fresh obstacle in the way of her marriage. Savinien's dejection at seeing her brought so low was such that she felt obliged to say in his ear, as they came out of church the morning of her moving into her new abode :

“ Love cannot live without patience ; we must wait.”

As soon as the preamble to the inventory was drawn up, Massin, advised by Goupil, who turned to him in his covert hatred of Minoret, hoping for more from the usurer's self-interest than from Zélie's thriftiness, foreclosed on Madame and Monsieur de Portenduère, whose term for payment had lapsed. The old lady was stunned by a summons to pay up 129,517 francs 55 centimes to the heirs-at-law within twenty-four hours, and interest from the day of the demand, under

penalty of the seizure of her landed estate. To borrow money to pay with was impossible. Savinien went to consult a lawyer at Fontainebleau.

“You have had a bad set to deal with who will make no compromise; their point is to drive you to extremities and take possession of the farm at Bordières,” said the lawyer. “The best thing will be to effect a voluntary sale so as to avoid costs.”

This melancholy news was a blow to the old Bretonne, to whom her son mildly remarked that if she had but consented to his marriage during Minoret’s lifetime, the doctor would have placed all his possessions in the hands of Ursule’s husband. At this moment they would have been enjoying wealth instead of suffering misery. Though spoken in no tone of reproach, this argument crushed the old lady quite as much as the notion of an immediate and violent eviction.

Ursule, hardly recovered from her fever and the blow dealt her by the doctor’s next-of-kin, was bewildered with dismay when she heard of this fresh disaster. To love, and be unable to help the person beloved, is one of the most terrible pangs that the soul of a high-minded and delicately constituted woman can suffer.

“I meant to buy my uncle’s house,” she said. “I will buy your mother’s instead.”

“Is it possible?” said Savinien. “You are under age, and cannot sell your securities without elaborate formalities, to which the public prosecutor would not give his consent. And, indeed, we shall attempt no resistance. All the town will look on with satisfaction at the discomfiture of a noble house. These townsmen are like hounds at the death. Happily, I still have ten thousand francs, on which my mother can live till this deplorable business is wound up. And, after all, the inventory of your godfather’s property is not yet complete. Monsieur Bongrand still hopes to find something for you. He is as much surprised as I am to find you left penniless. The doctor so often spoke to him and to me of the

handsome future he had prepared for you, that we cannot at all understand this state of things."

"Oh," said she, "if I can but buy the books and my godfather's furniture, that they may not be dispersed or pass into strange hands, I am content with my lot."

"But who knows what price those rascally people may not set on the things you wish to have!"

From Montargis to Fontainebleau the Minoret heirs, and the million they hoped to find, were the talk of the country; but the most careful search made throughout the house since the removal of the seals had led to no discovery. The hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs of the Portenduère mortgage, the fifteen thousand francs a year in three per cents., then quoted at sixty-five, and yielding a capital of three hundred and eighty thousand, the house, valued at forty thousand francs, and the handsome furniture, amounted to a total of about six hundred thousand francs, which the outer world thought a very consoling figure.

Minoret had at this time some moments of acute uneasiness. La Bougival and Savinien, who, like the justice, persisted in believing in the existence of a will, came in after every day's cataloguing to ask Bongrand the result of the investigations. The doctor's old friend would exclaim, as the clerks and the heirs-at-law quitted the premises: "I cannot understand it?"

As, in the eyes of many superficial observers, two hundred thousand francs apiece to each inheritor seemed a very fair fortune for the provinces, it never occurred to any one to inquire how the doctor could have kept house as he had done on an income of no more than fifteen thousand francs, since he had never drawn the interest on the Portenduère mortgage. Bongrand, Savinien, and the curé alone asked this question in Ursule's interest, and, on hearing them give it utterance, the postmaster more than once turned pale.

"And yet we have certainly hunted everywhere—they to find a hoard, and I to find a will, in favor probably of Mon-

sieur de Portenduère," said the justice the day the inventory was finished and signed. "They have sifted the ash-heap, raised the marble tops, felt in his slippers, pulled the bedsteads to pieces, emptied the mattresses, run pins into the counterpanes and coverlets, turned out his eiderdown quilt, examined every scrap of paper, every drawer, dug over the ground in the cellar; and I was ready to bid them pull the house down."

"What do you think about it?" asked the curé. "The will has been made away with by one of them."

"And the securities?"

"Try to find them! Try to guess what such creatures would be at—as cunning, as wily, and as greedy as these Massins and Crémières. Make what you can of such a fortune as this Minoret's; he gets two hundred thousand francs for his share, and he is going to sell his license, his house, and his interest in the Messageries for three hundred and fifty thousand! What sums of money! To say nothing of the savings on his thirty-odd thousand francs derived from real estate. Poor doctor!"

"The will might have been hidden in the library!" said Savinien.

"And, therefore, I did not dissuade the child from buying the books. But for that, would it not have been folly to let her spend all her ready money in books she will never look into?"

The whole town had believed that the doctor's godchild was in possession of the undiscoverable securities; but when it was known beyond a doubt that her fourteen thousand francs in consols and her little personalty constituted her whole fortune, the doctor's house and furniture excited the greatest curiosity. Some thought that bank-notes would be found in the stuffing of the chairs; others that the old man must have hidden them in his books. The sale accordingly afforded the spectacle of the strange precautions taken by the

heirs. Dionis, as auctioneer, explained with regard to each article put up for sale that the heirs-at-law were selling the piece of furniture only, and not anything that might be found in it; then, before parting with it, they all submitted it to the closest scrutiny, pinched it, tapped it, shook it; and then gazed after it with the fond looks of a father parting with his only son for a voyage to the Indies.

“Oh, mademoiselle,” said La Bougival, on her return from the first morning’s sale. “I will not go again. Monsieur Bongrand is right; you could not bear to see it. Everything is upside down. They come and go as if it were the street; the handsomest furniture is used for anything that is wanted; they stand upon it; there is such a mess that a hen could not find her chicks! You might think there had been a fire. Everything is turned out into the courtyard, the wardrobes all open and empty! Oh, poor, dear man, it is lucky for him he is dead! This sale would have been the death of him!”

Bongrand, who was buying for Ursule the things of which the old man had been fond, and which were suitable for her small house, did not appear when the library was sold. Sharper than the heirs-at-law, whose greed would have made him pay too dear for the books, he gave a commission to a second-hand book-dealer at Melun, who came to Nemours on purpose, and who managed to secure several lots. As a consequence of the suspicions of the heirs, the books were sold one by one. Three thousand volumes were turned over, shaken one by one, held by the boards and fluttered, to make any paper fly out that might be hidden between the leaves; finally, the bindings and backs were closely examined. The lots secured for Ursule mounted up to about six thousand five hundred francs, half of her claims on the estate.

The bookcase was not delivered over until it had been carefully examined by a cabinetmaker, noted for his experience of secret drawers and panels, who was sent for expressly, from Paris. When the justice gave orders that the bookcase

and books should be conveyed to Mademoiselle Mirouët's house, the heirs-at-law felt some vague alarms, which were subsequently dissipated by seeing that she was no richer than before.

Minoret bought his uncle's house, which the co-heirs ran up to about fifty thousand francs, imagining that the post-master hoped to find a treasure in the walls. And the deed of sale contained stipulations on this point. A fortnight after the conclusion of the whole business, Minoret, having sold his post-horses and his business to the son of a wealthy farmer, moved into his uncle's house, on which he spent considerable sums in improvements and repairs. So Minoret condemned himself to live within a few yards of Ursule.

"I only hope," said he to Dionis the day when Savinien and his mother had notice of the foreclosure, "that now we shall be rid of this precious nobility. We will turn them out, one by one."

"The old lady, with her fourteen quarterings, will not stay to witness the disaster," said Goupil. "She will go to die in Brittany, where, no doubt, she will find a wife for her son."

"I don't think so," replied the notary, who, that morning, had drawn up the agreement of purchase for Bongrand. "Ursule has just bought the widow Richard's little house."

"That cursed little fool does not know what to do next to annoy us!" cried Minoret, very rashly.

"Why, what can it matter to you if she lives at Nemours?" asked Goupil, astonished at the vehement disgust shown by the great simpleton.

"Do you not know," said Minoret, turning as red as a poppy, "that my son is fool enough to be in love with her? I would give a hundred crowns to see Ursule well out of Nemours."

From this it is easy to understand how much Ursule, poor and resigned as she was, would be in Minoret's way, with all

his money. The worry of securities to be realized, of selling his business, the expeditions consequent on such unwonted affairs, his disputes with his wife over every little detail, and the purchase of the doctor's house, where Zélie wished to live quite plainly for her son's sake—all this turmoil, so unlike the quiet course of his usual life, prevented the great Minoret from thinking of his victim. But a few days after he had settled in the Rue des Bourgeois, about the middle of May, on returning from a walk, he heard the sounds of a piano, and saw La Bougival sitting in the window, like a dragon guarding a treasure; and at the same moment he heard an importunate voice within himself.

An explanation of the reason why, in a man of his temper, the sight of Ursule, who did not even suspect the theft he had committed to her injury, became at once unendurable, why the sight of her dignity in misfortune filled him with the desire to get her out of the town, and why this desire assumed the character of hatred and passion, would lead perhaps to a complete moral treatise. Perhaps he felt that he was not the legitimate possessor of the thirty-six thousand francs while she to whom they belonged was so close to him. Perhaps he thought that by some chance his theft would be discovered, so long as those he had robbed were within reach. Perhaps, even, in a nature so primitive, so rough-hewn as his was, and hitherto always law-abiding, Ursule's presence awoke some kind of remorse. Perhaps this remorse was the more poignant because he had so much more wealth than had been legitimately acquired.

He no doubt ascribed these stirrings of his conscience wholly to Ursule's presence, fancying that if she were out of sight these uncomfortable pangs would vanish too. Or perhaps, again, crime has its own counsel of perfection. An ill deed begun may demand its climax, a first blow may require a second—a death-blow. Robbery, perhaps, inevitably leads to murder. Minoret had committed the theft without a mo-

ment's pause for reflection, events had crowded on so swiftly ; reflection came afterwards. Now, if the reader has fully pictured the appearance and build of this man, he will understand the prodigious results on him of an idea. Remorse is more than an idea ; it is the outcome of a feeling which can no more be smothered than love can, and which is tyrannous too. But just as Minoret had not hesitated for an instant to possess himself of the fortune intended for Ursule, so he mechanically felt the need of getting her away from Nemours when the sight of her cheated innocence stung him. Being an imbecile, he never considered consequences ; he went on from danger to danger, urged by his instinctive cupidity, like a wild animal which cannot foresee the wiles of the hunter, and trusts to its swiftness and strength.

Before long the richer townspeople, who were wont to meet at the notary's office, observed a change in the manners and demeanor of the man who had always been so light-hearted.

"I cannot think what has come over Minoret," said his wife, to whom he had never revealed his bold stroke. "He is ill anyhow."

The world at large accounted for Minoret's being sick of himself—for in his face the expression of thought was one of boredom—by the fact that he had absolutely nothing to do, and by the transition from an active to an indolent life. While Minoret was scheming to crush Ursule's life, La Bougival never let a day pass without making to her foster-child some allusion to the fortune she ought to have had, or comparing her humble lot with that which the late "Monsieur" had intended her to enjoy, and of which he had spoken to her—La Bougival.

"And besides," said she, "it is not out of greediness ; but would not monsieur, so kind as he was, have left me some little money ?"

"Am I not here ?" Ursule would reply, and forbid any further words on the subject.

She could not bear the taint of any self-interested thought to touch the loving, melancholy and sweet memories which clung round the image of the old doctor, of whom a sketch in black and white chalk, done by her drawing-master, hung in her little sitting-room. To her fresh and strong imagination the sight of this sketch was sufficient to bring her godfather before her; she thought of him constantly, and was surrounded by the objects he had loved—his deep armchair, the furniture of his study, his backgammon-board, and the piano he had given her. The two old friends who remained to her, the Abbé Chaperon and Monsieur Bongrand, the only persons whose visits she would receive, were like two living memories of the past in the midst of the objects to which her regrets almost gave life—of that past which was linked to the present by the love which her godfather had approved and blessed.

Ere long the sadness of her thoughts, insensibly softened by time, cast its hue on all her life, bringing everything into indefinable harmony; exquisite neatness, perfect order in the arrangement of the furniture, a few flowers brought every morning by Savinien, pretty nothings, a stamp of peace set on everything by the young girl's habits, and which made her home attractive. After breakfast and after church she regularly practiced and sang; then she took her embroidery, sitting in the window towards the street. At four o'clock Savinien, on his return from the walk he took in all weathers, would find the window half-open, and sit on the outer sill to chat with her for half an hour. In the evening the curé or the justice would call, but she would never allow Savinien to accompany them. Nor would she accept a proposal from Madame de Portenduère, whom her son persuaded to invite Ursule to live with her.

The young girl and La Bougival lived with the strictest economy; they did not spend, on all included, more than sixty francs a month. The old nurse was indefatigable; she

washed and ironed, she cooked only twice a week, and kept the remains of the cooked food, which the mistress and maid ate cold ; for Ursule hoped to save seven hundred francs a year to pay the remainder of the price of her house. This austere conduct, with her modesty and resignation to a penurious life, after having enjoyed a luxurious existence, when her lightest whims were worshiped, gained her the regard of certain persons. She was respected, and never talked about. The heirs, once satisfied, did her full justice. Savinien admired such strength of character in so young a girl. Now and again, on coming out of church, Madame de Portenduère would say a few kind words to Ursule ; she invited her to dinner twice, and came herself to fetch her. If it were not indeed happiness, at any rate it was peace.

But a successful transaction, in which the justice displayed his old skill as a lawyer, brought to a head Minoret's persecution of Ursule, which had hitherto smoldered, and not gone beyond covert ill-will. As soon as the old doctor's estate was fairly settled, the justice, at Ursule's entreaty, took up the cause of the Portenduères, and undertook to get them out of their difficulties ; but, in calling on the old lady, whose opposition to Ursule's happiness made him furious, he did not conceal from her that he was devoting himself to her interests solely to please Mademoiselle Mirouët. He selected one of his former clerks to plead for the Portenduères at Fontainebleau, and himself conducted the appeal for a decree against foreclosure. He intended to take advantage of the interval of time which must elapse between the granting of this decree and Massin's renewed appeal to re-let the farm at a rent of six thousand francs, and to extract from the lessee a good premium and the payment of a year's rent in advance. Thenceforth the whist parties met again at Madame de Portenduère's, consisting of himself and the curé, Savinien and Ursule, for whom the justice and the abbé called every evening, and they saw her home again.

In June, Bongrand got his decree annulling the proceedings taken by Massin against the Portenduères. He at once signed a new lease ; got thirty-two thousand francs from the farmer, and a rent of six thousand francs a year for eight years ; then, in the evening, before the transactions could get abroad, he went to Zélie, who, as he knew, was puzzled for an investment for her savings, and suggested to her that she should buy Bordières for two hundred and twenty thousand francs.

“ I would clinch the bargain on the spot,” said Minoret, “ if only I were sure that the Portenduères were going to live anywhere than at Nemours.”

“ Why ? ” asked the justice.

“ We want to be quit of nobles at Nemours,” frankly answered Minoret.

“ I fancy I have heard the old lady say that if she could settle matters, she could live nowhere but in Brittany on what would be left. She talks of selling her house.”

“ Well, sell it to me then,” said Minoret.

“ But you talk as if the money were yours ! ” said Zélie. “ What are you going to do with two houses ? ”

“ If I do not settle the matter of the farm with you this evening,” said the justice, “ our lease will become known ; we shall have fresh proceedings against us in three days, and I shall fail to pull the thing through. My heart is set on it ; I shall go on, this very hour, to Melun, where some farmers I know will take Bordières off my hands with their eyes shut. Then you will have lost the opportunity of an investment at three per cent. in the district of Le Rouvre.”

“ And why then did you come to us ? ” said Zélie.

“ Because I know you to be rich, while my older clients will want a few days to enable them to hand over a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs. I want no delays.”

“ Get *her* away from Nemours, and they are yours ! ” said Minoret.

“ You must see that I cannot pledge the Portenduères in

any way," replied Bongrand, "but I feel sure that they will not remain at Nemours."

On this assurance Minoret, to whom Zélie gave a nudge, undertook to pay off the Portenduères' debt to the doctor's estate. The contract for the sale was made out by Dionis, and the justice, very content, made Minoret agree to the terms of the renewed lease, though he perceived rather late, as well as Zélie, that the rent was payable a year in advance, leaving the last year, in point of fact, rent free.

By the end of June, Bongrand could take Madame de Portenduère a receipt in full and the remnant of her fortune, a hundred and twenty-nine thousand francs, which he advised her to invest in state securities at five per cent., as well as Savinien's ten thousand; this yielded an income of about six thousand francs a year. Thus, instead of having lost, the old lady had gained two thousand francs a year by the sale of her estate. She and her son therefore remained at Nemours.

Minoret thought he had been tricked, as if the justice could possibly have known that it was Ursule's presence that was intolerable to him, and felt a deep resentment, which added to his hatred of his victim. Then began the covert drama, terrible in its effects, the struggle between two persons' feelings: Minoret's, which prompted him to drive Ursule to leave Nemours; and Ursule's, which gave her the fortitude to endure a persecution of which the cause for long remained inexplicable, a singular state of things to which previous events had all led up and conduced, and to which they had been the prologue.

Madame Minoret, to whom her husband presented plate and a dinner service worth altogether twenty thousand francs, gave a handsome dinner every Sunday, the day on which her son brought friends over from Fontainebleau. For these banquets Zélie would send for some rare dainties from Paris, thus inciting Dionis the notary to imitate her display. Goupil, whom the Minorets did their utmost to banish as a

man of ill-repute and a blot on their magnificence, was not invited to the house till the end of July, a month after the retirement into private ease of the old postmaster and mistress. The clerk, quite alive to this deliberate neglect, was obliged to treat even Désiré with formality, and drop the familiar *tu*; and Désiré, since his appointment to official life, had assumed a grave and haughty air even among his family.

“You have forgotten Esther, then, since you are in love with Mademoiselle Mirouët?” said Goupil to the young lawyer.

“In the first place, Esther is dead, monsieur. And, in the second, I never thought of Ursule,” was the reply.

“Hey day—what did you tell me, Daddy Minoret?” cried Goupil audaciously.

Minoret, caught in the very act by so formidable a foe, would have been put out of countenance but for the scheme for which he had invited Goupil to dinner, remembering the proposal formerly made by the clerk to hinder Ursule’s marriage to young Portenduère. His only answer was to lead the clerk abruptly away and out into the garden.

“You are nearly eight-and-twenty, my good fellow,” said he, “and I do not see that you are on the high-road to fortune. I wish you well; for, after all, you were my son’s companion. Listen to me: If you can persuade that little Mirouët to become your wife—she has forty thousand francs at any rate—as sure as my name is Minoret, I will give you the money to buy a business at Orleans.”

“No,” said Goupil, “I should never become known. At Montargis——”

“No,” interrupted Minoret, “but at Sens——”

“Very good, say Sens,” replied the hideous clerk. “It is an archbishop’s see, and I have no objection to a religious centre. A little hypocrisy helps one to get on. Besides, the girl is very pious; she will be a success there.”

“It must be quite understood that I only give the hundred thousand francs in consideration of my young relative’s marriage. I wish to provide for her out of regard for my deceased uncle.”

“And why not out of regard for me?” said Goupil mischievously, for he suspected some secret motive for Minoret’s conduct. “Was it not information given by me that enabled you to get twenty-four thousand francs in rent from a single holding in a ring fence round the Château du Rouvre? With your meadows and mill on the other side of the Loing you can add sixteen thousand to that. Come, old Burly, will you play your game with me above board?”

“Yes.”

“Well, just to make you feel my claws, I was brewing a plan with Massin to get possession of Le Rouvre—park, gardens, preserves, timber, and all.”

“You had better!” exclaimed Zélie, interrupting them.

“Well,” said Goupil, with a viperine glance at her, “if I choose, Massin will have it all to-morrow for two hundred thousand francs.”

“Leave us, wife,” said the colossus, taking Zélie by the arm, and turning her about. “We understand each other. We have had so much business on our hands,” he went on, coming back to Goupil, “that we have not been able to think of you; but I rely on your friendship to let us get Le Rouvre.”

“An old marquisate,” said Goupil slyly, “which in your hands will soon be worth fifty thousand francs a year—more than two millions at the present price of money.”

“And then our boy can marry the daughter of a Marshal of France, or the heiress of some ancient house, which will help him on to be a judge in Paris,” said the postmaster, opening his huge snuff-box, and offering it to Goupil.

“Well, then, all is square and above board?” asked Goupil, shaking his fingers.

Minoret wrung his hand and said—

“My word of honor.”

Like all cunning men, the clerk fancied, happily for Minoret, that this marriage with Ursule was a mere excuse for making up to him, now he had been playing off Massin against them.

“It is not his doing,” said he to himself. “I know my Zélie’s hand; she has taught him his part. Bah! Let Massin slide! Within three years I shall be returned as député for Sens,” he thought.

Then, catching sight of Bongrand on his way to his game of whist over the way, he rushed into the street.

“You take a great interest in Ursule Mirouët, my dear Monsieur Bongrand,” said he; “you cannot be indifferent to her future prospects. This is our programme. She may marry a notary whose business is to be in a large district town. This notary, who will certainly be député in three years, will settle a hundred thousand francs on her.”

“She can do better,” said Bongrand stiffly. “Since Madame de Portenduère’s misfortunes her health is failing. Yesterday she looked dreadfully ill; she is dying of grief. Savinien will have six thousand francs a year; Ursule has forty thousand francs; I will invest their capital on Massin’s principle—but honestly—and in ten years they will have a little fortune.”

“Savinien would be a fool. He can marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre any day he likes, an only daughter, to whom her uncle and aunt will also leave splendid fortunes.”

“‘When love has gotten hold of us, farewell prudence,’ says La Fontaine. But who is this worthy notary, for, after all——?” said Bongrand, out of curiosity.

“I,” said Goupil, in a tone that made the justice start.

“You?” said he, not attempting to conceal his disgust.

“Very good, sir; your servant,” retorted Goupil, with a glare of venom, hatred, and defiance.

“Would you like to be the wife of a notary who will settle a hundred thousand francs on you?” cried Bongrand, entering the little sitting-room, and speaking to Ursule, who was sitting by Madame de Portenduère. Ursule and Savinien started as if by one impulse, and looked at each other; she with a smile, he not daring to show his uneasiness.

“I am not my own mistress,” replied Ursule, holding out her hand to Savinien in such a way that his old mother could not see it.

“I refused the offer without consulting you even.”

“But why?” said Madame de Portenduère. “It seems to me, my dear, that a notary’s profession is a very respectable one.”

“I prefer my peaceful poverty,” she replied, “for it is opulence in comparison with what I had a right to expect of life. My old nurse spares me many anxieties, and I would not exchange my present lot, which suits me, for an unknown future.”

Next morning the post brought a poisoned dart to two hearts in the shape of two anonymous letters—one to Madame de Portenduère, and one to Ursule. This is the letter received by the old lady:

“You love your son, you would wish to see him married as beseems the name he bears, and you are fostering his fancy for an ambitious little thing without any fortune, by receiving at your house one Ursule, the daughter of a regimental band-master; while you might marry him to Mademoiselle du Rouvre, whose two uncles, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and the Chevalier du Rouvre, each having thirty thousand francs a year, intend to settle a large sum on their niece on her marriage, so as not to leave their fortune to her foolish old father, M. du Rouvre, who wastes his substance. Madame de Sérizy—Aunt Clémentine du Rouvre—who has just lost her only son in Algiers, will no doubt also adopt her niece. Some

one who wishes you well believes that Savinien would be accepted."

This is the letter written to Ursule :

"DEAR URSULE:—There is in Nemours a young man who idolizes you ; he cannot see you at work at your window without such emotions as prove to him that his love is for life. This young man is gifted with a will of iron and a perseverance which nothing can daunt. Accept his love with favor, for his intentions are of the purest, and he humbly asks your hand in the hope of making you happy. His fortune, though suitable even now, is nothing to what he will make it when you are his wife. You will some day be received at court as the wife of a minister, and one of the first ladies in the land. As he sees you every day, though you cannot see him, place one of La Bougival's pots of pinks in your window, and that will tell him that he may appear before you."

Ursule burnt this letter without mentioning it to Savinien. Two days later she received another, in these terms :

"You were wrong, dear Ursule, not to reply to him who loves you better than his life. You fancy you will marry Savinien, but you are strangely mistaken. That marriage will never take place. Madame de Portenduère, who will see you no more at her house, is going this morning to La Rouvre, on foot, in spite of the weak state she is in, to ask Mademoiselle du Rouvre in marriage for Savinien. He will finally yield. What objection can he make? The young lady's uncles will settle their fortune on their niece at her marriage. That fortune amounts to sixty thousand francs a year."

This letter tortured Ursule's heart by making her acquainted with the torments of jealousy, pangs hitherto unknown, which, to her finely organized nature, so alive to suffering, swamped the present, the future, and even the past in grief. From the

moment when she received this fatal missive, she sat motionless in the doctor's armchair, her eyes fixed on vacancy, and lost in a sorrowful reverie. In an instant the chill of death had come on her instead of the glow of exquisite life. Alas! It was worse; it was, in fact, the dreadful awakening of the dead to find that there is no God—the masterpiece of that strange genius Jean Paul. Four times did La Bougival try to persuade Ursule to eat her breakfast; she saw the girl take up her bread and lay it down again, unable to carry it to her lips. When she ventured to offer a remonstrance, Ursule stopped her with a wave of the hand, saying Hush! in a terrible tone, as despotic as it had hitherto always been sweet. La Bougival, watching her mistress through a glass door between the rooms, saw her turn alternately as red as if fever were consuming her, and then blue, as though an ague fit had followed the fever. By about four o'clock, when Ursule rose every few minutes to look whether Savinien was coming, and Savinien came not, she became evidently worse. Jealousy and doubt destroy all the bashfulness of love. Ursule, who till now had never allowed her passion to be detected in the least gesture, put on her hat and her little shawl, and ran into the passage to go out and meet Savinien; but a remnant of reserve brought her back into the little sitting-room. There she wept.

When the curé came in the evening, the poor old nurse stopped him on the threshold.

“Oh, Monsieur le Curé, I do not know what ails mademoiselle; she——”

“I know,” said the priest sadly, silencing the frightened attendant.

The abbé then told Ursule what she had not dared to ask: “Madame de Portenduère had gone to dine at Le Rouvre.”

“And Savinien?”

“He too.”

Ursule shuddered nervously—a shudder which thrilled the

Abbé Chaperon as though he had received a shock from a Leyden jar, and he felt a painful turmoil at his heart.

“So we shall not go to her house this evening,” said he. “But, indeed, my child, you will be wise never to go there again. The old lady might receive you in a way that would wound your pride. We, having brought her to listen to the idea of your marriage to Savinien, cannot imagine what ill-wind has blown to change her views in an instant.”

“I am prepared for anything; nothing can astonish me now,” said Ursule in a tone of conviction. “In such extremities it is a great comfort to feel that I have done nothing to offend God.”

“Submit, my dear daughter, and never try to inquire into the ways of Providence,” said the curé.

“I do not wish to show any unjust suspicion of M. de Portenduère’s character——”

“Why do you no longer call him Savinien?” asked the abbé, observing a certain bitterness in Ursule’s tone.

“My dear Savinien!” she went on, with a burst of tears. “Yes, my good friend,” she said, sobbing, “a voice assures me that his heart is as noble as his birth. He has not merely told me that he loves me; he has proved it in a thousand delicate ways, and by heroically controlling the ardor of his passion. Lately, when he took my hand that I held out to him, when Monsieur Bongrand proposed to me for a notary, I declare to you that it was the first time I had ever offered it to him. Though he began, by a jest, blowing me a kiss across the street, since then our affection has never once, as you know, overstepped the strictest limits; but I may tell you—you who read my whole soul excepting the one spot which is open only to the angels—well, this affection is in me the foundation of many virtues. It has enabled me to accept my poverty; it has, perhaps, softened the bitterness of the irreparable loss for which I mourn now more in my garments than in my heart! Yes, I have done wrong—for my love

has been greater than my gratitude to my godfather; and God has avenged him! How could I help it? What I valued myself for was as Savinien's wife. I have been too proud; and it is that pride, perhaps, that God is punishing. God alone, as you have often told me, ought to be the spring and end of all we do."

The curé was touched as he saw the tears rolling down her cheeks, already paler. The greater the poor girl's confidence had been, the lower she had fallen.

"However," she went on, "reduced once more to my orphaned state, I shall be able to accustom myself to the proper frame of mind. After all, could I bear to be a stone round the neck of the man I love! What should he do here? Who am I that I should aspire to him? Do I not love him with such perfect love that it is equal to a complete sacrifice of my happiness, of my hopes? And you know I have often blamed myself for setting my love on a tomb, and looking forward to the morrow of that old lady's death. If Savinien can be rich and happy through another woman, I have just money enough to purchase my admission to a convent, to which I shall at once retire. There ought not to be two loves in a woman's heart, any more than there are two Lords in heaven. The religious life will have its charms for me."

"He could not allow his mother to go alone to Le Rouvre," said the kind priest gently.

"We will talk no more of it, my dear Monsieur Chaperon. I will write to him this evening to give him his liberty. I am glad to be obliged to close the windows of my sitting-room."

She then told him about the anonymous letters, saying that she would offer no encouragement to this unknown suitor.

"Ah! then it is an anonymous letter that has prompted Madame de Portenduère's expedition to Le Rouvre!" exclaimed the curé. "You are, no doubt, the object of some malignant persecution."

“But why? Neither Savinien nor I have injured any one, and we are doing no harm to any one here.”

“Well, well, my child. We will take advantage of this tornado which has broken up our little party to arrange our poor old friend’s books; they are still piled in disorder. Bongrand and I will set them straight, for we had thought of hunting through them. Put your trust in God; but remember, too, that in the justice and myself you have two devoted friends.”

“And that is much,” she said, walking to the end of the little alley with the priest, and craning her neck like a bird looking out of its nest, still hoping to see Savinien.

At this instant Minoret and Goupil, coming home from a walk in the country, stopped as they were passing, and the heir-at-law said to Ursule—

“What is the matter, cousin?—for we are still cousins, are we not? You look altered.”

Goupil cast such ardent eyes on Ursule that she was frightened. She ran in without replying.

“She is a wild bird,” said Minoret to the curé.

“Mademoiselle Mirouët is quite right not to talk to men on her doorstep; she is too young——”

“Oh!” said Goupil; “you must be well aware that she does not lack lovers!”

The curé bowed hastily, and hurried off to the Rue des Bourgeois.

“Well,” said the lawyer’s clerk to Minoret, “the fat is burning. She is as pale as death already; within a fortnight she will have left the town. You will see.”

“It is better to have you for a friend than for an enemy,” said Minoret, struck by the horrible smile which gave to Goupil’s face the diabolical expression which Joseph Bridau gave to Goethe’s Mephistopheles.

“I believe you!” replied Goupil. “If she will not marry me, I will make her die of grief.”

“Do so, boy, and I will give you money enough to start in business in Paris. Then you can marry a rich wife——”

“Poor girl!—why, what harm has she done to you?” asked the clerk in surprise.

“I am sick of her,” said Minoret roughly.

“Only wait till Monday, and you shall see how I will make her squirm,” replied Goupil, studying the postmaster’s countenance.

Next morning La Bougival went to see Savinien, and as she gave him a note, she said, “I don’t know what the dear child has written to you about, but she looks like a corpse this morning.”

Who, on reading this letter to Savinien, can fail to picture the sufferings Ursule must have endured during the past night?

“MY DEAR SAVINIEN :—Your mother wishes you to marry Mademoiselle du Rouvre, I am told; perhaps she is right. You see yourself between a life almost of poverty and a position of wealth, between the wife of your heart and a woman of fashion, between obedience to your mother and obedience to your own choice—for I still believe that I am your choice. Savinien, since you must decide, I wish that you should do so in perfect freedom. I give you back your word—given not to me, but to yourself, at a moment which I can never forget, and which, like all the days that have passed since then, was angelically pure and sweet. That memory will be enough for me to live on. If you should persist in adhering to your vows, a dark and dreadful thought would always trouble my happiness. In the midst of our privations, which you now take so lightly, you might afterwards reflect that, if you had but followed the rules of the world, things might have been very different with you. If you were the man to utter such a thought, it would be my death-warrant in bitter anguish; and if you did not say it, I should be suspicious of the slightest cloud on your brow. Dear Savinien, I have always cared for

you more than for anything on earth. I might do so ; for my godfather, though jealous of you, said to me, ‘ Love him, my child ! you will certainly be his, and he yours some day.’ When I went to Paris I loved you without hope, and that love was enough for me. I do not know whether I can revert to that state of mind, but I will try. What are we to each other at this moment ? A brother and sister. Let us remain so. Marry the happy girl, whose joy it will be to restore to your name the lustre due to it, which I, according to your mother, must tarnish. You shall never hear me mentioned. The world will applaud you ; I, believe me, shall never blame you, and shall always love you. So, farewell.”

“ Wait ! ” cried the young man. He made La Bougival sit down, and, going to his desk, he hastily wrote these few lines :

“ MY DEAR URSULE :—Your letter breaks my heart, for you are inflicting on yourself much useless pain, and for the first time our hearts have failed to understand each other. That you are not already my wife is because I cannot yet marry without my mother’s consent. After all, are not eight thousand francs a year, in a pretty cottage on the banks of the Loing, quite a fortune ? We calculated that, with La Bougival, we could save five thousand francs a year. You allowed me one evening in your uncle’s garden to regard you as my promised wife, and you cannot by yourself alone break the ties which bind us both. Need I tell you that I plainly declared, yesterday, to Monsieur du Rouvre that, even if I were free, I would not accept a fortune from a young lady whom I did not know ? My mother refuses to see you any more ; I lose the happiness of my evenings, but do not abridge the brief moments when I may speak with you at your window. Till this evening, then—— Nothing can part us.”

“Go now, my good woman. She must not have a moment’s needless anxiety.”

That afternoon, on his return from the walk he took every day on purpose to pass by Ursule’s dwelling, Savinien found her somewhat the paler for all these sudden agitations.

“I feel as though I had never till this moment known what a happiness it is to see you,” said she.

“You yourself said to me,” replied Savinien, with a smile, “that ‘Love cannot exist without patience; I will wait’—for I remember all your words. But have you, my dear child, divided love from faith? Ah! this is the end of all our differences. You have always said that you loved me more than I could love you. But have I ever doubted you?” he asked, giving her a bunch of wildflowers chosen so as to symbolize his feelings.

“You have no reason to doubt me,” she replied. “Besides, you do not know all,” she added, in a tone of uneasiness.

She had given orders that no letters to her by post should be taken in. But without her being able to guess by what conjuring trick the thing had been done, a few minutes after Savinien had left her, and she had watched him round the turning of the Rue des Bourgeois out of the High Street, she found on her armchair a piece of paper on which was written—

“Tremble! the lover scorned will be worse than a tiger.”

Notwithstanding Savinien’s entreaties, she would not, out of prudence, trust him with the dreadful secret of her fears. The ineffable joy of seeing him again, after believing him lost to her, could alone enable her to forget the mortal chill which came over her. Every one knows the intolerable torment of awaiting an indefinite misfortune. Suffering then assumes the proportions of the unknown, which is certainly infinitude, to the mind. To Ursule it was the greatest anguish. She found herself starting violently at the slightest

sound ; she distrusted the silence ; she suspected the walls of conspiracies. Her peaceful sleep was broken. Goupil, without knowing anything of her constitution—as fragile as that of a flower—had, by the instinct of wickedness, hit on the poison that would blight it—kill it.

The next day, however, passed without any shock. Ursule played the piano till very late, and went to bed almost reassured, and overpowered by sleep. At about midnight she was roused by a band, consisting of a clarionet, a hautboy, a flute, a cornet-à-pistons, a trombone, a bassoon, a fife, and a triangle. All the neighbors were at their windows. The poor child, upset by seeing a crowd in the street, was struck to the heart on hearing a hoarse, vulgar man's voice crying out—

“ For the fair Ursule Mirouët, a serenade from her lover ! ”

At church next morning all the town was in a hubbub ; and as Ursule entered and quitted the church, she saw the square filled with groups staring at her, and displaying the most odious curiosity. The serenade had set every tongue wagging, for every one was lost in conjecture. Ursule got home more dead than alive, and went out no more, the curé having advised her to say vespers at home. On going in she saw, lying in the passage paved with red brick that ran from the street to the courtyard behind, a letter that had been slipped under the door ; she picked it up and read it, prompted by the desire for some explanation. The least sensitive reader can imagine her feelings as she saw these terrible words :

“ Make up your mind to be my wife, rich and adored. I will have you. If you are not mine alive, you shall be, dead. You may ascribe to your refusal misfortunes which will not fall on you alone. HE WHO LOVES YOU AND WILL SOME DAY POSSESS YOU.”

Strange irony ! at the moment when the gentle victim

of this conspiracy was drooping like a plucked flower, Mesdemoiselles Massin, Dionis, and Crémière were envying her lot.

“She is a happy girl,” they were saying. “Men are devoted to her, flatter her taste, are ready to quarrel for her. The serenade was delightful, it would seem! There was a cornet-à-pistons!”

“What is a cornet-à-pistons?”

“A new sort of musical instrument—there—as long as that!” said Angélique Crémière to Paméla Massin.

Early the next day Savinien went off to Fontainebleau to inquire who had ordered the musicians of the regiment stationed there; but, as there were two men to each instrument, it was impossible to ascertain which one had gone to Nemours, since the colonel prohibited them from playing for private persons without his leave. Monsieur de Portenduère had an interview with the public prosecutor, Ursule’s legal guardian, and explained to him the serious effect such scenes must have on a young girl so delicate and fragile as she was, begging him to find out the instigator of this serenade by means that the law could set in motion.

Three days later, in the middle of the night, a second serenade was given by three violins, a flute, a guitar, and a hautboy. On this occasion the musicians made off by the road to Montargis, where there was just then a troupe of actors. Between two pieces a strident and drunken voice had proclaimed:

“To the daughter of Bandmaster Mirouët.”

Thus all Nemours was apprised of the profession of Ursule’s father, the secret the old doctor had so carefully kept.

But this time Savinien did not go to Montargis; he received in the course of the day an anonymous letter from Paris containing this terrible prophecy:

“You shall not marry Ursule. If you wish her to live, make haste and surrender her to him who loves her more than

you do ; for he has become a musician and an artist to please her, and would rather see her dead than as your wife."

By this time the town doctor of Nemours was seeing Ursule three times a day, for this covert persecution had brought her to the point of death. Plunged, as she felt herself, by a diabolical hand into a slough of mud, the gentle girl behaved like a martyr; she lay perfectly silent, raising her eyes to heaven, without tears, awaiting further blows with fervent prayer, and hoping for the stroke that might be her death.

"I am glad to be unable to go downstairs," said she to Monsieur Bongrand and the abbé, who stayed with her as much as possible. "*He* would come, and I feel unworthy to meet the looks with which he is in the habit of making me blest. Do you think he doubts me?"

"Why, if Savinien cannot discover the moving spirit of all this shameful business, he means to ask for the intervention of the Paris police," said Bongrand.

"The unknown persons must know that they have killed me," she replied. "They will be quiet now."

The curé, Bongrand, and Savinien puzzled themselves with conjectures and suppositions. Savinien, Tiennette, La Bougival, and two devoted adherents of the curé's constituted themselves spies, and were constantly on the watch for a whole week; but Goupil could never be betrayed by a sign, he pulled all the wires with his own hand. The justice was the first to suspect that the author of the evil was frightened at his own success. Ursule was as pale and weak as a consumptive English girl. The spies relaxed their efforts. There were no more serenades nor letters. Savinien ascribed the cessation of these odious means to the secret energy of the law officers, to whom he had sent the letters written to Ursule, to himself, and to his mother.

The armistice was of no long duration. When the doctor had checked the course of Ursule's nervous fever, just as she

was recovering her spirit, one morning, about the middle of July, a ladder of ropes was found attached to her window. The postillion who had ridden with the night mail deposed that a little man was in the act of coming down it just as he was passing ; but in spite of his wishing to stop, his horses, having set off down hill from the bridge, at the corner of which stood Ursule's little house, had carried him some way out of Nemours.

An opinion, suggested in Dionis' drawing-room, attributed these manœuvres to the Marquis du Rouvre, at that time in great need of money, who, it was supposed, by hastening Savinien's marriage with his daughter, would be able to save the Château of Le Rouvre from his creditors. Madame de Portenduère also, it was said, looked with favor on anything that could discredit, dishonor, and blight Ursule ; but when the young girl seemed likely to die, the old lady was almost conquered.

This last stroke of malice so much distressed the Curé Chaperon that it made him ill enough to compel him to remain at home for some days. Poor Ursule, in whom this cruel attack had brought on a relapse, received by post a note from the curé, which was not refused, as his writing was familiar.

“ My child, leave Nemours, and so discomfort the malice of your unknown enemies. Perhaps what they aim at is to imperil Savinien's life. I will tell you more when I can go to see you.” This note was signed, “ Your devoted friend Chaperon.”

When Savinien, almost driven mad, went to call on the priest, the poor man read and re-read the letter, so much was he horrified at the perfection with which his writing and signature had been imitated, for he had written nothing, and, if he had written, he would not have employed the post to carry a letter to Ursule. The mortal anguish to which this last villainy reduced Ursule compelled Savinien once more to

apply to the public prosecutor, showing him the forged letter from the abbé.

“It is murder,” said the young man to the lawyer. “Murder is being committed by means not provided against by law, on the person of an orphan placed under your protection by the Civil Code.”

“If you can discover any means of interfering,” replied the public prosecutor, “I am ready to adopt them; but I know of none. This rascally anonymous letter gives the best advice. Mademoiselle Mirouët must be sent to the care of the Ladies of the Adoration. Meanwhile, by my order, the commissary of police at Fontainebleau will authorize you to carry weapons in your own defense. I myself have been to Le Rouvre, and Monsieur du Rouvre is justifiably indignant at the suspicions that have attached to him. Minoret, my deputy’s father, is in treaty for the purchase of his château. Mademoiselle du Rouvre is to marry a rich Polish count. Monsieur du Rouvre himself was about to leave the neighborhood on the day of my visit, to escape being seized for debt.”

Désiré, questioned by his chief, dared not say what he thought; he recognized Goupil in all this. Goupil alone was capable of conducting a plot which should thus shave close to the Penal Code without being amenable to any of its provisions. The impunity, the secrecy, the success of it, increased Goupil’s audacity. The terrible man had set Massin, who had become his dupe, on the tracks of the Marquis du Rouvre, to compel that gentleman to sell the rest of his land to Minoret. After opening negotiations with a notary at Sens, he determined to try a last stroke to gain possession of Ursule. He thought he could imitate some young men of Paris, who owed their wife and fortune to an elopement. His services done to Minoret, Massin, and Crémère, and the protection of Dionis, mayor of Nemours, would allow of his hushing the matter up. He at once determined to cast off his mask, believing that Ursule was incapable of resistance in the

state of weakness to which he had brought her. However, before risking the last card of his base game, he thought it well to have an explanation at Le Rouvre, whither he went with Minoret, who was going there for the first time since the agreement was signed.

Minoret had just received a confidential letter from his son, asking him for information as to what was going on with regard to Ursule, before going himself with the public prosecutor to place her in a convent safe from any further atrocity. The young lawyer besought his father to give him his best advice, if this persecution were the work of one of their friends. Though justice could not always punish, she would at last find everything out and make good note of it. Minoret had achieved his great end; he was now the immovable owner of the Château du Rouvre, one of the finest in all the Gâtinais, and he could derive forty-odd thousand francs a year from the rich and beautiful land surrounding the park. The colossus could laugh at Goupil now. Moreover, he meant to live in the country, where the memory of Ursule would haunt him no more.

“My boy,” said he to Goupil, as they paced the terrace, “leave my little cousin in peace!”

“Pooh!” said the clerk, who could make nothing of his capricious behavior, for even stupidity has its depths.

“Oh, I am not ungrateful: you have helped me to get, for two hundred and eighty thousand francs, this fine mansion of brick and hewn stone, which certainly could not now be built for nearly five times the price, with the home farm, the park, the gardens, and timber—Well, yes, I will, on my word—I will give you ten per cent.—twenty thousand francs, with which you can buy a bailiff’s practice at Nemours. And I guarantee your marriage with one of the Crémère girls—the elder.”

“The one who talked of the cornet-à-pistons?” cried Goupil.

“But her mother will give her thirty thousand francs,” said Minoret. “You see, my boy, you were born to be a bailiff, just as I was made to be a postmaster, and we must all obey our vocation.”

“Very well,” said Goupil, fallen from his high hopes, “here are the stamps; sign me bills for twenty thousand francs, that I may make my bargain cash in hand.”

Eighteen thousand francs were due to Minoret, the half-yearly interest on securities of which his wife knew nothing; he thought he should thus be rid of Goupil, and he signed the bills. Goupil, seeing this huge and stupid Machiavelli of the Rue des Bourgeois in a fit of seignorial fever, took leave of him with an “Au revoir,” and a look that would have made any one but a parvenu simpleton tremble as he looked down from a high terrace on the gardens, and the handsome roof of a château built in the style fashionable under Louis XIII.

“You will not wait for me?” he cried to Goupil, seeing the clerk set out on foot.

“You can pick me up on the road, old man,” replied the prospective bailiff, thirsting for vengeance, and curious to know the answer to the riddle presented to his mind by the strangely tortuous conduct of this old man.

Ever since the day when the most infamous calumny had darkened her life, Ursule, a prey to one of those unaccountable maladies whose seat is in the soul, was hastening to the grave. Excessively pale, speaking rarely a few weak, slow words, looking about her with a gentle, indifferent gaze, everything in her appearance, even her brow, showed that she was possessed by a consuming thought. She believed that the ideal crown of pure flowers, with which in every age and nation the brow of a maiden has been supposed to be crowned, had fallen from hers. In the void and silence she seemed to hear the slanderous remarks, the malignant comments, the mean laughter of the little town. The burden was too heavy

for her; her innocence was too sensitive to endure such a stoning. She did not complain, a melancholy smile lay on her lips, and her eyes were constantly raised to heaven as though to appeal to the Lord of Angels against the injustice of men.

When Goupil got back to Nemours, Ursule had been brought down from her room to the ground floor, leaning on the arm of La Bougival and of the doctor. This was in honor of a great event. Madame de Portenduère, having heard that the young girl was dying as the ermine dies, though her honor was less cruelly attacked than that of Clarissa Harlowe, had come to see her and to comfort her. The sight of her son, who had been talking all night of killing himself, had been too much for the old lady. Madame de Portenduère, indeed, found it quite becoming to her dignity to carry encouragement to so pure a creature, and regarded her own visit as an antidote to all the ill done by the gossips of the place. Her opinion, so much more influential, no doubt, than that of the vulgar, would consecrate the power of the nobility.

This step, announced by the Abbé Chaperon, had produced a revulsion in Ursule which revived the hopes of the physician, who had been in despair, and had talked of holding a consultation with the most eminent Paris doctors. Ursule had been placed in her old guardian's armchair, and the character of her beauty was such that in mourning and in suffering she looked more lovely than at any time in her happy days. When Savinien came in, with his mother on his arm, the young invalid's color mounted to her cheeks once more.

“Do not rise, my dear,” said the old lady, in a tone of command. “However ill and feeble I may be myself, I was determined to come and tell you what I think of all that is going on. I esteem you as the purest, saintliest, and sweetest girl in the Gâtinais, and regard you as worthy to make a gentleman of family happy.”

At first Ursule could make no reply ; she held the withered hands of Savinien's mother and kissed them, dropping tears upon them.

“ Ah, madame ! ” she answered, in a weak voice, “ I should never have been so bold as to think of raising myself so far above my position if I had not been encouraged by promises, and my only claim was a love without limits ; but means have been found to separate me for ever from him whom I love. I have been made unworthy of him. Never ! ” she exclaimed, with a vehemence of tone that startled the listeners painfully—“ never will I consent to give to any man a hand so vilified, a reputation so tarnished ! I loved too well—I may say it now, wreck that I am ; I love a creature almost as much as God. And so God——”

“ Come, come, child, do not calumniate God. Come, my daughter,” said the old lady, making a great effort, “ do not exaggerate the importance of an infamous jest which no one believes in. You shall live—I promise it—live and be happy.”

“ You shall be happy ! ” cried Savinien, kneeling by Ursule, and kissing her hand. “ My mother calls you her daughter ! ”

“ That will do,” said the doctor, who was feeling his patient's pulse. “ Do not kill her with joy.”

At this instant Goupil, who had found the gate into the alley ajar, pushed open the drawing-room door and showed his hideous face, beaming with the thoughts of revenge that had blossomed in his heart in the course of his walk.

“ Monsieur de Portenduère,” said he, in a voice like the hiss of a viper at bay in its hole.

“ What do you want ? ” said Savinien, rising.

“ I want to say two words to you.”

Savinien went out into the passage, and Goupil led him into the yard.

“Swear to me by the life of Ursule whom you love, and by your honor as a gentleman which you prize, so to behave as though there were nothing known between us of what I am going to tell you, and I will explain to you the sole cause of the persecutions turned against Mademoiselle Mirouët.”

“Can I put an end to them?”

“Yes.”

“Can I be revenged?”

“Yes, on the prime mover—not on the instrument.”

“Why?”

“The instrument is—— I am the instrument.”

Savinien turned white.

“I just caught sight of Ursule——” the clerk began again.

“Ursule?” said Savinien, with a look at the clerk.

“Mademoiselle Mirouët,” said Goupil, made respectful by Savinien’s tone; “and I would shed all my blood to undo what has been done. I repent. If you were to kill me in a duel or in any other way, of what use would my blood be to you? Could you drink it? At this moment it would poison you.”

The man’s cool reasonableness and his own curiosity quelled Savinien’s boiling blood; he glared at this hunchback spoiled, with an eye that made Goupil look down.

“And who set you on the job?” asked the young man.

“You swear?”

“You wish to escape unharmed?”

“I wish that you and Mademoiselle Mirouët should forgive me.”

“She will forgive you. I never will!”

“Well, you will forget?”

How terrible is the force of logic seconded by interest! Two men, each longing to rend the other, were standing

there, close together, in a little yard, forced to speak to each other, united by one feeling in common.

“I will forgive you, but I shall not forget.”

“Of no use whatever,” said Goupil, coldly.

Savinien lost patience. He dealt the clerk a slap on the cheek that rang through the yard; it almost upset Goupil, and he himself staggered back.

“I have gotten no more than I deserve,” said Goupil. “I have been a fool. I thought you a finer fellow than you are. You have taken a mean advantage of the opportunity I offered you. You are in my power now!” he added, with a flash of hatred at Savinien.

“You are a murderer!” exclaimed Savinien.

“No more than the knife in the assassin’s hand,” replied Goupil.

“I ask your forgiveness,” said Savinien.

“Are you sufficiently revenged?” said the clerk with savage irony. “Will you now rest satisfied?”

“Forgive and forget on both sides,” replied Savinien.

“Your hand on it?” said Goupil, holding out his.

“Here it is,” said Savinien, swallowing the indignity out of love for Ursule. “But speak: who was behind you?”

Goupil paused, considering the two dishes of the scale, so to speak, with Savinien’s slap on one side, and on the other his hatred of Minoret. For two seconds he doubted; then a voice said to him: “You can be a notary!” and he replied, “Forgive and forget? Yes, on both sides, monsieur,” and he clasped Savinien’s hand.

“Who is it, then, that is persecuting Ursule?” said Savinien.

“Minoret. He would like to see her dead and buried. Why, I do not know; but we will find out the reason. Do not mix me up in the matter. I can do nothing more for you if once I am suspected. Instead of attacking Ursule, I will defend her; instead of serving Minoret, I will try to spoil his

game. I live only to ruin him, to crush him. And I will see him under my feet, I will dance on his dead body, I will make dominoes of his bones! To-morrow, on all the walls of Nemours, of Fontainebleau, of Le Rouvre, the words shall be seen in red chalk—*Minoret is a thief!* Oh, I will do it, by all that is holy! I will blow him to the four winds! Now, we are allies by my having peached. Well, if you like, I will go on my knees to Mademoiselle Mirouët, and tell her that I curse the insane passion which drove me to kill her. I will entreat her to forgive me. That will do her good. The justice and the curé are there; those two witnesses are enough; but Monsieur Bongrand must pledge his word that he will not damage me in my career. For I have a career now," concluded Goupil.

"Wait a moment," replied Savinien, quite bewildered by this revelation.

"Ursule, my child," said he, going back to the drawing-room, "the cause of all your misery has lived to feel the horror of his work; he repents, and would be glad to ask your pardon in the presence of these gentlemen, on condition that all shall be forgotten."

"What! Goupil?" exclaimed the curé, the justice, and the doctor in a breath.

"Keep his secret," said Ursule, putting a finger on her lips.

Goupil heard her words, and saw the gesture, and it touched him.

"Mademoiselle," he said, with feeling, "I wish that all Nemours might hear me confess to you that a fatal passion turned my head, and suggested to me a series of crimes deserving the blame of all honest folks. What I have said I will repeat everywhere, deploring the evil result of my practical jokes, though they may, in fact, have hurried on your happiness," he added, a little maliciously, as he rose, "since I see Madame de Portenduère here."

“That is right, Goupil,” said the curé; “Mademoiselle forgives you. But do not forget that you have been very near committing murder.”

“Monsieur Bongrand,” Goupil went on, turning to the justice, “I am going this evening to try to bargain with Le-cœur for his place as summonsing officer. I hope this confession will have done me no injury in your mind, and that you will support my candidature among the superior lawyers, and to the ministry.”

The justice gravely bowed, and Goupil went off to treat for the better of the two appointments in Nemours. The others remained with Ursule, and endeavored that evening to restore calmness and peace in her mind, which was already relieved by the satisfaction given her by the clerk.

“All Nemours shall know it,” said Bongrand.

“You see, my child, God was not against you,” said the curé.

Minoret returned late from Le Rouvre, and dined late. At about nine in the evening he was sitting in his Chinese pavilion digesting his dinner, his wife by his side, and laying plans with her for Désiré's future prospects. Désiré had quite settled down since he had held an appointment; he worked steadily, and had a good chance, it was said, of succeeding the public prosecutor of the district of Fontainebleau, who was to be promoted to Melun. They must find him a wife now, a girl wanting money, but belonging to some old and noble family; then he might rise to a judgeship in Paris. Possibly they might be able to get him elected député for Fontainebleau, where Zélie thought it would be well to settle for the winter, after spending the summer at Le Rouvre. Minoret, very much pleased with himself for having arranged everything for the best, had ceased to think of Ursule at the very moment when the drama he had so clumsily begun had become so fatally complicated.

“Monsieur de Portenduère would like to speak to you,” said Cabirolle, coming in.

“Bring him here,” said Zélie.

The shades of dusk prevented Madame Minoret’s seeing her husband suddenly turn pale; he shuddered as he heard Savinien’s boots creak on the inlaid flooring of the passage, where the doctor’s books had formerly lined the wall. A vague presentiment ran like a congestive chill through the spoiler’s veins.

Savinien came in. He stood still, keeping his hat on, his stick in his hand, his arms folded—motionless, face to face with the couple.

“I have come to know, Monsieur and Madame Minoret, the reasons which have led you to torture in the most infamous manner the young girl who is, to the knowledge of all Nemours, my future wife; why you have tried to brand her honor; why you wish her dead; and why you have abandoned her to the insults of such a creature as Goupil? Answer.”

“What a queer notion, Monsieur Savinien,” said Zélie, “to come and ask us our reasons for a thing which is to us inexplicable! I do not care for Ursule one snap. Since Uncle Minoret’s death I have no more given her a thought than to an old smock! I have never breathed her name to Goupil—and a queer rascal he is, whom I would not trust with the interests of my dog. Well, Minoret, why don’t you answer? Are you going to let monsieur attack you and accuse you of rascality that is beneath you? As if a man who has forty-eight thousand francs a year in landed estate round a château fit for a prince would demean himself to such folly! Wake up, man—sitting there like a dummy!”

“I don’t know what monsieur would be at,” said Minoret at last, in his thin voice, of which the clear accents betrayed its trembling. “What reason could I have for persecuting the girl? I may have said to Goupil that it vexed me to know that she was in Nemours; my son Désiré had taken a

fancy to her, and I would not have him marry her, that was all."

"Goupil has confessed everything, Monsieur Minoret."

There was a moment's silence—a terrible moment, while these three persons watched each other. Zélie had detected a nervous movement in the broad face of her colossus.

"Though you are but vermin, I intend to be publicly revenged on you," the young nobleman went on. "I shall not ask satisfaction from you, a man of sixty-seven, for the insults heaped on Mademoiselle Mirouët; but from your son. The first time Monsieur Minoret, junior, sets foot in Nemours, we meet. He will have to fight me, and he shall fight! Or he shall be so utterly disgraced that he will not dare to show his face anywhere; if he does not come to Nemours, I will go to Fontainebleau! I will have satisfaction. It shall never be said that you have basely tried to bring shame on a defenseless girl."

"But the calumnies of such a fellow as Goupil—really—are not——" said Minoret.

"Would you like me to confront you with him?" cried Savinien, interrupting him. "Believe me, you had better not noise the matter; it is between you and Goupil and me; leave it so, and God will decide the issue in the duel to which I shall do your son the honor of challenging him."

"But things cannot go on like that!" cried Zélie. "What? Do you suppose that I shall allow Désiré to fight with you, a naval officer, whose business it is to use the sword and pistol? If you have a score against Minoret, here is Minoret; take Minoret, fight with Minoret! But why should my boy, who, by your own confession, is innocent of it all, suffer the penalty? I will set a dog of mine to hinder that, my fine gentleman! Come, Minoret, there you sit gaping like a great idiot! You are in your own house, and you allow this young fellow to keep his hat on in your wife's presence! Now, young man, to begin with, take yourself off. Every man's house is his

castle. I do not know what you are at with all your rhodomontade, but just turn on your heel; and if you lay a finger on Désiré, you will have me to settle with—you and your precious slut, Ursule."

She rang violently, and called the servants.

"Remember what I have said," repeated Savinien, who, heedless of Zélie's diatribe, went away, leaving this sword of Damocles suspended over their heads.

"Now, Minoret, will you tell me the meaning of all this?" said Zélie to her husband. "A young man does not come into a decent house and kick up all this tremendous dust for nothing, and insist on the blood of an only son and heir."

"It is some trick of that nasty ape, Goupil; I had promised to help him to be made notary if he would get Le Rouvre on reasonable terms. I gave him ten per cent., twenty thousand francs, in bills of exchange, and I suppose he is not satisfied."

"Yes; but what previous reason can he have had to get up serenades and rascalities to trouble Ursule?"

"He wanted to marry her."

"A girl without a sou? He? Fiddlesticks! Look here, Minoret, you are cramming me with nonsense, and you are by nature too stupid to make it take, my man. There is something behind it all, and you must tell it me."

"There is nothing."

"There is nothing? Well, I tell you that is a lie, and we shall see."

"Will you leave me in peace?"

"I will turn on the tap of that barrel of poison, Goupil, whom you know, I think; and you will not get the best of the bargain then."

"As you please."

"Certainly, it will be as I please! And what I please, first and foremost, is that no one shall lay a finger on Désiré; if anything happens to him—there, I tell you, I should do

something that would take me to the block. Désiré! Why! And there you sit without stirring!"

A quarrel thus begun between Minoret and his wife was not likely to end without long domestic broils. The thieving fool now found his struggle with himself and Ursule made harder by his blundering, and complicated by a fresh and terrible adversary. Next day, when he went out to go to Goupil, hoping to silence him with money, he read on all the walls: *Minoret is a thief!* Every one he met pitied him, and asked him who was at the bottom of this anonymous placarding, and every one overlooked the evasiveness of his replies by ascribing it to his stupidity. Simpletons gain more advantages from their weakness than clever men get from their strength. We look on at a great man struggling against fate, but we raise a fund for a bankrupt grocer. Do you know why? We feel superior when we protect an idiot, and are aggrieved at being no more than equal to the man of genius. A clever man would have been ruined if, like Minoret, he had stammered out preposterous replies with a scared look. Zélie and the servants effaced the libelous inscription wherever they saw it; but it weighed on Minoret's conscience.

Though Goupil had, only the day before, given the summoning officer his word, he most audaciously refused now to sign the agreement.

"My dear Lecœur, you see I am in a position to buy Dionis' practice, and I can help you to sell yours to some one else. Put your agreement in your pocket again. It is the loss only of a couple of stamps. Here are seventy centimes."

Lecœur was too much afraid of Goupil to make any complaints. All Nemours was forthwith informed that Minoret had offered his guarantee to Dionis to enable Goupil to purchase his place. The budding notary wrote to Savinien retracting all his confession regarding Minoret, and explaining to the young nobleman that his new position, the decisions of the supreme court, and his respect for justice forbade his

fighting a duel. At the same time, he warned him to take care henceforth how he behaved, as he—Goupil—was practiced in kicking, and at the first provocation would have the pleasure of breaking his leg.

The walls of Nemours spoke no more. But the quarrel between Minoret and his wife continued, and Savinien kept angry silence. Within ten days of these events the marriage of the elder Mademoiselle Massin to the future notary was publicly rumored. Mademoiselle Massin had eighty thousand francs and her ugly face ; Goupil, his misshapen body and his appointment ; so the union seemed suitable and probable.

At midnight, as Goupil was quitting the Massins' house, he was seized in the street by two strangers, who thrashed him soundly and disappeared. Goupil never breathed a word about this nocturnal scene, and gave the lie to an old woman who, looking out of her window, fancied she had recognized him.

All these great little events were watched by the justice, who clearly saw that Goupil had some mysterious power over Minoret, and promised himself that he would find out the reason of it.

Though public opinion in the little town acknowledged Ursule's perfect innocence, she recovered but slowly. In this state of physical prostration, which left her soul and mind free, she became the passive medium of certain phenomena of which the effects indeed were terrible, and of a nature to attract the attention of science, if science had only been taken into the secret. Ten days after Madame de Portenduère's visit, Ursule had a dream which presented the characteristics of a supernatural vision, as much in its moral facts as in its physical conditions, so to speak.

Her godfather, old Doctor Minoret, appeared to her, and signed to her to follow him ; she dressed and went with him,

through the darkness, as far as the house in the Rue des Bourgeois, where she found everything, to the most trivial details, just as they had been at the time of her godfather's death. The old man wore the clothes he had had on the day before he died; his face was pale, not a sound was heard as he moved; nevertheless, Ursule distinctly heard his voice, though it was faint, as if repeated by a distant echo. The doctor led his ward into the Chinese pavilion, where he made her raise the marble top of the little Boule chiffonier, as she had done the day of his death; but instead of finding nothing there, she saw the letter her godfather had desired her to fetch. She unsealed it and read it, as well as the will in Savinien's favor.

“The letters of the writing,” she said to the curé, “shone as though they had been traced with sunbeams; they scorched my eyes.”

When she looked up at her uncle to thank him, she saw a kindly smile on his pale lips. Then, in his weak but quite clear voice, the spectre showed her Minoret in the passage listening to his secret, unscrewing the lock, and taking the packet of papers. Then, with his right hand, he took hold of the girl and obliged her to walk with the tread of the dead to follow Minoret home to his house. Ursule crossed the town, went into the posting-house, and up to Zélie's room, where the spectre made her see the spoiler unsealing the letters, reading and burning them.

“He could only make the third match burn,” said Ursule, “to set light to the papers, and he buried the ashes among the cinders. After that, my godfather took me back to our house, and I saw Monsieur Minoret-Levrault steal into the library, where he took out of the third volume of the ‘Pandects’ the three bonds bearing twelve thousand francs a year, as well as the money saved in the house, all in bank-notes. Then my guardian said to me: ‘All the torments that have brought you to the brink of the grave are his work, but God wills that

you shall be happy. You will not die yet; you will marry Savinien. If you love me, if you love Savinien, you will ask for the restoration of your fortune by my nephew. Swear that you will.' "

Shining like the Lord at His Transfiguration, the spectre had had such a violent effect on Ursule's mind, in the oppressed state in which she was at the time, that she promised all her uncle asked her to be rid of the nightmare. She woke to find herself standing in the middle of her room, in front of the portrait of her godfather, which she had had brought there when she was ill. She went to bed again, and to sleep after great excitement, remembering this strange vision when she woke; but she dared not speak of it. Her refined good sense, and her delicacy of feeling, took offense at the thought of revealing a dream of which the cause and object were her own pecuniary interests; she naturally attributed it to La Bougival's chat, as she was going to sleep, of the doctor's liberality, and the convictions her old nurse still cherished on the subject.

But the dream returned with aggravated details, which made her dread it greatly. The second time her godfather laid his ice-cold hand on her shoulder, causing her the acutest pain, an indescribable sensation. "The dead must be obeyed!" he said in sepulchral tones.

"And tears," she added, "fell from his hollow blank eyes."

The third time the dead man took her by her long plaits of hair, and showed her Minoret talking with Goupil, and promising him money if he would take Ursule to Sens. Then she made up her mind to tell her three dreams to the Abbé Chaperon.

"Monsieur le Curé," she said to him one evening, "do you believe that the dead can walk?"

"My child, sacred history, profane history, modern history bear witness in many passages to their appearing. Still, the

church has never made it an article of faith; and as to science, in France it laughs it to scorn."

"What do you believe?"

"The power of God, my child, is infinite."

"Did my godfather ever speak to you of these things?"

"Yes; often. He had completely changed his views of such matters. His conversion dated from the day, as he told me twenty times, when a woman at Paris heard you, at Nemours, praying for him, and saw the red dot you had made on the calendar at the name of Saint Savinien."

Ursule gave a scream that made the priest shudder; she remembered the scene when, on his return from Paris, her guardian had read her heart, and had taken away her calendar.

"If that is the case," said she, "my visions are possible. My godfather has appeared to me as Jesus appeared to His disciples. He stands in a golden light, and he speaks to me. I wanted to beg you to say a mass for the repose of his soul, and to beseech the interposition of God to stop these apparitions which overwhelm me."

She then related her three dreams in every detail, insisting on the absolute truthfulness of the facts, the freedom of her own movements, and the clear vision of an inner self which, as she described it, followed the guidance of her uncle's spectre with perfect ease. What most surprised the priest, to whom Ursule's perfect veracity was well known, was her exact description of the room formerly occupied by Zélie Minoret at the posting-house, into which Ursule had never been, and which, indeed, she had never even heard mentioned.

"By what means can these strange apparitions be produced?" said Ursule. "What did my godfather think?"

"Your godfather, my child, argued from hypotheses. He acknowledged the possible existence of a spiritual world, a world of ideas. If ideas are a creation proper to man, if they subsist and live a life peculiar to themselves, they must have forms imperceptible to our external senses, but perceptible to

our interior senses under certain conditions. Thus your godfather's ideas may enwrap you, and you perhaps have lent them his aspect. Then, if Minoret has committed these actions, they are dissolved into ideas; for every action is the outcome of several ideas. Now, if ideas have their being in the spiritual world, your spirit may have been enabled to see them when transported thither. These phenomena are not more strange than those of memory; and those of memory are as surprising and as inexplicable as those of the perfume of plants, which are perhaps the plants' ideas."

"Dear me! how you expand the world! But is it really possible to hear a dead man speak, to see him walk and act?"

"Swedenborg, in Sweden," replied the abbé, "has proved to demonstration that he held intercourse with the dead. But, at any rate, come into the library, and in the life of the famous Duc de Montmorency, who was beheaded at Toulouse, and who certainly was not the man to invent a cock-and-bull story, you will read of an adventure almost like your own, which also occurred, above a hundred years before, to Cardan."

Ursule and the curé went up to the second floor, and the good man found for her a little duodecimo edition, printed in Paris in 1666, of the "History of Henri de Montmorency," written by a contemporary priest who had known that prince.

"Read," said the curé, giving her the volume open at pages 175 and 176. "Your godfather often read this passage; see, here are some grains of his snuff."

"And he is no more!" said Ursule, taking the book to read this passage:

"The siege of Privas was remarkable for the loss of some of the persons in command. Two colonels were killed, to wit: the Marquis d'Uxelles, who died of a wound received in the trenches, and the Marquis de Portes, by a gunshot in the head. He was to have been made a marshal of France the very day he was killed. Just about the moment when the

Marquis died, the Duc de Montmorency, who was sleeping in his tent, was roused by a voice like that of the Marquis, bidding him farewell. The love he had for one who was so dear to him caused him to attribute the illusion of this dream to the power of his imagination; and the toil of the night, which he had spent as usual in the trenches, made him go to sleep again without any fear. But the same voice suddenly broke it again; and the phantom, which he had only seen in his sleep, compelled him to wake once more, and to hear distinctly the same words that it had spoken before disappearing. The Duc then recollected that one day when they had heard Pitrat the philosopher discoursing of the separation of the soul from the body, they had promised to bid each other farewell, whichever died first, if he were permitted. Whereupon, unable to hinder his dread of the truth of this warning, he at once sent one of his servants to the Marquis' lodgings, which were distant from his own. But before his man could return he was sent for by the King, who caused him to be told, by persons who could comfort him, of the misfortune he had already apprehended.

“I leave it to the learned to discuss the cause of this event, which I have often heard the Duc de Montmorency relate, and which I have thought worthy to be set down for its marvellousness and its truth.”

“But, then,” asked Ursule, “what ought I to do?”

“My child,” said the curé, “the case is so serious, and so much to your own advantage, that you must keep complete silence. Now that you have trusted me with the secret of this apparition, perhaps it will come no more. Besides, you are strong enough now to go to church; well, then, to-morrow you can come to thank God, and to pray for the peace of your godfather's soul. Be quite sure, at any rate, that your secret is in safe hands.”

“If you could know in what terror I go to sleep! What awful looks my godfather gives me! The last time he held

on to my dress to see me longer. I woke with my face streaming with tears."

"Rest in peace; he will come no more," said the curé.

Without losing any time the Abbé Chaperon went to Minoret's house and begged him to grant him a minute's conversation in the Chinese pavilion, insisting that they must be alone.

"No one can hear us?" asked the priest.

"No one," said Minoret.

"Monsieur, my character is known to you," said the worthy priest, looking Minoret mildly but steadfastly in the face. "I must speak to you of some serious, extraordinary matters, which concern you alone, and which you may rely on me to keep a profound secret; but it is impossible that I should not reveal them to you. When your uncle was alive, there stood just there——" said the abbé, pointing to the spot, "a little chiffonier of Boule with a marble top" (Minoret turned pale), "and under the marble slab your uncle placed a letter for his ward——"

The curé went on to tell Minoret the whole story of Minoret's conduct, without omitting the smallest detail. The retired postmaster, when he heard of the circumstance of the two matches that went out before burning up, felt his hair creep on his thick-set scalp.

"Who has invented such a cock-and-bull story?" he said in a husky voice, when the tale was finished.

"The dead man himself!"

This reply made Minoret shiver slightly, for he too saw the doctor in his dreams.

"God is most good to work miracles for me, Monsieur le Curé," said Minoret, inspired by his peril to utter the only jest he ever perpetrated in his life.

"All that God does is natural," replied the priest.

"Your phantasmagoria does not frighten me," said the colossus, recovering his presence of mind a little.

“I have not come to frighten you, my dear sir, for I shall never speak of this to any living creature,” said the curé. “You alone know the truth. It is a matter between you and God.”

“Come, now, Monsieur le Curé, do you believe me capable of such a breach of faith?”

“I believe in no crimes but those which are confessed to me, and of which the sinner repents,” said the priest in apostolic tones.

“A crime?” exclaimed Minoret.

“A crime, terrible in its results.”

“In what way?”

“In the fact that it evades human justice. The crimes which are not expiated here will be expiated in the other world. God Himself avenges the innocent.”

“You think that God troubles Himself about such mere trifles?”

“If He could not see all the worlds and every detail at a glance, as you hold a landscape in your eye, He would not be God.”

“Monsieur le Curé, do you give me your word of honor that you have heard all this story from no one but my uncle?”

“Your uncle has now appeared three times to Ursule, to reiterate it. Worn out by these dreams, she confided these revelations to me, under the seal of secrecy; she herself regards them as so entirely irrational that she will never allude to them. So on that point you may be quite easy.”

“But I am quite easy on all points, Monsieur Chaperon.”

“I can but hope so,” said the old priest. “Even if I should regard such warnings given in dreams as utterly absurd, I should still think it necessary to communicate them to you on account of the singularity of the details. You are a respectable man; and you have earned your fine fortune too legitimately to wish to add to it by robbery. You are, too, a

very simple man; remorse would torture you too cruelly. We have in ourselves an instinct of justice, in the civilized man as in the savage, which does not allow of our enjoying in peace anything we have acquired dishonestly according to the laws of the society we live in; for well-organized communities are modeled on the plan given to the universe by God Himself. In so far, society has a divine origin. Man does not evolve ideas, does not invent forms; he imitates the eternal relations he finds in all that surrounds him. Consequently, this is what happens: no criminal going to the scaffold with the full power of carrying out of the world the secret of his crimes, allows himself to be executed without making the confession to which he is urged by a mysterious impulse. So, my dear Monsieur Minoret, if you are easy I may go away happy."

Minoret was so dazed that he left the curé to let himself out. As soon as he was alone he flew into the rage of a full-blooded nature; he broke out in the wildest blasphemies, and called Ursule by every odious name.

"Why, what has that little wench done to you?" asked Madame Minoret, who had come in on tiptoe after seeing the curé depart.

For the first and only time in his life, Minoret, drunk with fury and driven to extremities by his wife's persistent questioning, beat her so soundly that when she fell helpless he was obliged to lift her in his arms, and, very much ashamed of himself, to put her to bed.

He himself had a short fit of illness; the doctor was obliged to bleed him twice. When he was about again, every one, within a short time, noticed that he was altered. Minoret would take walks alone, and often wander about the streets like a man uneasy in his mind. He seemed absent-minded when spoken to—he, who had never had two ideas in his head. At last, one day, he addressed the justice, in the High Street, as he was going, no doubt, to fetch Ursule

to take her to Madame de Portenduère's, where the whist parties had begun again.

“Monsieur Bongrand, I have something rather important to say to my cousin Ursule,” said he, taking the justice by the arm, “and I am glad that you should be present; you may give her some advice.”

They found Ursule at the piano; she rose with an air of cold dignity when she saw Minoret.

“Monsieur Minoret wishes to speak with you on business, my dear,” said the justice. “By the way, do not forget to give me your dividend warrants. I am going to Paris, and I will get your six months' interest, and La Bougival's.”

“Cousin,” said Minoret, “our uncle had accustomed you to an easier life than you now enjoy.”

“It is possible to be very happy without much money,” said she.

“I have been thinking that money would help to make you happy,” replied Minoret, “and I came to offer you some, out of respect for my uncle's memory.”

“You had a very natural course open to show your respect for him,” said Ursule severely. “You might have left his house just as it was, and have sold it to me, for you ran the price up so high only in the hope of finding treasure hoarded there——”

“At any rate,” said Minoret, evidently ill at ease, “if you had twelve thousand francs a year, you would be in a position to marry the better.”

“I have not such an income.”

“But if I were to give it to you, on condition of your purchasing an estate in Brittany, in Madame de Portenduère's part of the country, she would then consent to your marrying her son?——”

“Monsieur Minoret, I have no right to so large a sum, and could not possibly accept it from you. We are scarcely related, and still less are we friends. I have suffered too

much already from slander to wish to give any cause for evil speaking. What have I done to deserve such a gift? On what pretext could you make me such a present? These questions, which I have a right to ask you, every one will answer in his own way. It will be interpreted as compensation for some injury, and I decline to recognize any. Your uncle did not bring me up in ignoble sentiments. We can accept gifts only from a friend. I could not feel any affection for you, and should necessarily prove ungrateful, so I do not choose to run the risk of such ingratitude."

"You refuse!" exclaimed the colossus; the idea of anybody refusing a fortune would never have entered his head.

"I refuse," repeated Ursule.

"But on what grounds have you any claim to offer such a fortune to mademoiselle?" asked the old lawyer. "You have an idea; have you an idea?"

"Well, yes; the idea of getting her away from Nemours, that my son may leave me in peace; he is in love with her, and insists on marrying her."

"Well, we will see about that," replied the justice, settling his spectacles. "Give us time to reflect."

He escorted Minoret home, quite approving his anxiety as to the future on Désiré's account, gently blaming Ursule's hasty decisiveness, and promising to make her listen to reason. As soon as Minoret was within doors, Bongrand went to the posting stables, borrowed a horse and gig, and hurried off to Fontainebleau, where he inquired for Désiré, and was informed that he was at an evening party at the sous-préfet's. The justice, quite delighted, went on thither. Désiré was playing a rubber with the public prosecutor's wife, the wife of the sous-préfet, and the colonel of the regiment stationed there.

"I have come the bearer of good news," said Monsieur Bongrand to Désiré. "You are in love with Ursule Mirouët, and your father no longer objects to the marriage."

“Ursule Mirouët! I am in love with her?” cried Désiré, laughing. “What put Ursule Mirouët into your head? I remember seeing her occasionally at old Doctor Minoret’s, my great grand-uncle, a little girl who is certainly lovely; but she is outrageously pious; and if I, like everybody else, did justice to her charms, I never troubled my head with caring for her washed-out complexion,” and he smiled at the lady of the house—a “sprightly brunette,” to use a last-century phrase. “Where were you dug up, my dear Monsieur Bongrand? All the world knows that my father is sovereign lord over lands worth forty-eight thousand francs a year, lying round his Château du Rouvre, so all the world knows that I have forty-eight thousand perpetual and funded reasons for not caring for the ward of the law. If I were to marry a mere nobody, these ladies would think me a great fool.”

“You have never teased your father about Ursule?”

“Never.”

“You hear him, monsieur,” said the justice to the lawyer, who had been listening, and whom he now buttonholed in a corner, where they stood talking for about a quarter of an hour.

An hour later the justice, having returned to Nemours and to Ursule’s house, sent La Bougival to fetch Minoret, who came at once.

“Mademoiselle——” said Bongrand, as Minoret came in.

“Accepts?” Minoret put in, interrupting him.

“No, not yet,” replied the justice, settling his spectacles. “She had some scruples regarding your son’s condition, for she had been very much ill-used on the score of a similar passion, and knows the value of peace and quiet. Can you swear to her that your son is crazed with love, and that you have no object in view but that of preserving our dear Ursule from some fresh Goupilleries?”

“Oh yes, I swear it!” said Minoret.

“Stop a minute, Master Minoret!” said the justice, taking

one of his hands out of his trousers-pocket to slap Minoret on the back, making him start. "Do not so lightly commit perjury."

"Perjury!"

"It lies between you and your son, who, at Fontainebleau, at the sub-prefect's house, and in the presence of four persons and the public prosecutor of the district, has just sworn that he never once thought of his cousin Ursule Mirouët. You must therefore have had other reasons for offering her such an immense sum? I perceived that you were making very rash statements, and I have been to Fontainebleau myself."

Minoret stood aghast at his own blunder.

"Still, there is no harm, Monsieur Bongrand, in offering to a young relative what will facilitate a marriage, which, as it would seem, will make her happy, and in seeking some excuse to overcome her modesty."

Minoret, who in his extremity had hit on an almost admissible plea, wiped his brow, wet with large drops of sweat.

"You know my motives for refusing," replied Ursule. "I can but beg you to come here no more. Monsieur de Portenduère has not told me his reasons, but he has a feeling of contempt, even of hatred, of you, which forbids me to receive you. My happiness is my whole fortune; I do not blush to own it; and I will do nothing to compromise it, for Monsieur de Portenduère is waiting only till I am of age to marry me."

"The proverb, 'Money is all-powerful,' is very false!" said the huge, burly Minoret, looking at the justice, whose observant eyes disturbed him greatly.

He rose and went away; but he found the air outside as oppressive as that in the little sitting-room.

"I must somehow put an end to this!" said he to himself as he got home.

"Now, your dividend warrant, my child," said the justice, a good deal surprised at Ursule's calmness after so strange a scene.

When she returned with her own warrant and La Bougival's, Ursule found the justice walking up and down the room.

"You have no idea what could have led to that huge lout's offer?" he asked her.

"None that I can tell you," she replied.

Monsieur Bongrand looked at her in surprise—

"Then we both have the same notion," he said. "Here, make a note of the numbers of the two warrants, in case I should lose them; that is always a necessary precaution." Bongrand himself noted on a card the numbers of the warrants.

"Good-by, my child; I shall be away two days, but I shall be back on the third for my sitting."

That night Ursule had a vision of a very strange character. It seemed to her that her bed was in the graveyard of Nemours, and that her uncle's grave was at the foot of the bed. The white stone on which she read the epitaph dazzled her eyes, and opened endways like the front cover of an album. She shrieked loudly, but the figure of the doctor slowly sat up. She first saw his yellow head and white hair, that shone as if surrounded by a halo. Under his bald forehead his eyes glittered like beams of light, and he rose as if drawn up by some superior force. Ursule trembled horribly in her bodily frame; her flesh felt like a burning garment; and, as she subsequently described it, there seemed to be another self moving within it.

"Mercy, godfather!" she cried.

"Mercy? It is too late," he answered in the voice of the dead, to use the poor girl's inexplicable expression when she related this fresh dream to the Abbé Chaperon. "He has been warned. He has paid no heed to the warning. His son's days are numbered. If he does not ere long confess all and make full restitution, he will mourn his son, who is to perish by a horrible and violent death. Tell him this!" The

spectre pointed to a row of figures, which flashed on the wall as if they had been written with fire, and said: "That is his sentence!"

When her uncle had lain down in the grave again, Ursule heard the noise of the stone falling into place, and then, far away, a strange noise as of tramping horses, and men loudly shouting.

Next day Ursule was prostrate. She could not get up, this dream had so overwrought her. She begged her old nurse to go at once to the Abbé Chaperon and bring him back with her. The good man came as soon as he had performed mass; but he was not at all astonished by Ursule's dream. He was convinced of the fact of the robbery, and no longer sought any explanation of the abnormal state of his "little dreamer." He left Ursule, and went straight to Minoret.

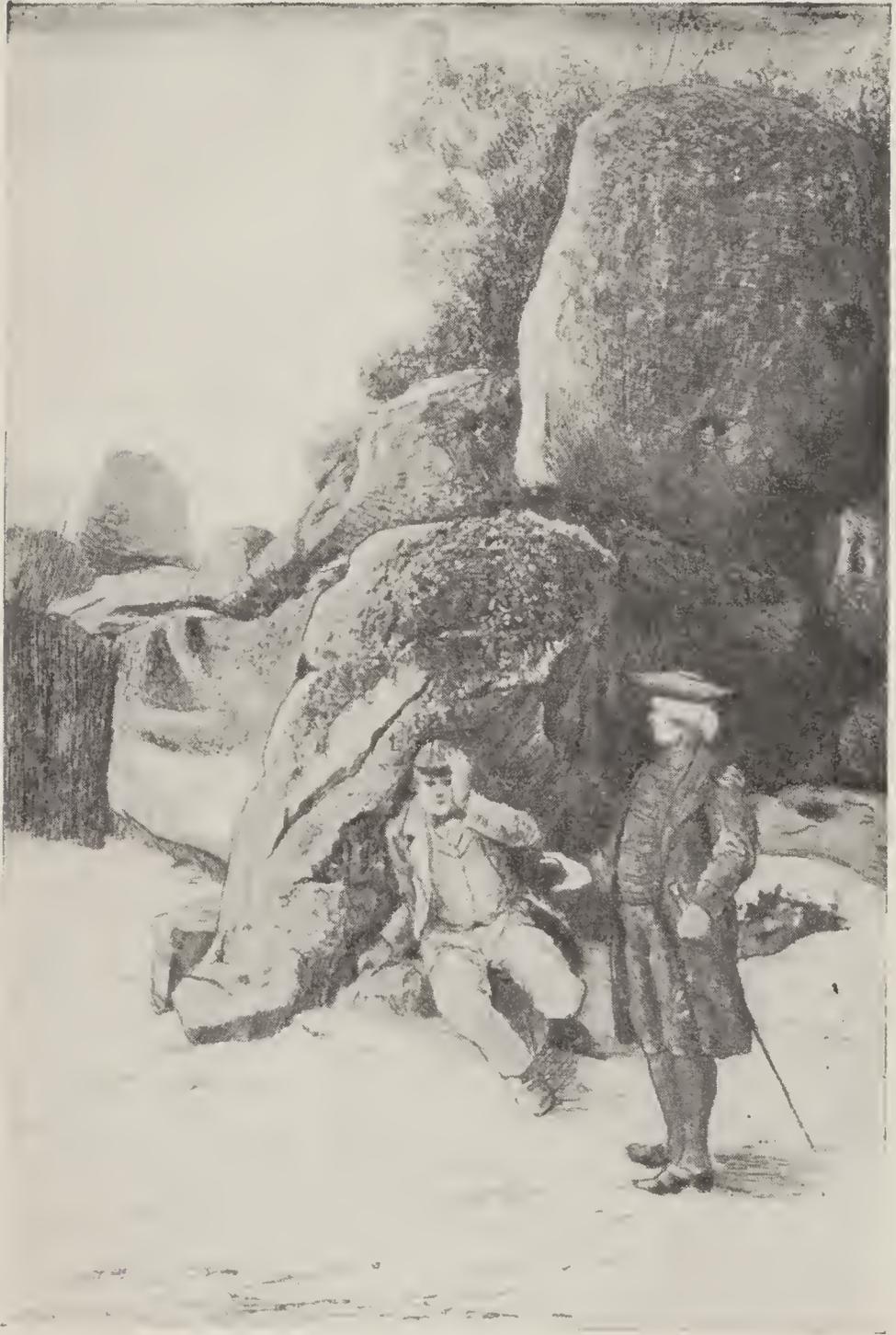
"Dear me, Monsieur le Curé," said Zélie, "my husband's temper is so spoilt, I don't know what is the matter with him. Until lately, he was a perfect child; but these two months past I hardly know him. That he should have gotten into such a rage as to strike me—me, when I am so gentle! The man must be completely and utterly altered. You will find him among the rocks; he spends his life there. What does he do there?"

In spite of the heat—it was September, 1836—the priest crossed the canal, and turned up a pathway, where he saw Minoret sitting under a boulder.

"You are in some great trouble, Monsieur Minoret," said the priest, appearing before the guilty man. "You belong to me, you know, for you are unhappy. Unfortunately, I have come to add, perhaps, to your apprehensions. Ursule has just had a terrible dream. Your uncle lifted up his gravestone to prophesy misfortune to your family. I have not come to frighten you, believe me, but you ought to be told what he said——"

"Really, Monsieur le Curé, I cannot be left in peace any-





*"YOU STOLE THE THREE CERTIFICATES."*



where, not even in this wilderness. I want to know nothing of what goes on in the next world," dejectedly replied the miserable old man.

"I will leave you, monsieur. I have not taken this walk in the heat for my own pleasure," said the priest, wiping his brow.

"Well, then, what was it the old fellow said?" asked Minoret.

"You are threatened with the loss of your son. If your uncle could tell things which you alone knew, you must tremble at the things which we none of us know. Restitution, my dear sir, restitution! Do not lose your soul for a little gold."

"Restitution of what?"

"Of the fortune the doctor intended for Ursule. You stole the three certificates; I now know it. You began by persecuting the poor girl, and you now end by offering her a dowry; you have fallen so low as lying; you are entangled in its mazes, and make a false step at every turn. You are yourself clumsy, and you have been badly served by your accomplice, Goupil, who only laughs at you. Make haste, for you are being watched by clever and clear-sighted persons, Ursule's friends. Restitution! And even if you do not save your son, who may not be in any danger, you will save your own soul, and your honor. In a society constituted as ours is, in a little town where you all have your eyes on each other, and where what is not known is surely guessed, can you hope to hide an ill-gotten fortune? Come, my son, an innocent man would not have allowed me to say so much?"

"Go to the devil!" cried Minoret. "I do not know what you are all at, setting on me. I like these stones better, for they leave me in peace."

"Good-by. You have been warned by me, my dear sir, without a soul in the world having heard a single word about the matter, either from me or from that poor girl. But

beware ! There is a man who has his eye on you. God have mercy on you ! ”

The curé turned and left him. When he had gone a few steps, he looked back once more at Minoret. He was sitting with his head between his hands, for his head ached. Minoret was a little mad.

In the first place, he had kept the three certificates ; he did not know what to do with them ; he dared not present them himself ; he was afraid lest he should be recognized ; he did not wish to sell them, and was trying to hit on some way of transferring them. His day dreams were romances of business, of which the climax always was the transfer of those cursed certificates. In this dreadful predicament he thought, however, of confessing to his wife, so as to have some advice. Zélie, who had steered her own ship so well, would know how to get him out of this scrape.

Three per cents. were now quoted at eighty ; thus, with arrears, the restitution in question would amount to nearly a million francs. Give up a million, without any proof against him that he had taken them ! This was no joke. And during the whole of September and part of October Minoret remained a prey to remorse and irresolution. To the amazement of the whole town, he grew thinner.

A fearful circumstance hastened the imparting of his secret to Zélie ; the sword of Damocles swayed over their heads. Towards the middle of October Monsieur and Madame Minoret received the following letter from their son Désiré :

“ MY DEAR MOTHER :—If I have not been to see you since the vacation, it is because, in the first place, I have been on duty in the absence of my chief, and also because I knew that Monsieur de Portenduère only awaited my going to Nemours to pick a quarrel with me. Tired, perhaps, of the long postponement of the revenge he is anxious to take on our family, the Vicomte has been to Fontainebleau, where he appointed

to meet one of his friends from Paris, after making sure of the assistance of the Vicomte de Soulanges, brigadier of the hussars quartered here.

“ He called on me very politely, accompanied by these two gentlemen, and told me that my father was undoubtedly the originator of the infamous persecution directed against Ursule Mirouët, his future wife ; he gave me proof by telling me that Goupil had confessed before witnesses, and by giving me an account of my father’s conduct ; he, it seems, after refusing at first to carry out his promises to Goupil as the price of his villainous devices, found the necessary funds for acquiring the place of summonsing officer at Nemours, and, finally, out of fear, stood surety to Monsieur Dionis for the purchase of his practice, and so disposed of Goupil. The Vicomte, who cannot fight a man of sixty-seven, and who insists on avenging the insults heaped on Ursule, formally asked satisfaction of me. His purpose, thought out and determined on in silence, was not to be altered. If I should refuse to fight, he meant to meet me in a drawing-room in the presence of those persons whose opinion I most value, and there to insult me so grossly that either I must fight or my hopes in life be at an end. In France a coward is universally contemned. Moreover, his motives for demanding such reparation would be laid before me by gentlemen of honor.

“ He was sorry, he said, to be driven to such extremities. In the opinion of his seconds, the wisest thing I could do would be to arrange a meeting, as men of honor are in the habit of doing, in such a way that Ursule’s name should not appear in the matter. Finally, to avoid all scandal in France, we could, with our seconds, cross the frontier at the nearest point. Thus everything would be arranged for the best. His name, he said, was worth ten times my fortune, and his prospects of happiness were a greater stake for him to risk than anything I could risk in this duel, which is to be fatal. He desired me to choose seconds and settle the matter. My

seconds met his yesterday, and they unanimously decided that I owe him this reparation.

“In a week I set out for Geneva with two of my friends. Monsieur de Portenduère, Monsieur de Soulanges, and Monsieur de Trailles will go their own way. We fight with pistols; all the details are arranged. Each is to fire three shots, and then, whatever may have come of it, the matter is at an end. To avoid all talk of such a dirty business—for I cannot possibly justify my father’s conduct—I am writing to you only at the last minute. I will not go to see you on account of the violence you might display, which would be quite out of place. To make my way in the world I must obey its laws; and where a Vicomte finds ten reasons for a duel, the son of a postmaster must have a hundred. I shall pass through Nemours at night, and will there bid you good-by.”

When they had read this letter, there was a scene between Zélie and Minoret, which ended in his confessing the theft, with all the circumstances connected with it, and the strange scenes to which it had everywhere given rise, even in the realm of dreams. The million had the same fascination for Zélie as it had for Minoret, and she did not propose to let it give her any uneasiness.

“Do you stay quietly here,” said Zélie, without the smallest reproach to her husband for his blundering; “I will take the matter in hand. We will keep the money, and Désiré shall not fight.”

Madame Minoret put on her shawl and bonnet and hurried off to Ursule with her son’s letter; she found her alone, for it was about twelve o’clock.

In spite of her audacity, Zélie Minoret was abashed by the girl’s cold looks, but she scolded herself for her cowardice, and took an airy tone.

“Here; Mademoiselle Mirouët, have the kindness to read

this letter, and tell me what you think of it," she exclaimed, holding out her son's letter.

Ursule felt a thousand conflicting emotions on reading this letter, which proved to her how deeply she was loved, and what care Savinien would take of the honor of the woman he was about to marry; but she was at once too pious and too charitable to desire to be the cause of death or suffering to her worst enemy.

"I promise you, madame, that I will hinder this duel, and your mind may be easy; but I beg you to leave me the letter."

"Let us see, my beauty, if we cannot do better than that. Listen to me. We have estates to the tune of forty-eight thousand a year round Le Rouvre, which is a real royal château; besides that we can give Désiré twenty-four thousand francs a year in consols; seventy-two thousand francs a year in all. You will allow that there are not many matches to compare with him. You are an ambitious little puss—and you are very right," added Zélie, noting Ursule's eager gesture of denial. "I have come to ask your hand for Désiré; you will take your godfather's name—that will do it honor. Désiré, as you may have seen, is a good-looking young fellow; he is very much liked at Fontainebleau, and will soon be public prosecutor. You, who are such a coaxing charmer, will get him to Paris. At Paris we will give you a fine house; you will shine and play a part in society; for with seventy-two thousand francs a year and the salary of a good appointment, you and Désiré will be in the highest circles. Consult your friends; you will see what they say."

"I need only consult my heart, madame."

"Pooh, pooh! Now you will be talking of that little lady-killer, Savinien! Hang it all! you will pay very dear for his name, his little mustache twirled into two curly spikes, and his black hair. A pretty boy he is! A nice business you will make of housekeeping on seven thousand francs a year, and a husband who ran into debt for a hundred thousand in two

years in Paris. You don't know it yet, my child, but all men are alike; and though I say it that shouldn't, my Désiré is every bit as good as a king's son."

"You are forgetting, madame, the danger that your son is in at this moment, which can only be averted by Monsieur de Portenduère's wish to oblige me. The danger would be quite inevitable if he should learn that you are making such a dishonoring proposal. I may assure you, madame, that I shall be happier with the small income to which you allude than with the wealth you describe to dazzle me. For reasons unknown as yet—for everything will be known, madame—Monsieur Minoret, by his odious persecution, has brought to light the affection which binds me to Monsieur de Portenduère, and which I may openly avow since his mother will give us her blessing; I may tell you that this affection, now sanctioned and legitimate, is all I live for. No lot, however splendid, however elevated, would induce me to change. I love beyond all possibility of repentance or change. Hence it would be a crime, undoubtedly punished, if I were to marry a man to whom I could only bring a heart that is wholly Savinien's. And, indeed, madame, since you drive me to it, I will say more: even if I did not love Monsieur de Portenduère, I could never make up my mind to go through the sorrows and joys of life as your son's companion. If Monsieur Savinien has been in debt, you have often paid Monsieur Désiré's. Our natures have neither the points of resemblance nor of difference which would allow of our living together without covert bitterness. I, perhaps, should not show him the tolerance that a woman owes to her husband; I should therefore soon become a burden to him. Think no more of a marriage of which I am unworthy, and which I may decline without causing you the smallest regret, since, with such advantages, you will not fail to find plenty of girls handsomer than I am, of higher rank, and much richer."

"Swear to me, child," said Zélie, "that you will pre-

vent these two young men from taking their journey and fighting."

"It will, I know, be the greatest sacrifice Monsieur de Portenduère can make for my sake. But my bridal wreath must not be claimed by blood-stained hands."

"Very well, little cousin; I am much obliged to you, and I hope you may be happy."

"And I, madame, hope you may realize the promise of your son's future."

This reply struck to the mother's heart; she remembered the predictions of Ursule's last dream; she stood up, her little eyes fixed on Ursule's face—so pale, pure, and fair in her half-mourning dress—for Ursule had risen, as a hint to her self-called cousin to leave.

"Then you believe in dreams?" asked Zélie.

"I suffer from them too much not to believe in them."

"But then——" Zélie began.

"Good-morning, madame," said Ursule, with a bow to Madame Minoret, as she heard the curé's step.

The Abbé Chaperon was surprised to find Madame Minoret with Ursule. The anxiety depicted on the retired postmistress' pinched and wrinkled face naturally led the priest to study the two women by turns.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" Zélie asked the curé.

"Do you believe in dividends?" replied the curé, smiling.

"Sharpers—all of them!" thought Zélie; "they want to get round us. The old priest, the old justice, and that rascally little Savinien have arranged it all. There are no more dreams in it than there are hairs in the palm of my hand." She then courtesied twice with curt abruptness, and went away.

"I know why Savinien went to Fontainebleau," said Ursule to the Abbé Chaperon, and she informed him of the duel, begging him to use his influence to prevent it.

“And Madame Minoret proposed to you to marry her son?” asked the old man.

“Yes.”

“Minoret has probably confessed his crime to his wife,” added the curé.

The justice, who came in at this moment, heard of the proceedings and the offer made by Zélie, whose hatred of Ursule was known to him, and he glanced at the curé as much as to say—“Come out; I want to speak to you about Ursule out of her hearing.”

“Savinien will hear that you have refused eighty thousand francs a year and the cock of the walk of Nemours!” he said.

“Is that any sacrifice?” answered she. “Is anything a sacrifice to those who truly love? And is there any merit in my refusing the son of a man we despise? If others can make a virtue of their aversions, that should not be the moral code of a girl brought up by a Jordy, an Abbé Chaperon, and our dear doctor!” and she looked up at the portrait.

Bongrand took Ursule’s hand and kissed it.

“Do you know,” said the justice to the curé when they were in the street, “what Madame Minoret came for?”

“What?” said the priest, looking at his friend with a keen eye that only revealed curiosity.

“She wanted to make a kind of restitution.”

“Then, do you think——?” began the Abbé Chaperon.

“I do not think, I am sure—here, only look.” The justice pointed to Minoret, who was coming towards them on his way home, for on leaving Ursule’s house the two friends had turned up the High Street.

“Having to plead in court, I have naturally studied many cases of remorse, but I never saw one to compare with this. What can have produced that flaccid pallor in cheeks of which the skin was tight as a drum, bursting with the coarse, rude health of a man without a care? What has set dark rings

round those eyes, and deadened their rustic twinkle? Could you have believed that there would ever be a wrinkle on that brow, or that that colossus could ever have felt his brain reel! At last he is conscious of a heart! I know the phases of remorse, my dear curé, as you know those of repentance. Those that have hitherto come under my observation were awaiting punishment, or condemned to endure it, to settle their score with the world; they were resigned, or breathed vengeance. But here we have remorse without expiation; remorse pure and simple, greedy of its prey, and rending it. You are not yet aware," said the justice, stopping Minoret, "that Mademoiselle Mirouët has just refused your son's hand?"

"But," added the curé, "you may be easy; she will prevent his duel with Monsieur de Portenduère."

"Ah! my wife has been successful," said Minoret; "I am very glad. I was more dead than alive."

"You are indeed so altered that you are not like yourself," said the justice.

Minoret looked from one to the other to see if the curé had betrayed him, but the abbé preserved a fixity of countenance, a calm melancholy, that at once greatly reassured the guilty man.

"And the change is all the more surprising," the lawyer went on, "because you ought to be perfectly happy. Why, here you are, lord of Le Rouvre, to which you have added Les Bordières, all your farms, your mills, your meadows. You have a hundred thousand francs a year in consols——"

"I hold no consols," said Minoret, hastily.

"Bah!" said the justice. "Why, it is just the same with that as with your son's love for Ursule. One day he will have nothing to say to her, and the next asks her to marry him. After having tried to kill Ursule with misery, you want to have her for a daughter-in-law! My dear sir, there is something at the bottom of all this!"

Minoret wanted to answer ; he tried to find words ; he could only bring out—

“You are funny, Mr. Justice of the Peace. Good-day, gentlemen.”

And with this reply he slowly turned down the Rue des Bourgeois.

“He has stolen our poor Ursule’s fortune. But how can we prove it?”

“God grant——” said the curé.

“God has endowed us with a feeling which is now speaking in that man,” replied the justice. “But we call that presumptive evidence, and human justice requires something more.”

The Abbé Chaperon kept silent, as a priest. As happens in such cases, he thought much more often than he wished of the robbery Minoret had almost confessed, and of Savinien’s happiness, so evidently delayed by Ursule’s lack of fortune ; for the old lady owned in secret to her spiritual director how wrong she had been not to consent to her son’s marriage during the doctor’s lifetime.

Next day, as he came down the altar steps after mass, he was struck by an idea, which came upon him with the force of a voice calling to him. He signed to Ursule to wait for him, and went home with her without breakfasting.

“My dear child,” said he, “I want to see the two volumes in which your godfather, as you dream of him, says that he placed the certificates and notes.”

Ursule and the curé went upstairs to the library and took down the third volume of the “Pandects.” On opening it, the curé observed, not without surprise, the mark left by some papers on the pages, which, offering less resistance than the boards of the binding, still showed the impression made by the certificates ; and in the other volume it was easy to see the readiness to open caused by the long pressure of a packet of papers between two pages of the folio.

“Come in, come up!” cried the abbé to the justice, who was just passing the house.

Bongrand entered the room at the very moment when the priest was putting on his spectacles to read three numbers written by the dead doctor’s hand on the colored vellum-paper guard placed inside the boards by the binder, and which Ursule had just detected.

“What is the meaning of that? Our worthy friend was too great a book-lover to spoil the guard of a binding,” said the Abbé Chaperon; “here are three numbers written between a first number, preceded by an M, and another preceded by an U.”

“What do you say?” cried Bongrand. “Let me look at that. Good God!” he exclaimed, “is not this enough to open the eyes of an atheist, by proving to him the existence of Providence? Human justice is, I believe, the development of a divine idea brooding over the universe.”

He seized Ursule and kissed her on the forehead.

“Oh! my child, you shall be happy—rich—and through me!”

“What is it?” said the curé.

“My dear monsieur!” cried La Bougival, taking the tail of the justice’s blue coat, “let me embrace you for what you say.”

“But explain yourself,” said the curé, “that we may not rejoice vainly.”

“If, in order to be rich, I must give anybody pain,” said Ursule, who had an inkling of a criminal trial, “I——”

“But think,” said the lawyer, interrupting Ursule, “of the happiness you will give our dear Savinien.”

“But you are mad!” said the curé.

“No, my dear curé,” said Bongrand. “Listen. Certificates of consols are numbered in as many series as there are letters of the alphabet, and each number bears the letter of its series; but certificates to bearer cannot have any letter,

since they are inscribed in no name. Hence, what you here see proves that, on the day when the good man placed his money in state securities, he made a note of the number of his certificate for fifteen thousand francs a year under the letter M—for Minoret; of the numbers of three certificates to bearer; and of that of Ursule Mirouët under the letter U, number 23,534, which, as you see, immediately follows that of the certificate for fifteen thousand francs. This coincidence proves that these numbers are those of five certificates acquired on the same day, and noted by the old man in case of loss. I had advised him to put Ursule's money into certificates to bearer, and he must have invested his own money, the money he intended for Ursule, and her little property all on the same day. I am now going to Dionis to look at the inventory. If the number of the certificate he left in his own name is 23,533, letter M, we may be certain that he invested through the same stockbroker, and on the same day: Firstly, his own money in one lump sum; secondly, his savings in three sums, in certificates to bearer; and, thirdly, his ward's money; the register of transfer will afford irrefutable proof. Ah, Minoret the wisehead, I have gotten you! Mum's the word, my friends!"

The justice left the curé, Ursule, and La Bougival lost in admiration of the ways by which God brings innocence to happy issues.

"The finger of God is here!" cried the Abbé Chaperon.

"Will they do him any hurt?" asked Ursule.

"Oh, mademoiselle," cried La Bougival, "I would give the rope to hang him with!"

The justice was by this time at the house where Goupil was already the successor designate of Dionis, and went into the office with a careless air.

"I want a little information," said he to Goupil, "as to the estate of Doctor Minoret."

"What is it?" asked Goupil.

“Did the old man leave one or more certificates of investment in three per cents.?”

“He left fifteen thousand francs of income in three per cents.,” said Goupil, “in one certificate. I entered it myself.”

“Then just look in the inventory,” said the justice.

Goupil took down a box, turned over the contents, took out the document in question, looked through it, and read, “Item, one certificate—there, read for yourself—number 23,533, letter M.”

“Be so kind as to hand over to me an extract of the particulars from the inventory before one o’clock. I will wait for it.”

“What can you want it for?” asked Goupil.

“Do you wish to become notary?” retorted the justice, looking sternly at the expectant successor to Dionis.

“I should think so!” cried Goupil. “I am sure I have eaten dirt enough to earn my title of ‘Master.’ I beg you to understand, monsieur, that the wretched office clerk known as Goupil has no connection with ‘Master’ Jean-Sebastien-Marie Goupil, notary at Nemours, and husband to Mademoiselle Massin. The two men do not know each other; they are not even alike in any particular. Do you not see me?”

Monsieur Bongrand then remarked Goupil’s dress. He wore a white stock, a shirt of dazzling whiteness with ruby studs, a red velvet waistcoat, a coat and trousers of fine black cloth and Paris make. He had neat boots, and his hair, carefully combed and smoothed, was elegantly scented. In short, he seemed to have been metamorphosed!

“You are, in fact, another man,” said Bongrand.

“Morally as well as physically, monsieur. Wisdom comes with work; and money is the fountain of cleansing——”

“Morally as well as physically?” said the justice, settling his spectacles.

“Dear me, monsieur, is a man with a hundred thousand crowns a year ever a democrat? Regard me as a respectable man, who has a taste for refinement, and for loving his wife,” he added, as Madame Goupil came in. “I am so much altered,” said he, “that I think my cousin Madame Crémère quite witty. I have taken her in hand; and even her daughter no longer talks about pistons. Why, only yesterday, in speaking of Monsieur Savinien’s dog, she said he was making a point. Well, I did not repeat her blunder, though it is a funny one. I at once explained to her the difference between pointing, making a point, and standing at point. So, you see, I am quite another man, and would not allow a client to get into a mess.”

“Well, make haste then,” said Bongrand. “Give me that copy within an hour, and Goupil, the notary, will have done something towards repairing the misdeeds of the clerk.”

After borrowing from the town doctor his cab and horse, the justice went to fetch the two accusing folios, Ursule’s certificate, and the extract from the inventory; armed with these, he drove to Fontainebleau to the public prosecutor there. Bongrand easily proved the abstraction of the three certificates to be the act of one or another of the heirs-at-law, and then demonstrated Minoret’s guilt.

“It accounts for his conduct,” said the lawyer.

Then, as a measure of precaution, he stopped the transfer of the three certificates by a minute to the treasury, he desired Bongrand to ask what was the amount of interest due on the three certificates, and ascertain if they had been sold.

While the justice went to do all this at Paris, the public prosecutor wrote a polite note to Madame Minoret to beg her to come to the assize town. Zélie, anxious about her son’s duel, dressed, had her own carriage out, and drove post-haste to Fontainebleau. The public prosecutor’s scheme was simple but formidable. By separating the husband and wife, he felt sure of learning the truth as a result of the terrors of the law.

Zélie found the magistrate in his private room, and was absolutely thunderstruck by this unceremonious speech :

“Madame, I do not imagine that you are an accomplice in a robbery made at the time of Doctor Minoret’s death ; justice is now on the traces, and you will save your husband from appearing at the bar by making a full confession of all you know about it. The punishment that threatens your husband is not, indeed, all you have to fear ; you must try to save your son from degradation, and not cut his throat. In a few minutes it will be too late ; the gendarmes are already on horseback, and the warrant for Minoret’s apprehension will be sent to Nemours.”

Zélie fainted. When she came to herself, she confessed everything. After proving easily to this woman that she was an accomplice, the magistrate told her that, to avoid ruining her husband and son, he would proceed cautiously.

“You have had to deal with a man and not with a judge,” said he. “There is no charge on the part of the victim, nor has the theft been made public ; but your husband has committed dreadful crimes, madame, which are usually tried before a tribunal less accommodating than I am. In the present circumstances of the case you will be obliged to remain a prisoner. Oh, in my house, and on parole,” he added, seeing Zélie ready to faint again. “Remember that my strict duty would be to demand a warrant for your imprisonment, and institute an inquiry ; however, I am acting at present as the legal guardian of Mademoiselle Ursule Mirouët, and in her interests, wisely understood, a compromise will be advisable.”

“Ah !” said Zélie.

“Write as follows to your husband.” And he dictated this letter to Zélie, who wrote it at his desk, with preposterously bad spelling :

“MY DEAR :—I am arrested, and I have told all. Give

up the certificates left by our uncle to Monsieur de Portenduère by virtue of the will you burned, for monsieur the public prosecutor has stopped them at the treasury."

"By this means you will prevent his making denials, which would be his ruin," said the lawyer, smiling at the spelling. "We will see about having the restitution carried out in a proper manner. My wife will make your stay at my house as little unpleasant as possible; I advise you to say nothing to any one, and not to show your distress."

As soon as his deputy's mother had confessed and been placed in safety, the magistrate sent for Désiré, told him point by point the story of the robbery committed by his father, secretly to Ursule's detriment, evidently to that of the co-heirs, and showed him the letter his mother had written. Désiré immediately begged to be sent to Nemours, to see that his father made restitution.

"The whole case is very serious," said his chief. "The will having been destroyed, if the thing becomes known, the co-heirs, Massin and Crémère, your relations, may intervene. I have now sufficient evidence against your father. I give your mother back to you; this little ceremony has sufficiently enlightened her as to her duty. In her eyes I shall seem to have yielded to your entreaties in releasing her. Go to Nemours with her, and guide all these difficulties to a happy issue. Fear nobody. Monsieur Bongrand loves Mademoiselle Mirouët too well to commit any indiscretion."

Zélie and Désiré set out at once for Nemours. Three hours after his deputy's departure, the public prosecutor received by express messenger the following letter, of which the spelling is corrected, not to make an unhappy man ridiculous:

"To the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Assizes at  
Fontainebleau.

"MONSIEUR:—God has not been so merciful to us as you

have been, and an irreparable misfortune has fallen on us. On arriving at the bridge of Nemours, a strap came unfastened. My wife was at the back of the chaise without a servant; the horses smelt the stable. My son, afraid of their restiveness, would not let the coachman get down, and got out himself to buckle it up. At the moment when he turned to get up again by his mother, the horses started off; Désiré did not make way quickly enough by squeezing back against the parapet, the iron step cut his legs; he fell, and the hind wheel went over his body. The messenger riding express to Paris to fetch the first surgeons will carry you this letter, which my son, in the midst of his suffering, desires me to write, to express to you our entire submission to your decisions in the business which was bringing him home.

“I shall be grateful to you till my latest breath for the way in which you have proceeded, and will justify your confidence.

“FRANÇOIS MINORET.”

This terrible event upset the whole town of Nemours. The excited crowd that gathered round Minoret's gate showed Savinien that his revenge had been taken in hand by one more powerful than he. The young man went at once to Ursule, and the young girl and the curé alike felt more horror than surprise. The next day, after the first treatment, when the Paris doctors and surgeons had given their advice, which was unanimous as to the necessity for amputating both legs, Minoret, pale, dejected, and heart-broken, came, accompanied by the curé, to Ursule's house, where he found Bongrand and Savinien.

“Mademoiselle,” said he, “I am guilty towards you; but though all the ill I have done cannot be entirely repaired, some I can expiate. My wife and I have made up our minds to give you, as an absolute possession, our estate of Le Rouvre if we preserve our son—as well as if we have the terrible grief

of losing him." As he ceased speaking, the man melted into tears.

"I may assure you, my dear Ursule," said the curé, "that you may and ought to accept a part of this gift."

"Do you forgive us?" said the colossus humbly, and kneeling at the feet of the astonished girl. "In a few hours the operation is to be performed by the first surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu; but I put no trust in human science; I believe in the omnipotence of God! If you forgive me, if you will go and ask God to preserve us our son, he will have strength to endure this torment, and we shall have the happiness of keeping him, I am sure of it."

"Let us all go to the church!" said Ursule, rising. She was no sooner on her feet than she gave a piercing shriek, fell back in her chair, and fainted away. When she recovered her senses, she saw her friends, with the exception of Minoret, who had rushed off to find a doctor, all with their eyes fixed on her, anxiously expecting her to speak a word. That word filled every heart with horror.

"I saw my godfather at the door," she said. "He signed to me that there was no hope."

And, in fact, the day after the operation, Désiré died, carried off by fever and the revulsion of the humors which follows on such operations. Madame Minoret, whose heart held no sentiment but that of motherhood, went mad after her son's funeral, and was taken by her husband to the care of Doctor Blanche for medical treatment, where she died in January, 1841.

Three months after these events, in January, 1837, Ursule married Savinien, with Madame de Portenduère's consent. Minoret intervened at the signing of the contract to settle on Mademoiselle Mirouët, by deed of gift, his estate of Le Rouvre, and twenty-eight thousand francs a year in consols, reserving of all his fortune only his uncle's house and six thousand francs a year. He has become the most charitable

and pious man in Nemours, churchwarden of the parish, and the providence of the unfortunate.

“The poor have taken the place of my child,” he says.

If you have ever observed by the roadside, in districts where the oak is lopped low, some old tree, bleached, and, as it would seem, blasted, but still throwing out shoots, its sides riven, crying out for the axe, you will have an idea of the old postmaster, white-haired, bent, and lean, in whom the old folks of the district can trace nothing of the happy lout whom we saw watching for his son at the beginning of this tale; he no longer takes snuff in the same way even; he bears some burden besides his body. In short, it is perceptible in everything that the hand of God has been heavily laid on that form to make it a terrible example. After hating his uncle's ward so bitterly, this old man, like Doctor Minoret himself, has so set his affections on Ursule, that he is the self-constituted steward of her property at Nemours.

Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère spend five months of the year in Paris, where they have purchased a splendid house in the Faubourg St.-Germain. After bestowing her house at Nemours on the Sisters of Charity to be used as a free school, Madame de Portenduère the elder went to live at Le Rouvre, where La Bougival is the head gatekeeper. Cabirolle's father, formerly the guard of the “Ducler,” a man of sixty, has married La Bougival, who owns twelve hundred francs a year in consols, besides the comfortable profits of her place. Cabirolle's son is Monsieur de Portenduère's coachman.

When, in the Champs-Élysées, you see one of those neat little low carriages, known as *escargots* (or snail-shells), drive past, and admire a pretty, fair woman leaning lightly against a young man, her face surrounded by a myriad of curls, like light foliage, and eyes like luminous periwinkle flowers, full of love—if you should feel the sting of envious wishes, remember that this handsome couple, the favorites of God, have paid in advance their tribute to the woes of life. These

married lovers will probably be the Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife. There are not two such couples in Paris.

“It is the prettiest happiness I ever saw,” said the Comtesse d’Estorade, not long since.

So give those happy children your blessing instead of envying them, and try to find an Ursule Mirouët—a young girl brought up by three old men, and that best of mothers—adversity.

Goupil, who is helpful to everybody, and justly regarded as the wittiest man in Nemours, is esteemed by the little town; but he is punished in his children, who are hideous, rickety, and hydrocephalous. His predecessor, Dionis, flourishes in the Chamber of Deputies, of which he is one of the greatest ornaments, to the great satisfaction of the King of the French, who sees Madame Dionis at every state ball. Madame Dionis relates to all the town of Nemours the particulars of her reception at the Tuileries, and the grandeurs of the King’s court. She is queen at Nemours, by virtue of a king who is certainly popular in that sense.

Bongrand is president of the court of justice at Melun, and his son is on the high road to becoming a very respectable public prosecutor.

Madame Crémère still says the funniest things in the world. She writes tambour *tambourg*, and says it is because her pen splutters. On the eve of her daughter’s marriage, she told her, in concluding her advice to her, that a wife ought to be the toiling caterpillar of her home, and keep a sphinx’s eye on everything. Indeed, Goupil is making a collection of his cousin’s absurd blunders, a *Crémèriana*.

“We have had the grief of losing our good Abbé Chaperon this winter,” says the Vicomtesse de Portenduère, who nursed him during his illness. All the district attended his funeral. Nemours is fortunate, for this saintly man’s successor is the venerable Curé de Saint-Lange.

PARIS, *June–July, 1841.*

## MADAME FIRMIANI.

*(To my dear Alexandre de Berny, from his old  
friend De Balzac.)*

MANY tales, rich in situations, or made dramatic by the endless sport of chance, carry their plot in themselves, and can be related artistically or simply by any lips without the smallest loss of the beauty of the subject ; but there are some incidents of human life to which only the accents of the heart can give life ; there are certain anatomical details, so to speak, of which the delicacy appears only under the most skillful infusions of mind. Again, there are portraits which demand a soul, and are nothing without the more ethereal features of the responsive countenance. Finally, there are certain things which we know not how to say, or to depict, without I know not what unconceived harmonies that are under the influence of a day or an hour, of a happy conjunction of celestial signs, or of some occult moral predisposition.

Such revelations as these are absolutely required for the telling of this simple story, in which I would fain interest some of those naturally melancholy and pensive souls which are fed on bland emotions. If the writer, like a surgeon by the side of a dying friend, has become imbued with a sort of respect for the subject he is handling, why should not the reader share this inexplicable feeling ? Is it so difficult to throw one's self into that vague, nervous melancholy which sheds gray hues on all our surroundings, which is half an illness, though its languid suffering is sometimes a pleasure ?

If you are thinking by chance of the dear friends you have lost ; if you are alone, and it is night, or the day is dying, read this narrative ; otherwise, throw the book aside, here. If you have never buried some kind aunt, an invalid or poor,

you will not understand these pages. To some, they will be odorous as of musk; to others, they will be as colorless, as strictly virtuous as those of Florian. In short, the reader must have known the luxury of tears; must have felt the wordless grief of a memory that drifts lightly by, bearing a shade that is dear but remote; he must possess some of those remembrances that make us at the same time regret those whom the earth has swallowed, and smile over vanished joys.

And now the author would have you believe that for all the wealth of England he would not extort from poetry even one of her fictions to add grace to this narrative. This is a true story, on which you may pour out the treasure of your sensibilities, if you have any.

In these days our language has as many dialects as there are men in the great human family. And it is a really curious and interesting thing to listen to the different views or versions of one and the same thing, or event, as given by the various species which make up the monograph of the Parisian—the Parisian being taken as a generic term. Thus you might ask a man of the matter-of-fact type, “Do you know Madame Firmiani?” and this man would interpret Madame Firmiani by such an inventory as this: “A large house in the Rue du Bac, rooms handsomely furnished, fine pictures, a hundred thousand francs a year in good securities, and a husband who was formerly receiver-general in the department of Montenotte.” Having thus spoken, your matter-of-fact man—stout and roundabout, almost always dressed in black—draws up his lower lip, so as to cover the upper lip, and nods his head, as much as to say, “Very respectable people, there is nothing to be said against them.” Ask him no more. Your matter-of-fact people state everything in figures, dividends, or real estate—a great word in their dictionary.

Turn to your right, go and question that young man, who belongs to the lounge species, and repeat your inquiry.

“Madame Firmiani?” says he. “Yes, yes, I know her very well. I go to her evenings. She receives on Wednesdays; a very good house to know.” Madame Firmiani is already metamorphosed into a house. The house is not a mere mass of stones architecturally put together; no, this word, in the language of the loungeur, has no equivalent. And here your loungeur, a dry-looking man, with a pleasant smile, saying clever nothings, but always with more acquired wit than natural wit, bends to your ear, and says with a knowing air: “I never saw Monsieur Firmiani. His social position consists in managing estates in Italy. But Madame Firmiani is French, and spends her income as a Parisian should. She gives excellent tea! It is one of the few houses where you really can amuse yourself, and where everything they give you is exquisite. It is very difficult to get introduced, and the best society is to be seen in her drawing-rooms.” Then the loungeur emphasizes his last words by gravely taking a pinch of snuff; he applies it to his nose in little dabs, and seems to be saying: “I go to the house, but do not count on my introducing you.”

To folks of this type Madame Firmiani keeps a sort of inn without a sign.

“Why on earth can you want to go to Madame Firmiani’s? It is as dull there as it is at court. Of what use are brains if they do not keep you out of such drawing-rooms, where, with poetry such as is now current, you hear the most trivial little ballad just hatched out.”

You have asked one of your friends who comes under the class of petty autocrats—men who would like to have the universe under lock and key, and have nothing done without their leave. They are miserable at other people’s enjoyment, can forgive nothing but vice, wrong-doing, and infirmities, and want nothing but protégés. Aristocrats by taste, they are republicans out of spite, simply to discover many inferiors among their equals.

“Oh, Madame Firmiani, my dear fellow, is one of those adorable women whom nature feels to be a sufficient excuse for all the ugly ones she has created by mistake; she is bewitching, she is kind! I should like to be in power to be king, to have millions of money, solely” (and three words are whispered in your ear). “Shall I introduce you to her?”

This young man is a schoolboy, known for his audacious bearing among men and his extreme shyness in private.

“Madame Firmiani!” cries another, twirling his cane in the air. “I will tell you what I think of her. She is a woman of between thirty and thirty-five, face a little *passée*, fine eyes, a flat figure, a worn contralto voice, dresses a great deal, rouges a little, manners charming; in short, my dear fellow, the remains of a pretty woman which are still worthy of a passion.”

This verdict is pronounced by a specimen of the genus coxcomb, who, having just breakfasted, does not weigh his words, and is going out riding. At such moments a coxcomb is pitiless.

“She has a collection of magnificent pictures in her house. Go and see her,” says another; “nothing can be finer.”

You have come upon the species amateur. This individual quits you to go to Pérignon’s, or to Tripet’s. To him Madame Firmiani is a number of painted canvases.

A WIFE.—“Madame Firmiani? I will not have you go there.” This phrase is the most suggestive view of all. Madame Firmiani. A dangerous woman! A siren! She dresses well, has good taste; she spoils the night’s rest of every wife. The speaker is of the species shrew.

AN ATTACHÉ TO AN EMBASSY.—“Madame Firmiani? From Antwerp, is she not? I saw that woman, very handsome, about ten years ago. She was then at Rome.”

Men of the order of attachés have a mania for utterances *à la Talleyrand*, their wit is often so subtle that their perception is imperceptible. They are like those billiard players who

miss the balls with infinite skill. These men are not generally great talkers; but when they talk it is of nothing less than Spain, Vienna, Italy, or Saint Petersburg. The names of countries act on them like springs; you press them and the machinery plays all its tunes.

“Does not that Madame Firmiani see a great deal of the Faubourg Saint-Germain?” This is asked by a person who desires claims to distinction. She adds a *de* to everybody’s name—to Monsieur Dupin, senior, to Monsieur Lafayette; she flings it right and left and spatters people with it. She spends her life in anxieties as to what is *correct*; but, for her sins, she lives in the unfashionable Marais, and her husband was an attorney—but an attorney in the King’s court.

“Madame Firmiani, monsieur? I do not know her.” This man is of the class of dukes. He recognizes no woman who has not been presented. Excuse him; he was created duke by Napoleon.

“Madame Firmiani? Was she not a singer at the Italian opera house?” A man of the genus simpleton. The individuals of this genus must have an answer to everything. They would rather speak calumnies than be silent.

TWO OLD LADIES (*the wives of retired lawyers*). THE FIRST (she has a cap with bows of ribbon, her face is wrinkled, her nose sharp; she holds a prayer-book, and her voice is harsh).—“What was her maiden name—this Madame Firmiani?”

THE SECOND (she has a little red face like a lady-apple, and a gentle voice).—“She was a Cadignan, my dear, niece of the old Prince de Cadignan, and cousin, consequently, to the Duc de Maufrigneuse.”

Madame Firmiani then is a Cadignan. Bereft of virtues, fortune, and youth, she would still be a Cadignan; that, like a prejudice, is always rich and living.

AN ECCENTRIC.—“My dear fellow, I never saw any clogs in her anteroom; you may go to her house without compromising yourself, and play there without hesitation; for if

there should be any rogues, they will be people of quality, consequently there is no quarreling."

AN OLD MAN OF THE SPECIES OBSERVER.—“You go to Madame Firmiani's, my dear fellow, and you find a handsome woman lounging indolently by the fire. She will scarcely move from her chair; she rises only to greet women, or ambassadors, or dukes—people of importance. She is very gracious, she charms you, she talks well, and likes to talk of everything. She bears every indication of a passionate soul, but she is credited with too many adorers to have a lover. If suspicion rested on only two or three intimate visitors, we might know which was her gallant slave. But she is all mystery; she is married, and we have never seen her husband; Monsieur Firmiani is purely a creature of fancy, like the third horse we are made to pay for when traveling post, and which we never see; madame, if you believe the professionals, has the finest contralto voice in Europe, and has not sung three times since she came to Paris; she receives numbers of people, and goes nowhere.”

The observer speaks as an oracle. His words, his anecdotes, his quotations must all be accepted as truth, or you risk being taken for a man without knowledge of the world, without capabilities. He will slander you lightly in twenty drawing-rooms, where he is as essential as the first piece in the bill—pieces so often played to the benches, but which once upon a time were successful. The observer is a man of forty, never dines at home, and professes not to be dangerous to women; he wears powder and a maroon-colored coat; he can always have a seat in various boxes at the Théâtre des Bouffons. He is sometimes mistaken for a parasite, but he has held too high positions to be suspected of sponging, and, indeed, possesses an estate, in a department of which the name has never leaked out.

“Madame Firmiani? Why, my dear boy, she was a mistress of Murat's.” This gentleman is a contradictory. They.

supply the errata to every memory, rectify every fact, bet you a hundred to one, are cock-sure of everything. You catch them out in a single evening in flagrant delictions of ubiquity. They assert that they were in Paris at the time of Mallet's conspiracy, forgetting that half an hour before they had crossed the Beresina. The contradictories are almost all members of the Legion of Honor; they talk very loud, have receding foreheads, and play high.

“Madame Firmiani, a hundred thousand francs a year? Are you mad? Really some people scatter thousands a year with the liberality of authors, to whom it costs nothing to give their heroines handsome fortunes. But Madame Firmiani is a flirt who ruined a young fellow the other day, and hindered him from making a very good marriage. If she were not handsome, she would be penniless.”

This speaker you recognize; he is one of the envious, and we will not sketch his least feature. The species is as well known as that of the domestic cat. How is the perpetuity of envy to be explained! A vice which is wholly unprofitable!

People of fashion, literary people, very good people, and people of every kind were, in the month of January, 1824, giving out so many different opinions on Madame Firmiani that it would be tiresome to report them all. We have only aimed at showing that a man wishing to know her, without choosing, or being able, to go to her house, would have been equally justified in the belief that she was a widow or a wife—silly or witty, virtuous or immoral, rich or poor, gentle or devoid of soul, handsome or ugly; in fact, there were as many Mesdames Firmiani as there are varieties in social life, or sects in the Catholic Church. Frightful thought! We are all like lithographed plates, of which an endless number of copies are taken off by slander. These copies resemble or differ from the original by touches so imperceptibly slight that, but for the calumnies of our friends and the

witticisms of newspapers, reputation would depend on the balance struck by each hearer between the limping truth and the lies to which Parisian wit lends wings.

Madame Firmiani, like many other women of dignity and noble pride, who close their hearts as a sanctuary and scorn the world, might have been very hardly judged by Monsieur de Bourbonne, an old gentleman of fortune, who had thought a good deal about her during the past winter. As it happened, this gentleman belonged to the Provincial land-owner class, folks who are accustomed to inquire into everything, and to make bargains with peasants. In this business a man grows keen-witted in spite of himself, as a soldier, in the long run, acquires the courage of routine. This inquirer, a native of Touraine, and not easily satisfied by the Paris dialects, was a very honorable gentleman who rejoiced in a nephew, his sole heir, for whom he planted his poplars. Their more than natural affection gave rise to much evil-speaking, which individuals of the various species of Tourangeau formulated with much mother wit; but it would be useless to record it; it would pale before that of Parisian tongues. When a man can think of his heir without displeasure, as he sees fine rows of poplars improving every day, his affection increases with each spadeful of earth he turns at the foot of his trees. Though such phenomena of sensibility may be uncommon, they still are to be met with in Touraine.

This much-loved nephew, whose name was Octave de Camps, was descended from the famous Abbé de Camps, so well known to the learned, or to the bibliomaniacs, which is not the same thing.

Provincial folks have a disagreeable habit of regarding young men who sell their reversions with a sort of respectable horror. This Gothic prejudice is bad for speculation, which the government has hitherto found it necessary to encourage. Now, without consulting his uncle, Octave had on a sudden disposed of an estate in favor of the speculative builders. The

château of Villaines would have been demolished but for the offers made by his old uncle to the representatives of the demolishing fraternity. To add to the testator's wrath, a friend of Octave's, a distant relation, one of those cousins with small wealth and great cunning, who lead their prudent neighbors to say, "I should not like to go to law with him!" had called, by chance, on Monsieur de Bourbonne and informed him that his nephew was ruined. Monsieur Octave de Camps, after dissipating his fortune for a certain Madame Firmiani, and not daring to confess his sins, had been reduced to giving lessons in mathematics, pending his coming into his uncle's leavings. This distant cousin—a sort of Charles Moor—had not been ashamed of giving this disastrous news to the old country gentleman at the hour when, sitting before his spacious hearth, he was digesting a copious provincial dinner. But would-be legatees do not get rid of an uncle so easily as they could wish. This uncle, thanks to his obstinacy, refusing to believe the distant cousin, came out victorious over the indigestion brought on by the biography of his nephew. Some blows fall on the heart, others on the brain; the blow struck by the distant cousin fell on the stomach, and produced little effect, as the good man had a strong one.

Monsieur de Bourbonne, as a worthy disciple of Saint Thomas, came to Paris without telling Octave, and tried to get information as to his heir's insolvency. The old gentleman, who had friends in the Faubourg Saint-Germain—the Listomères, the Lenoncourts, and the Vandenesses—heard so much slander, so much that was true, and so much that was false concerning Madame Firmiani, that he determined to call on her, under the name of Monsieur de Rouxellay, the name of his place. The prudent old man took care, in going to study Octave's mistress—as she was said to be—to choose an evening when he knew that the young man was engaged on work to be well paid for; for Madame Firmiani was always at home to her young friend, a circumstance that no one could

account for. As to Octave's ruin, that, unfortunately, was no fiction.

Monsieur de Rouxellay was not at all like a stage uncle. As an old musketeer, a man of the best society, who had his successes in his day, he knew how to introduce himself with a courtly air, remembered the polished manners of the past, had a pretty wit, and understood almost all the rôle of nobility. Though he loved the Bourbons with noble frankness, believed in God as gentlemen believe, and read only the *Quotidienne*, he was by no means so ridiculous as the Liberals of his department would have wished. He could hold his own with men about the court, so long as he was not expected to talk of "Moses," or the play, or romanticism, or local color, or railways. He had not gotten beyond Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur le Comte de Buffon, Peyronnet, and the Chevalier Gluck, the Queen's private musician.

"Madame," said he to the Marquise de Listomère, to whom he had given his arm to go into Madame Firmiani's room, "if this woman is my nephew's mistress, I pity her. How can she bear to live in the midst of luxury and know that he is in a garret? Has she no soul? Octave is a fool to have invested the price of the estate of Villaines in the heart of a——"

Monsieur de Bourbonne was of a fossil species, and spoke only the language of a past day.

"But suppose he had lost it at play?"

"Well, madame, he would have had the pleasure of playing."

"You think he has had no pleasure for his money? Look, here is Madame Firmiani."

The old uncle's brightest memories paled at the sight of his nephew's supposed mistress. His anger died in a polite speech wrung from him by the presence of Madame Firmiani. By one of those chances which come only to pretty women, it was a moment when all her beauties shone with particular

brilliance, the result, perhaps, of the glitter of wax-lights, of an exquisitely simple dress, of an indefinable reflection from the elegance in which she lived and moved. Only long study of the petty revolutions of an evening party in a Paris salon can enable one to appreciate the imperceptible shades that can tinge and change a woman's face. There are moments when, pleased with her dress, feeling herself brilliant, happy at being admired and seeing herself the queen of a room full of remarkable men, all smiling at her, a Parisian is conscious of her beauty and grace ; she grows the lovelier by all the looks she meets ; they give her animation, but their mute homage is transmitted by subtle glances to the man she loves. In such a moment a woman is invested, as it were, with supernatural power, and becomes a witch, an unconscious coquette ; she involuntarily inspires the passion which is a secret intoxication to herself, she has smiles and looks that are fascinating. If this excitement which comes from the soul lends attractiveness even to ugly women, with what splendor does it not clothe a naturally elegant creature, finely made, fair, fresh, bright-eyed, and, above all, dressed with such taste as artists and even her most spiteful rivals must admit.

Have you ever met, for your happiness, some woman whose harmonious tones give to her speech the charm that is no less conspicuous in her manners, who knows how to talk and to be silent, who cares for you with delicate feeling, whose words are happily chosen and her language pure ? Her banter flatters you, her criticism does not sting ; she neither preaches nor disputes, but is interested in leading a discussion, and stops it at the right moment. Her manner is friendly and gay, her politeness is unforced, her eagerness to please is not servile ; she reduces respect to a mere gentle shade ; she never tires you, and leaves you satisfied with her and yourself. You will see her gracious presence stamped on the things she collects about her. In her home everything charms the eye, and you breathe, as it seems, your native air. This woman is

quite natural. You never feel an effort, she flaunts nothing, her feelings are expressed with simplicity because they are genuine. Though candid, she never wounds the most sensitive pride ; she accepts men as God made them, pitying the vicious, forgiving defects and absurdities, sympathizing with every age, and vexed with nothing because she has the tact to forefend everything. At once tender and lively, she first constrains and then consoles you. You love her so truly that, if this angel does wrong, you are ready to justify her. Then you know Madame Firmiani.

By the time old Bourbonne had talked with this woman, for a quarter of an hour, sitting by her side, his nephew was absolved. He understood that, true or false, Octave's connection with Madame Firmiani no doubt covered some mystery. Returning to the illusions of his youth, and judging of Madame Firmiani's heart by her beauty, the old gentleman thought that a woman so sure of her dignity as she seemed, was incapable of a base action. Her black eyes spoke of so much peace of mind, the lines of her face were so noble, the forms so pure, and the passion of which she was accused seemed to weigh so little on her heart, that, as he admired all the pledges given to love and to virtue by that adorable countenance, the old man said to himself, " My nephew has committed some folly."

Madame Firmiani owned to twenty-five. But the matter-of-facts could prove that, having been married in 1813 at the age of sixteen, she must be at least eight-and-twenty in 1825. Nevertheless the same persons declared that she had never at any period of her life been so desirable, so perfectly a woman. She had no children, and had never had any ; the hypothetical Firmiani, a respectable man of forty in 1813, had, it was said, only his name and fortune to offer her. So Madame Firmiani had come to the age when a Parisian best understands what passion is, and perhaps longs for it innocently in her unemployed hours: she had everything that the world can

sell, or lend, or give. The attachés declared she knew everything; the contradictories said she had yet many things to learn; the observers noticed that her hands were very white, her foot very small, her movements a little too undulating; but men of every species envied or disputed Octave's good fortune, agreeing that she was the most aristocratic beauty in Paris.

Still young, rich, a perfect musician, witty, exquisite; welcomed, for the sake of the Cadignans, to whom she was related through her mother, by the Princess de Blamont-Chauvry, the oracle of the aristocratic quarter; beloved by her rivals the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse her cousin, the Marquise d'Espard, and Madame de Macumer, she flattered every vanity which feeds or excites love. And, indeed, she was the object of too many desires not to be the victim of fashionable detraction and those delightful calumnies which are wittily hinted behind a fan or in a whispered *aside*. Hence the remarks with which this story opened were necessary to mark the contrast between the real Firmiani and the Firmiani known to the world. Though some women forgave her for being happy, others could not overlook her respectability; now there is nothing so terrible, especially in Paris, as suspicion without foundation; it is impossible to kill it.

This sketch of a personality so admirable by nature can only give a feeble idea of it; it would need the brush of an Ingres to represent the dignity of the brow, the mass of fine hair, the majesty of the eyes, all the thoughts betrayed by the varying hues of the complexion. There was something of everything in this woman; poets could see in her both Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel; but there was also the unknown woman—the soul hidden behind this deceptive mask—the soul of Eve, the wealth of evil and treasures of goodness, wrong and resignation, crime and self-sacrifice—the Doña Julia and Haidee of Byron's "Don Juan."

The old soldier very boldly remained till the last in Madame

Firmiani's drawing-room ; she found him quietly seated in an armchair, and staying with the pertinacity of a fly that must be killed to be gotten rid of. The clock marked two in the morning.

“Madame,” said the old gentleman, just as Madame Firmiani rose in the hope of making her guest understand that it was her pleasure that he should go. “Madame, I am Monsieur Octave de Camps’ uncle.”

Madame Firmiani at once sat down again, and her agitation was evident. In spite of his perspicacity, the planter of poplars could not make up his mind whether shame or pleasure made her turn pale. There are pleasures which do not exist without a little coy bashfulness—delightful emotions which the chastest soul would fain keep behind a veil. The more sensitive a woman is, the more she lives to conceal her soul's greatest joys. Many women, incomprehensible in their exquisite caprices, at times long to hear a name spoken by all the world, while they sometimes would sooner bury it in their hearts. Old Bourbonne did not read Madame Firmiani's agitation quite in this light ; but forgive him ; the country gentleman was suspicious.

“Indeed, monsieur ?” said Madame Firmiani, with one of those clear and piercing looks in which we men can never see anything, because they question us too keenly.

“Indeed, madame ; and do you know what I have been told—I, in the depths of the country ? That my nephew has ruined himself for you ; and the unhappy boy is in a garret while you live here in gold and silks. You will, I hope, forgive my rustic frankness, for it may be useful to you to be informed of the slander.”

“Stop, monsieur,” said Madame Firmiani, interrupting the gentleman with an imperious gesture, “I know all that. You are too polite to keep the conversation to this subject when I beg you to change it. You are too gallant, in the old-fashioned sense of the word,” she added, with a slightly ironical

emphasis, “not to acknowledge that you have no right to cross-question me. However, it is ridiculous in me to justify myself. I hope you have a good enough opinion of my character to believe in the utter contempt I feel for money, though I was married without any fortune whatever to a man who had an immense fortune. I do not know whether your nephew is rich or poor; if I have received him, if I still receive him, it is because I regard him as worthy to move in the midst of my friends. All my friends, monsieur, respect each other; they know that I am not so philosophical as to entertain people whom I do not esteem. That, perhaps, shows a lack of charity; but my guardian angel has preserved in me, to this day, an intense aversion for gossip and dishonor.”

Though her voice was not quite firm at the beginning of this reply, the last words were spoken by Madame Firmiani with the cool decision of *Célimène* rallying the *Misanthrope*.

“Madame,” the Count resumed in a broken voice, “I am an old man—I am almost a father to Octave—I therefore must humbly crave your pardon beforehand for the only question I shall be so bold as to ask you; and I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that your reply will die here,” and he laid his hand on his heart with a really religious gesture. “Does gossip speak the truth; do you love Octave?”

“Monsieur,” said she, “I should answer any one else with a look. But you, since you are almost a father to Monsieur de Camps, you I will ask what you would think of a woman who, in reply to your question, should say, Yes. To confess one’s love to the man we love—when he loves us—well, well; when we are sure of being loved for ever, believe me, monsieur, it is an effort to us and a reward to him; but to any one else!——”

Madame Firmiani did not finish her sentence; she rose, bowed to the good gentleman, and vanished into her private rooms, where the sound of doors opened and shut in succession had language to the ears of the poplar planter.

“Damn it !” said he to himself, “what a woman ! She is either a very cunning hussy or an angel ;” and he went down to his hired fly in the courtyard, where the horses were pawing the pavement in the silence. The coachman was asleep, after having cursed his customer a hundred times.

Next morning, by about eight o’clock, the old gentleman was mounting the stairs of a house in the Rue de l’Observance, where dwelt Octave de Camps. If there was in this world a man amazed, it was the young professor on seeing his uncle. The key was in the door, Octave’s lamp was still burning ; he had sat up all night.

“Now, you rascal,” said Monsieur de Bourbonne, seating himself in an armchair. “How long has it been the fashion to make fools (speaking mildly) of uncles who have twenty-six thousand francs a year in good land in Touraine ? and that when you are sole heir ? Do you know that formerly such relations were treated with respect ? Pray, have you any fault to find with me ? Have I bungled my business as an uncle ? Have I demanded your respect ? Have I ever refused you money ? Have I shut my door in your face, saying you had only come to see how I was ? Have you not the most accommodating, the least exacting uncle in France ?—I will not say in Europe, it would be claiming too much. You write to me, or you don’t write. I live on your professions of affection. I am laying out the prettiest estate in the neighborhood, a place that is the object of envy in all the department ; but I do not mean to leave it you till the latest date possible—a weakness that is very pardonable. And my gentleman sells his property, is lodged like a groom, has no servants, keeps no style——”

“My dear uncle——”

“It is not a case of uncle, but of nephew. I have a right to your confidence ; so have it out all at once ; it is the easiest way, I know by experience. Have you been gambling ? Have you been speculating on the Bourse ? Come, say,

‘Uncle, I am a wretch,’ and we kiss and are friends. But if you tell me any lie bigger than those I told at your age, I will sell my property, buy an annuity, and go back to the bad ways of my youth, if it is not too late.”

“Uncle——”

“I went last night to see your Madame Firmiani,” said the uncle, kissing the tips of all his fingers together. “She is charming,” he went on. “You have the King’s warrant and approval, and your uncle’s consent, if that is any satisfaction to you. As to the sanction of the church, that I suppose is unnecessary—the sacraments, no doubt, are too costly. Come; speak out. Is it for her that you have ruined yourself?”

“Yes, uncle.”

“Ah! the hussy! I would have bet upon it. In my day a woman of fashion could ruin a man more cleverly than any of your courtesans of to-day. I saw in her a resuscitation of the last century.”

“Uncle,” said Octave, in a voice that was at once sad and gentle, “you are under a mistake. Madame Firmiani deserves your esteem, and all the adoration of her admirers.”

“So hapless youth is always the same!” said Monsieur de Bourbonne. “Well, well! go on in your own way; tell me all the old stories once more. At the same time, you know, I dare say, that I am no chicken in such matters.”

“My dear uncle, here is a letter which will explain everything,” replied Octave, taking out an elegant letter-case—*her* gift, no doubt. “When you have read it I will tell you the rest, and you will know Madame Firmiani as the world knows her not.”

“I have not my spectacles with me,” said his uncle. “Read it to me.”

Octave began: “‘My dear love——’”

“Then you are very intimate with this woman?”

“Why, yes, uncle.”

“And you have not quarreled?”

“Quarreled!” echoed Octave in surprise. “We are married—at Gretna Green.”

“Well, then, why do you dine for forty sous?”

“Let me proceed.”

“Very true. I am listening.”

Octave took up the letter again, and could not read certain passages without strong emotion.

“My beloved husband, you ask me the reason of my melancholy. Has it passed from my soul into my face, or have you only guessed it? And why should you not? Our hearts are so closely united. Besides, I cannot lie, though that perhaps is a misfortune. One of the conditions of being loved is, in a woman, to be always caressing and gay. Perhaps I ought to deceive you; but I would not do so, not even if it were to increase or to preserve the happiness you give me—you lavish on me—under which you overwhelm me. Oh, my dear, my love carries with it so much gratitude! And I must love for ever, without measure. Yes, I must always be proud of you. Our glory—a woman’s glory—is all in the man she loves. Esteem, consideration, honor, are they not all his who has conquered everything? Well, and my angel has fallen. Yes, my dear, your last confession has dimmed my past happiness. From that moment I have felt myself humbled through you—you, whom I believed to be the purest of men, as you are the tenderest and most loving. I must have supreme confidence in your still childlike heart to make an avowal which costs me so dear. What, poor darling, your father stole his fortune, and you know it, and you keep it! And you could tell me of this attorney’s triumph in a room full of the dumb witnesses of our love, and you are a gentleman, and you think yourself noble, and I am yours, and you are two-and-twenty! How monstrous all through!

“I have sought excuses for you; I have ascribed your indifference to your giddy youth; I know there is still much of the child in you. Perhaps you have never yet thought

seriously of what is meant by wealth, and by honesty. Oh, your laughter hurt me so much! Only think, there is a family, ruined, always in grief, girls perhaps, who curse you day by day, an old man who says to himself every night, "I should not lack bread if Monsieur de Camps' father had only been an honest man." " "

"What!" exclaimed Monsieur de Bourbonne, interrupting him, "were you such an idiot as to tell that woman the story of your father's affair with the Bourgneufs? Women better understood spending a fortune than making one——"

"They understand honesty. Let me go on, uncle!

"Octave, no power on earth is authorized to garble the language of honor. Look into your conscience, and ask it by what name to call the action to which you owe your riches.' "

And the nephew looked at his uncle, who bent his head.

"I will not tell you all the thoughts that beset me; they can all be reduced to one, which is this: I cannot esteem a man who knowingly soils himself for a sum of money whether large or small. Five francs stolen at play, or six times a hundred thousand francs obtained by legal trickery, disgrace a man equally. I must tell you all: I feel myself sullied by a love which till now was all my joy. From the bottom of my soul there comes a voice I cannot stifle. I have wept to find that my conscience is stronger than my love. You might commit a crime, and I would hide you in my bosom from human justice if I could; but my devotion would go no farther. Love, my dearest, is, in a woman, the most unlimited confidence, joined to I know not what craving to reverence and adore the being to whom she belongs. I have never conceived of love but as a fire in which the noblest feelings were yet further purified—a fire which develops them to the utmost.

"I have but one thing more to say: Come to me poor, and I shall love you twice as much if possible; if not, give me up. If I see you no more, I know what is left to me to do.

“ ‘ But, now, understand me clearly, I will not have you make restitution because I desire it. Consult your conscience. This is an act of justice, and must not be done as a sacrifice to love. I am your wife, and not your mistress ; the point is not to please me, but to inspire me with the highest esteem. If I have misunderstood, if you have not clearly explained your father’s action, in short, if you can regard your fortune as legitimately acquired—and how gladly would I persuade myself that you deserve no blame—decide as the voice of conscience dictates ; act wholly for yourself. A man who truly loves, as you love me, has too high a respect for all the holy inspiration he may get from his wife to be dishonorable.

“ ‘ I blame myself now for all I have written. A word would perhaps have been enough, and my preaching instinct has carried me away. So I should like to be scolded—not much, but a little. My dear, between you and me, are not you the power ? You only should detect your own faults. Well, master mine, can you say I understand nothing about political discussion ? ’

“ Well, uncle ? ” said Octave, whose eyes were full of tears.

“ I see more writing, finish it. ”

“ Oh, there is nothing further but such things as only a lover may read. ”

“ Very good, ” said the old man. “ Very good, my dear boy. I was popular with the women in my day ; but I would have you to believe that I too have loved ; *et ego in Arcadiâ*. Still, I cannot imagine why you give lessons in mathematics. ”

“ My dear uncle, I am your nephew. Is not that as much as to say that I have made some inroads on the fortune left to me by my father ? After reading that letter a complete revolution took place in me, in one instant I paid up the arrears of remorse. I could never describe to you the state in which I was. As I drove my cab to the Bois a voice cried to me, ‘ Is that horse yours ? ’ As I ate my dinner, I said to myself, ‘ Have you not stolen the food ? ’ I was ashamed of

myself. My honesty was ardent in proportion to its youth. First I flew off to Madame Firmiani. Ah, my dear uncle, that day I had such joys of heart, such raptures of soul as were worth millions. With her I calculated how much I owed the Bourgneuf family; and I sentenced myself, against Madame Firmiani's advice, to pay them interest at the rate of three per cent. But my whole fortune was not enough to refund the sum. We were both of us lovers enough—husband and wife enough—for her to offer and for me to accept her savings——”

“What, besides all her virtues, that adorable woman can save money!” cried the uncle.

“Do not laugh at her. Her position compels her to some thrift. Her husband went to Greece in 1820, and died about three years ago; but to this day it has been impossible to get legal proof of his death, or to lay hands on the will he no doubt made in favor of his wife; this important document was stolen, lost, or mislaid in a country where a man's papers are not kept as they are in France, nor is there a consul. So, not knowing whether she may not some day have to reckon with other and malignant heirs, she is obliged to be extremely careful, for she does not wish to have to give up her wealth as Chateaubriand has just given up the ministry. Now I mean to earn a fortune that shall be mine, so as to restore my wife to opulence if she should be ruined.”

“And you never told me—you never came to me. My dear nephew, believe me I love you well enough to pay your honest debts, your debts as a gentleman. I am the uncle of the fifth act—I will be revenged.”

“I know your revenges, uncle; but let me grow rich by my own toil. If you wish to befriend me, allow me a thousand crowns a year until I need capital for some business. I declare at this moment I am so happy that all I care about is to live. I give lessons that I may be no burden on any one.

“Ah, if you could but know with what delight I made restitution. After making some inquiries I found the Bourg-

neufs in misery and destitution. They were living at Saint-Germain in a wretched house. The old father was manager in a lottery office; the two girls did the work of the house and kept the accounts. The mother was almost always ill. The two girls are charming, but they have learned by bitter experience how little the world cares for beauty without fortune. What a picture did I find there! If I went to the house as the accomplice in a crime, I came out of it an honest man, and I have purged my father's memory. I do not judge him, uncle; there is in a lawsuit an eagerness, a passion which may sometimes blind the most honest man alive. Lawyers know how to legitimize the most preposterous claims; there are syllogisms in law to humor the errors of conscience, and judges have a right to mistakes. My adventure was a perfect drama. To have played the part of Providence, to have fulfilled one of these hopeless wishes: 'If only twenty thousand francs a year could drop from heaven!'—a wish we all have uttered in jest; to see a sublime look of gratitude, amazement and admiration take the place of a glance fraught with curses; to bring opulence into the midst of a family sitting round a turf-fire in the evening, by the light of a wretched lamp. No words can paint such a scene. My excessive justice to them seemed unjust. Well, if there be a paradise, my father must now be happy. As for myself, I am loved as man was never loved before. Madame Firmiani has given me more than happiness; she has taught me a delicacy of feeling which perhaps I lacked. Indeed, I call her Dear Conscience, one of those loving names that are the outcome of certain secret harmonies of spirit. Honesty is said to pay; I hope ere long to be rich myself; at this moment I am bent on solving a great industrial problem, and if I succeed I shall make millions."

"My boy, you have your mother's soul," said the old man, hardly able to restrain the tears that rose at the remembrance of his sister.

At this instant, in spite of the height above the ground of Octave's room, the young man and his uncle heard the noise of a carriage driving up.

“It is she! I know her horses by the way they pull up.”

And it was not long before Madame Firmiani made her appearance.

“Oh!” she cried, with an impulse of annoyance on seeing Monsieur de Bourbonne. “But our uncle is not in the way,” she went on with a sudden smile. “I have come to kneel at my husband's feet and humbly beseech him to accept my fortune. I have just received from the Austrian embassy a document proving Firmiani's death. The paper, drawn up by the kind offices of the Austrian envoy at Constantinople, is quite formal, and the will which Firmiani's valet had in keeping for me is subjoined. There, you are richer than I am, for you have there,” and she tapped her husband's breast, “treasures which only God can add to.” Then, unable to disguise her happiness, she hid her face in Octave's bosom.

“My sweet niece, we made love when I was young,” said the uncle, “but now you love. You women are all that is good and lovely in humanity, for you are never guilty of your faults; they always originate with us.”

PARIS, *February*, 1831.



# A FORSAKEN WOMAN.

(*La Femme Abandonnée.*)

Translated by ELLEN MARRIAGE.

*To Her Grace the Duchesse d'Abrantès,  
from her devoted servant,*

HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

PARIS, *August*, 1835.

IN the early spring of 1822, the Paris doctors sent to Lower Normandy a young man just recovering from an inflammatory complaint, brought on by overstudy, or perhaps by excess of some other kind. His convalescence demanded complete rest, a light diet, bracing air, and freedom from excitement of every kind, and the fat lands of Bessin seemed to offer all these conditions of recovery. To Bayeux, a picturesque place about six miles from the sea, the patient therefore betook himself, and was received with the cordiality characteristic of relatives who lead very retired lives, and regard a new arrival as a godsend.

All little towns are alike, save for a few local customs. When M. le Baron Gaston de Nueil, the young Parisian in question, had spent two or three evenings in his cousin's house, or with the friends who made up Mme. de Sainte-Sevère's circle, he very soon had made the acquaintance of the persons whom this exclusive society considered to be "the whole town." Gaston de Nueil recognized in them the invariable stock characters which every observer finds in every one of the many capitals of the little states which made up the France of an older day.

First of all comes the family whose claims to nobility are

regarded as incontestable, and of the highest antiquity in the department, though no one has so much as heard of them a bare fifty leagues away. This species of royal family on a small scale is distantly, but unmistakably, connected with the Navarreins and the Grandlieu family, and related to the Cadignans, and the Blamont-Chauvrys. The head of the illustrious house is invariably a determined sportsman. He has no manners, crushes everybody else with his nominal superiority, tolerates the sub-prefect much as he submits to the taxes, and declines to acknowledge any of the novel powers created by the nineteenth century, pointing out to you as a political monstrosity the fact that the prime minister is a man of no birth. His wife takes a decided tone, and talks in a loud voice. She has had adorers in her time, but takes the sacrament regularly at Easter. She brings up her daughters badly, and is of the opinion that they will always be rich enough with their name.

Neither husband nor wife has the remotest idea of modern luxury. They retain a livery only seen elsewhere on the stage, and cling to old fashions in plate, furniture, and equipages, as in language and manner of life. This is a kind of ancient state, moreover, that suits passably well with provincial thrift. The good folk are, in fact, the lords of the manor of a bygone age, *minus* the quit-rents and heriots, the pack of hounds and the laced coats; full of honor among themselves, and one and all loyally devoted to princes whom they only see at a distance. The historical house *incognito* is as quaint a survival as a piece of ancient tapestry. Vegetating somewhere among them there is sure to be an uncle or a brother, a lieutenant-general, an old courtier of the King, who wears the red ribbon of the order of Saint-Louis, and went to Hanover with the Maréchal de Richelieu, and here you find him like a stray leaf out of some old pamphlet of the time of Louis Quinze.

This fossil greatness finds a rival in another house, wealthier,

though of less ancient lineage. Husband and wife spend a couple of months of every winter in Paris, bringing back with them its frivolous tone and short-lived contemporary crazes. Madame is a woman of fashion, though she looks rather conscious of her clothes, and is always behind the mode. She scoffs, however, at the ignorance affected by her neighbors. *Her* plate is of modern fashion; she has "grooms," negroes, a valet-de-chambre, and what not. Her oldest son drives a tilbury, and does nothing (the estate is entailed upon him), his younger brother is auditor to a council of state. The father is well posted up in official scandals, and tells you anecdotes of Louis XVIII. and Mme. du Cayla. He invests his money in the five per cents., and is careful to avoid the topic of cider, but has been known occasionally to fall a victim to the craze for rectifying the conjectural sum-total of the various fortunes of the department. He is a member of the departmental council, has his clothes from Paris, and wears the cross of the Legion of Honor. In short, he is a country gentleman who has fully grasped the significance of the Restoration, and is coining money at the Chamber, but his Royalism is less pure than that of the rival house; he takes the *Gazette* and the *Débats*, the other family only reads the *Quotidienne*.

His lordship the bishop, a sometime vicar-general, fluctuates between the two powers, who pay him the respect due to religion, but at times they bring home to him the moral appended by the worthy La Fontaine to the fable of the "Ass laden with Relics." The good man's origin is distinctly plebeian.

Then come stars of the second magnitude, men of family with ten or twelve hundred livres a year, captains in the navy or cavalry regiments, or nothing at all. Out on the roads, on horseback, they rank half-way between the curé bearing the sacraments and the tax-collector on his rounds. Pretty nearly all of them have been in the Pages or in the Horse

Guards, and now are peaceably ending their days in worthy manorial duties; more interested in felling timber and the cider prospects than in the monarchy.

Still they talk of the Charter and the Liberals while the cards are making, or over a game at backgammon, when they have exhausted the usual stock topic of *dots*, and have married everybody off according to the genealogies which they all know by heart. Their womenkind are haughty dames, who assume the airs of court ladies in their basket-chaises. They huddle themselves up in shawls and caps by way of full-dress; and twice a year, after ripe deliberation, have a new bonnet from Paris, brought as opportunity offers. Exemplary wives are they for the most part, and garrulous.

These are the principal elements of aristocratic gentility, with a few outlying old maids of good family, spinsters who have solved the problem: given a human being, to remain absolutely stationary. They might be sealed up in the houses where you see them; their faces and their dresses are literally part of the fixtures of the town, and the province in which they dwell. They are its tradition, its memory, its quintessence, the local genus incarnate. There is something frigid and monumental about these ladies; they know exactly when to laugh and when to shake their heads, and every now and then give out some utterance which passes current as a witticism.

A few rich townspeople have crept into the miniature Faubourg Saint-Germain, thanks to their money or their aristocratic leanings. But despite their forty years, the circle still says of them, "Young So-and-so has sound opinions," and of such do they make deputies. As a general rule, the elderly spinsters are their principal patronesses, and not without comment.

Finally, in this exclusive little set include two or three ecclesiastics, admitted for the sake of their cloth, or for their wit; for these great nobles find their own society rather dull,

and introduce the bourgeois element into their drawing-rooms, as a baker puts leaven into his dough.

The sum-total contained by all heads put together consists of a certain quantity of antiquated notions; a few new reflections brewed in company of an evening being added from time to time to the common stock. Like sea-water in a little creek, the phrases which represent these ideas surge up daily, punctually obeying the tidal laws of conversation in their flow and ebb; you hear the hollow echo of yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, a year hence, and for evermore. On all things here below they pass immutable judgments, which go to make up a body of tradition into which no power of mortal man can infuse one drop of wit or sense. The lives of these persons revolve with the regularity of clockwork in an orbit of use and wont which admits of no more deviation or change than their opinions on matters religious, political, moral, or literary.

If a stranger is admitted to the *cénacle*,\* every member of it in turn will say (not without a trace of irony), “You will not find the brilliancy of your Parisian society here,” and proceed forthwith to criticise the life led by his neighbors, as if he himself were an exception who had striven, and vainly striven, to enlighten the rest. But any stranger, so ill-advised as to concur in any of their freely expressed criticism of each other, is pronounced at once to be an ill-natured person, a heathen, an outlaw, a reprobate Parisian “as Parisians mostly are.”

Before Gaston de Nueil made his appearance in this little world of strictly observed etiquette, where every detail of life is an integrant part of a whole, and everything is known; where the values of personalty and real estate are quoted like stocks on the last sheet of the newspaper—before his arrival he had been weighed in the unerring scales of Bayeusaine judgment.

\* Guest-chamber.

His cousin, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère, had already given out the amount of his fortune, and the sum of his expectations, had produced the family tree, and expatiated on the talents, breeding, and modesty of this particular branch. So he received the precise amount of attention to which he was entitled; he was accepted as a worthy scion of a good stock; and, for he was but twenty-three, was made welcome without ceremony, though certain young ladies and mothers of daughters looked not unkindly upon him.

He had an income of eighteen thousand livres from land in the valley of the Auge; and sooner or later his father, as in duty bound, would leave him the château of Manerville, with the lands thereunto belonging. As for his education, political career, personal qualities, and qualifications—no one so much as thought of raising the questions. His land was undeniable, his rentals steady; excellent plantations had been made; the tenants paid for repairs, rates, and taxes; the apple-trees were thirty-eight years old; and, to crown all, his father was in treaty for two hundred acres of woodland just outside the paternal park, which he intended to enclose with walls. No hopes of a political career, no fame on earth, can compare with such advantages as these.

Whether out of malice or design, Mme. de Sainte-Sevère omitted to mention that Gaston had an elder brother; nor did Gaston himself say a word about him. But, at the same time, it is true that the brother was consumptive, and to all appearance would shortly be laid in earth, lamented and forgotten.

At first Gaston de Nueil amused himself at the expense of the circle. He drew, as it were, for his mental album, a series of portraits of these folk, with their angular, wrinkled faces and hooked noses, their crotchets and ludicrous eccentricities of dress, portraits which possessed all the racy flavor of truth. He delighted in their "Normanisms," in the primitive quaintness of their ideas and characters. For a short time

he flung himself into their squirrel's life of busy gyrations in a cage. Then he began to feel the want of variety, and grew tired of it. It was like the life of the cloister, cut short before it had well begun. He drifted on till he reached a crisis, which is neither spleen nor disgust, but combines all the symptoms of both. When a human being is transplanted into an uncongenial soil, to lead a starved, stunted existence, there is always a little discomfort over the transition. Then, gradually, if nothing removes him from his surroundings, he grows accustomed to them, and adapts himself to the vacuity which grows upon him and renders him powerless. Even now, Gaston's lungs were accustomed to the air; and he was willing to discern a kind of vegetable happiness in days that brought no mental exertion and no responsibilities. The constant stirring of the sap of life, the fertilizing influences of mind on mind, after which he had sought so eagerly in Paris, were beginning to fade from his memory, and he was in a fair way of becoming a fossil with these fossils, and ending his days among them, content, like the companions of Ulysses, in his gross envelope.

One evening Gaston de Nueil was seated between a dowager and one of the vicars-general of the diocese, in a gray-paneled drawing-room, floored with large, white tiles. The family portraits which adorned the walls looked down upon four card-tables, and some sixteen persons gathered about them, chattering over their whist. Gaston, thinking of nothing, digesting one of those exquisite dinners to which the provincial looks forward all through the day, found himself justifying the customs of the country.

He began to understand why these good folk continued to play with yesterday's pack of cards and shuffled them on a threadbare tablecloth, and how it was that they had ceased to dress for themselves or others. He saw the glimmerings of something like a philosophy in the even tenor of their perpetual round, in the calm of their methodical monotony, in

their ignorance of the refinements of luxury. Indeed, he almost came to think that luxury profited nothing; and even now, the city of Paris, with its passions, storms, and pleasures, was scarcely more than a memory of childhood.

He admired in all sincerity the red hands and shy, bashful manner of some young lady who at first struck him as an awkward simpleton, unattractive to the last degree, and surpassingly ridiculous. His doom was sealed. He had gone from the provinces to Paris; he had led the feverish life of Paris; and now he would have sunk back into the lifeless life of the provinces, but for a chance remark which reached his ear—a few words that called up a swift rush of such emotions as he might have felt when a strain of really great music mingles with the accompaniment of some tedious opera.

“You went to call on Mme. de Beauséant yesterday, did you not?” The speaker was an elderly lady, and she addressed the head of the local royal family.

“I went this morning. She was so poorly and depressed that I could not persuade her to dine with us to-morrow.”

“With Mme. de Champignelles?” exclaimed the dowager, with something like astonishment in her manner.

“With my wife,” calmly assented the noble. “Mme. de Beauséant is descended from the House of Burgundy, on the spindle side, 'tis true, but the name atones for everything. My wife is very much attached to the Vicomtesse, and the poor lady has lived alone for such a long while, that——”

The Marquis de Champignelles looked round about him while he spoke with an air of cool unconcern, so that it was almost impossible to guess whether he made a concession to Mme. de Beauséant's misfortunes or paid homage to her noble birth; whether he felt flattered to receive her in his house, or, on the contrary, sheer pride was the motive that led him to try to force the country families to meet the Vicomtesse.

The women appeared to take counsel of each other by a

glance ; there was a sudden silence in the room, and it was felt that their attitude was one of disapproval.

“ Does this Mme. de Beuséant happen to be the lady whose adventure with M. d’Ajuda-Pinto made so much noise ? ” asked Gaston of his neighbor.

“ The very same,” he was told. “ She came to Courcelles after the marriage of the Marquis d’Ajuda ; nobody visits her. She has, besides, too much sense not to see that she is in a false position, so she has made no attempt to see any one. M. de Champignelles and a few gentlemen went to call upon her, but she would see none but M. de Champignelles, perhaps because he is a connection of the family. They are related through the Beuséants ; the father of the present Vicomte married a Mlle. de Champignelles of the older branch. But though the Vicomtesse de Beuséant is supposed to be a descendant of the House of Burgundy, you can understand that we could not admit a wife separated from her husband into our society here. We are foolish enough still to cling to these old-fashioned ideas. There was the less excuse for the Vicomtesse, because M. de Beuséant is a well-bred man of the world, who would have been quite ready to listen to reason. But his wife is quite mad——” and so forth and so forth.

M. de Nueil, still listening to the speaker’s voice, gathered nothing of the sense of the words ; his brain was too full of thick-coming fancies. Fancies ? What other name can you give to the alluring charms of an adventure that tempts the imagination and sets vague hopes springing up in the soul ; to the sense of coming events and mysterious felicity and fear at hand, while as yet there is no substance of fact on which these phantoms of caprice can fix and feed ? Over these fancies thought hovers, conceiving impossible projects, giving in the germ all the joys of love. Perhaps, indeed, all passion is contained in that thought-germ, as the beauty, and fragrance, and rich color of the flower are all packed in the seed.

M. de Nueil did not know that Mme. de Beauséant had taken refuge in Normandy, after a notoriety which women for the most part envy and condemn, especially when youth and beauty in some way excuse the transgression. Any sort of celebrity bestows an inconceivable prestige. Apparently for women, as for families, the glory of the crime effaces the stain ; and if such and such a noble house is proud of its tale of heads that have fallen on the scaffold, a young and pretty woman becomes more interesting for the dubious renown of a happy love or a scandalous desertion, and the more she is to be pitied, the more she excites our sympathies. We are only pitiless to the commonplace. If, moreover, we attract all eyes, we are to all intents and purposes great ; how, indeed, are we to be seen unless we raise ourselves above other people's heads ? The common herd of humanity feels an involuntary respect for any person who can rise above it, and is not over particular as to the means by which they rise.

It may have been that some such motives influenced Gaston de Nueil at unawares, or perhaps it was curiosity, or a craving for some interest in his life ; or, in a word, that crowd of inexplicable impulses which, for want of a better name, we are wont to call " fatality," that drew him to Mme. de Beauséant.

The figure of the Vicomtesse de Beauséant rose up suddenly before him with gracious thronging associations. She was a new world for him, a world of fears and hopes, a world to fight for and to conquer. Inevitably he felt the contrast between this vision and the human beings in the shabby room ; and then, in truth, she was a woman ; what woman had he seen so far in this dull, little world, where calculation replaced thought and feeling, where courtesy was a cut-and-dried formality, and ideas of the very simplest were too alarming to be received or to pass current ? The sound of Mme. de Beauséant's name revived a young man's dreams and wakened urgent desires that had lain dormant for a little.

Gaston de Nueil was absent-minded and preoccupied for the

rest of that evening. He was pondering how he might gain access to Mme. de Beauséant, and truly it was no very easy matter. She was believed to be extremely clever. But if men and women of parts may be captivated by something subtle or eccentric, they are also exacting, and can read all that lies below the surface; and after the first step has been taken, the chances of failure and success in the difficult task of pleasing them are about even. In this particular case, moreover, the Vicomtesse, besides the pride of her position, had all the dignity of her name. Her utter seclusion was the least of the barriers raised between her and the world. For which reasons it was well-nigh impossible that a stranger, however well born, could hope for admittance; and yet, the next morning found M. de Nueil taking his walks abroad in the direction of Courcelles, a dupe of illusions natural at his age. Several times he made the circuit of the garden walls, looking earnestly through every gap at the closed shutters or open windows, hoping for some romantic chance, on which he founded schemes for introducing himself into this unknown lady's presence, without a thought of their impracticability. Morning after morning was spent in this way to mighty little purpose; but with each day's walk that vision of a woman living apart from the world, of love's martyr buried in solitude, loomed larger in his thoughts, and was enshrined in his soul. So Gaston de Nueil walked under the walls of Courcelles, and some gardener's heavy footstep would set his heart beating high with hope.

He thought of writing to Mme. de Beauséant, but, on mature consideration, what can you say to a woman whom you have never seen, a complete stranger? And Gaston had little self-confidence. Like most young persons with a plentiful crop of illusions still standing, he dreaded the mortifying contempt of silence more than death itself, and shuddered at the thought of sending his first tender epistle forth to face so many chances of being thrown into the fire. He was dis-

tracted by innumerable conflicting ideas. But by dint of inventing chimeras, weaving romances, and cudgeling his brains, he hit at last upon one of the hopeful stratagems that are sure to occur to your mind if you persevere long enough, a stratagem which must make clear to the most inexperienced woman that here was a man who took a fervent interest in her. The caprice of social conventions puts as many barriers between lovers as any Oriental imagination can devise in the most delightfully fantastic tale; indeed, the most extravagant pictures are seldom exaggerations. In real life, as in the fairy tales, the woman belongs to him who can reach her and set her free from the position in which she languishes. The poorest of calenders that ever fell in love with the daughter of the Khalif is in truth scarcely farther from his lady than Gaston de Nueil from Mme. de Beauséant. The Vicomtesse knew absolutely nothing of M. de Nueil's wanderings round her house; Gaston de Nueil's love grew to the height of the obstacles to overleap; and the distance set between him and his extemporized lady-love produced the usual effect of distance, in lending enchantment.

One day, confident in his inspiration, he hoped everything from the love that must pour forth from his eyes. Spoken words, in his opinion, were more eloquent than the most passionate letter; and, besides, he would engage feminine curiosity to plead for him. He went, therefore, to M. de Champignelles, proposing to employ that gentleman for the better success of his enterprise. He informed the Marquis that he had been intrusted with a delicate and important commission which concerned the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, that he felt doubtful whether she would read a letter written in an unknown handwriting, or put confidence in a stranger. Would M. de Champignelles, on his next visit, ask the Vicomtesse if she would consent to receive him—Gaston de Nueil? While he asked the Marquis to keep his secret in case of a refusal, he very ingeniously insinuated sufficient reasons for his

own admittance, to be duly passed on to the Vicomtesse. Was not M. de Champignelles a man of honor, a loyal gentleman incapable of lending himself to any transaction in bad taste, nay, the merest suspicion of bad taste! Love lends a young man all the self-possession and astute craft of an old ambassador; all the Marquis' harmless vanities were gratified, and the haughty grandee was completely duped. He tried hard to fathom Gaston's secret; but the latter, who would have been greatly perplexed to tell it, turned off M. de Champignelles' adroit questioning with a Norman's shrewdness, till the Marquis, as a gallant Frenchman, complimented his young visitor upon his discretion.

M. de Champignelles hurried off at once to Courcelles, with that eagerness to serve a pretty woman which belongs to his time of life. In the Vicomtesse de Beauséant's position such a message was likely to arouse keen curiosity; so although her memory supplied no reason at all that could bring M. de Nueil to her house, she saw no objection to his visit—after some prudent inquiries as to his family and condition. At the same time, she began by a refusal. Then she discussed the propriety of the matter with M. de Champignelles, directing her questions so as to discover, if possible, whether he knew the motives for the visit, and finally revoked her negative answer. The careful discussion and the extreme discretion shown perforce by the Marquis had seriously piqued her curiosity.

M. de Champignelles had no mind to cut a ridiculous figure. He said, with the air of a man who can keep another's counsel, that the Vicomtesse must know the purpose of this visit perfectly well; while the Vicomtesse, in all sincerity, had no notion what it could be. Mme. de Beauséant, in perplexity, connected Gaston with people whom he had never met, went astray after various wild conjectures, and asked herself if she had seen this M. de Nueil before. In truth, no love letter, however sincere or skillfully indited, could have

produced so much effect as this riddle. Again and again Mme. de Beauséant puzzled over it.

When Gaston heard that he might call upon the Vicomtesse, his rapture at so soon obtaining the ardently longed-for good fortune was mingled with singular embarrassment. How was he to contrive a suitable sequel to this stratagem?

“Bah! I shall see *her*,” he said over and over again to himself as he dressed. “See her, and that is everything!”

He fell to hoping that once across the threshold of Courcelles he should find an expedient for unfastening this Gordian knot of his own tying. There are believers in the omnipotence of necessity who never turn back; the close presence of danger is an inspiration that calls out all their powers for victory. Gaston de Nueil was one of these.

He took particular pains with his dress, imagining, as youth is apt to imagine, that success or failure hangs on the position of a curl, and ignorant of the fact that anything is charming in youth. And, in any case, such women as Mme. de Beauséant are only attracted by the charms of wit or character of an unusual order. Greatness of character flatters their vanity, promises a great passion, seems to imply a comprehension of the requirements of their hearts. Wit amuses them, responds to the subtlety of their natures, and they think that they are understood. And what do all women wish but to be amused, understood, or adored? It is only after much reflection on the things of life that we understand the consummate coquetry of neglect of dress and reserve at a first interview; and by the time we have gained sufficient astuteness for successful strategy, we are too old to profit by our experience.

While Gaston's lack of confidence in his mental equipment drove him to borrow charms from his clothes, Mme. de Beauséant herself was instinctively giving more attention to her toilet.

“I would rather not frighten people, at all events,” she said to herself as she arranged her hair.

In M. de Nueil's character, person, and manner there was that touch of unconscious originality which gives a kind of flavor to things that any one might say or do, and absolves everything that they may choose to do or say. He was highly cultivated, he had a keen brain, and a face, mobile as his own nature, which won the good-will of others. The promise of passion and tenderness in the bright eyes was fulfilled by an essentially kind heart. The resolution which he made as he entered the house at Courcelles was in keeping with his frank nature and ardent imagination. But, bold as he was with love, his heart beat violently when he had crossed the great court, laid out like an English garden, and the manservant, who had taken his name to the Vicomtesse, returned to say that she would receive him.

“M. le Baron de Nueil.”

Gaston came in slowly, but with sufficient ease of manner ; and it is a more difficult thing, be it said, to enter a room where there is but one woman than a room that holds a score.

A great fire was burning on the hearth in spite of the mild weather, and by the soft light of the candles in the sconces he saw a young woman sitting on a high-backed *bergère* in the angle by the hearth. The seat was so low that she could move her head freely ; every turn of it was full of grace and delicate charm, whether she bent, leaning forward, or raised and held it erect, slowly and languidly, as though it were a heavy burden, so low that she could cross her feet and let them appear, or draw them back under the folds of a long, black dress.

The Vicomtesse made as if she would lay the book that she was reading on a small, round stand ; but as she did so she turned towards M. de Nueil, and the volume, insecurely laid upon the edge, fell to the floor between the stand and the sofa. This did not seem to disconcert her. She looked up, bowing almost imperceptibly in response to his greeting, without rising

from the depths of the low chair in which she lay. Bending forwards, she stirred the fire briskly, and stooped to pick up a fallen glove, drawing it mechanically over her left hand, while her eyes wandered in search of its fellow. The glance was instantly checked, however, for she stretched out a thin, white, all-but-transparent right hand, with flawless ovals of rose-colored nail at the tips of the slender, ringless fingers, and pointed to a chair as if to bid Gaston be seated. He sat down, and she turned her face questioningly towards him. Words cannot describe the subtlety of the winning charm and inquiry in that gesture; deliberate in its kindliness, gracious yet accurate in expression, it was the outcome of early education and of a constant use and wont of the graciousness of life. Those movements of hers, so swift, so deft, succeeded each other so smoothly that Gaston de Nueil was fascinated by the blending of a pretty woman's fastidious carelessness with the high-bred manner of a great lady.

Mme. de Beauséant stood out in such strong contrast against the automatons among whom he had spent two months of exile in that out-of-the-world district of Normandy that he could not but find in her the realization of his romantic dreams; and, on the other hand, he could not compare her perfections with those of other women whom he had formerly admired. Here in her presence, in a drawing-room like some salon in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, full of costly trifles lying about upon the tables, and flowers and books, he felt as if he were back in Paris. It was a real Parisian carpet beneath his feet; he saw once more the high-bred type of Parisienne, the fragile outlines of her form, her exquisite charm, her disdain of the studied effects which do so much to spoil provincial women.

Mme. de Beauséant had fair hair and dark eyes, and the pale complexion that belongs to fair hair. She held up her brow nobly like some fallen angel, grown proud through the fall, disdainful of pardon. Her way of gathering her thick

hair into a crown of plaits above the broad, curving lines of the bandeaux upon her forehead, added to the queenliness of her face. Imagination could discover the ducal coronet of Burgundy in the spiral threads of her golden hair; all the courage of her house seemed to gleam from the great lady's brilliant eyes, such courage as women use to repel audacity or scorn, for they were full of tenderness and gentleness. The outline of that little head, so admirably poised above the long, white throat, the delicate, fine features, the subtle curves of the lips, the mobile face itself, wore an expression of delicate discretion, a faint semblance of irony suggestive of craft and insolence. Yet it would have been difficult to refuse forgiveness to those two feminine failings in her; for the lines that came out in her forehead whenever her face was not in repose, like her upward glances (that pathetic trick of manner), told unmistakably of unhappiness, of a passion that had all but cost her her life. A woman, sitting in the great, silent salon, a woman cut off from the rest of the world in this remote little valley, alone, with the memories of her brilliant, happy, and impassioned youth, of continual gaiety and homage paid on all sides, now replaced by the horrors of the void—was there not something in the sight to strike awe that deepened with reflection? Consciousness of her own value lurked in her smile. She was neither wife nor mother, she was an outlaw; she had lost the one heart that could set her pulses beating without shame; she had nothing from without to support her reeling soul; she must even look for strength from within, live her own life, cherish no hope save that of forsaken love, which looks forward to death's coming, and hastens his lagging footsteps. And this while life was in its prime. Oh! to feel destined for happiness and to die—never having given nor received it! A woman too! What pain was this! These thoughts, flashing across M. de Nueil's mind like lightning, left him very humble in the presence of the greatest charm with which woman can be invested. The triple aureole of

beauty, nobleness, and misfortune dazzled him ; he stood in dreamy, almost open-mouthed admiration of the Vicomtesse. But he found nothing to say to her.

Mme. de Beauséant, by no means displeased, no doubt, by his surprise, held out her hand with a kindly but imperious gesture ; then, summoning a smile to her pale lips, as if obeying, even yet, the woman's impulse to be gracious—

“I have heard from M. de Champignelles of a message which you have kindly undertaken to deliver, monsieur,” she said. “Can it be from——”

With that terrible phrase Gaston understood, even more clearly than before, his own ridiculous position, the bad taste and bad faith of his behavior towards a woman so noble and so unfortunate. He reddened. The thoughts that crowded in upon him could be read in his troubled eyes ; but suddenly, with the courage which youth draws from a sense of its own wrong-doing, he gained confidence, and very humbly interrupted Mme. de Beauséant.

“Madame,” he faltered out, “I do not deserve the happiness of seeing you. I have deceived you basely. However strong the motive may have been, it can never excuse the pitiful subterfuge which I used to gain my end. But, madame, if your goodness will permit me to tell you——”

The Vicomtesse glanced at M. de Nueil, haughty disdain in her whole manner. She stretched her hand to the bell and rang it.

“Jacques,” she said, “light this gentleman to the door,” and she looked with dignity at the visitor.

She rose proudly, bowed to Gaston, and then stooped for the fallen volume. If all her movements on his entrance had been caressingly dainty and gracious, her every gesture now was no less severely frigid. M. de Nueil rose to his feet, but he stood waiting. Mme. de Beauséant flung another glance at him. “Well, why do you not go ?” she seemed to say.

There was such cutting irony in that glance that Gaston

grew white as if he were about to faint. Tears came into his eyes, but he would not let them fall, and scorching shame and despair dried them. He looked back at Mme. de Beauséant, and a certain pride and consciousness of his own worth was mingled with his humility; the Vicomtesse had a right to punish him, but ought she to use her right? Then he went out.

As he crossed the ante-chamber, a clear head and wits sharpened by passion were not slow to grasp the danger of his situation.

“If I leave this house, I can never come back to it again,” he said to himself. “The Vicomtesse will always think of me as a fool. It is impossible that a woman, and such a woman, should not guess the love that she has called forth. Perhaps she feels a little, vague, involuntary regret for dismissing me so abruptly. But she could not do otherwise, and she cannot recall her sentence. It rests with me to understand her.”

At that thought Gaston stopped short on the flight of steps with an exclamation; he turned sharply, saying, “I have forgotten something,” and went back to the salon. The lackey, all respect for a baron and the rights of property, was completely deceived by the natural utterance, and followed him. Gaston returned quietly and unannounced. The Vicomtesse, thinking that the intruder was the servant, looked up and beheld M. de Nueil.

“Jacques lighted me to the door,” he said, with a half-sad smile which dispelled any suspicion of jest in those words, while the tone in which they were spoken went to the heart. Mme. de Beauséant was disarmed.

“Very well, take a seat,” she said.

Gaston eagerly took possession of a chair. His eyes were shining with happiness; the Vicomtesse, unable to endure the brilliant light in them, looked down at the book. She was enjoying a delicious, ever-new sensation; the sense of a

man's delight in her presence is an unfailing feminine instinct. And then, besides, he had divined her, and a woman is so grateful to the man who has mastered the apparently capricious, yet logical, reasoning of her heart; who can track her thought through the seemingly contradictory workings of her mind, and read the sensations, or shy or bold, written in fleeting red, a bewildering maze of coquetry and self-revelation.

"Madame," Gaston exclaimed in a low voice, "my blunder you know, but you do not know how much I am to blame. If you only knew what joy it was to——"

"Ah! take care," she said, holding up one finger with an air of mystery, as she put out her hand towards the bell.

The charming gesture, the gracious threat, no doubt, called up some sad thought, some memory of the old happy time when she could be wholly charming and gentle without an after-thought; when the gladness of her heart justified every caprice, and put charm into every least movement. The lines in her forehead gathered between her brows, and the expression of her face grew dark in the soft candle-light. Then looking across at M. de Nueil gravely but not unkindly, she spoke like a woman who deeply feels the meaning of every word.

"This is all very ridiculous! Once upon a time, monsieur, when thoughtless high spirits were my privilege, I should have laughed fearlessly over your visit with you. But now my life is very much changed. I cannot do as I like, I am obliged to think. What brings you here? Is it curiosity? In that case I am paying dearly for a little fleeting pleasure. Have you fallen *passionately* in love already with a woman whom you have never seen, a woman with whose name slander has, of course, been busy? If so, your motive in making this visit is based on disrespect, on an error which accident brought into notoriety."

She flung her book down scornfully upon the table, then,

with a terrible look at Gaston, she went on: "Because I once was weak, must it be supposed that I am always weak? This is horrible, degrading. Or have you come here to pity me? You are very young to offer sympathy with heart troubles. Understand this clearly, sir, that I would rather have scorn than pity. I will not endure compassion from any one."

There was a brief pause.

"Well, sir," she continued (and the face that she turned to him was gentle and sad), "whatever motive induced this rash intrusion upon my solitude, it is very painful to me, you see. You are too young to be totally without good feeling, so surely you will feel that this behavior of yours is improper. I forgive you for it, and, as you see, I am speaking of it to you without bitterness. You will not come here again, will you? I am entreating when I might command. If you come to see me again, neither you nor I can prevent the whole place from believing that you are my lover, and you would cause me great additional annoyance. You do not mean to do that, I think."

She said no more, but looked at him with a great dignity which abashed him.

"I have done wrong, madame," he said, with deep feeling in his voice, "but it was through enthusiasm and thoughtlessness and eager desire of happiness, the qualities and defects of my age. Now, I understand that I ought not to have tried to see you," he added; "but, at the same time, the desire was a very natural one"—and making an appeal to feeling rather than to the intellect, he described the weariness of his enforced exile. He drew a portrait of a young man in whom the fires of life were burning themselves out, conveying the impression that here was a heart worthy of tender love, a heart which, notwithstanding, had never known the joys of love for a young and beautiful woman of refinement and taste. He explained, without attempting to justify, his

unusual conduct. He flattered Mme. de Beauséant by showing that she had realized for him the ideal lady of a young man's dream, the ideal sought by so many, and so often sought in vain. Then he touched upon his morning prowlings under the walls of Courcelles, and his wild thoughts at the first sight of the house, till he excited that vague feeling of indulgence which a woman can find in her heart for the follies committed for her sake.

An impassioned voice was speaking in the chill solitude; the speaker brought with him a warm breath of youth and the charms of a carefully cultivated mind. It was so long since Mme. de Beauséant had felt stirred by real feeling delicately expressed, that it affected her very strongly now. In spite of herself, she watched M. de Nueil's expressive face, and admired the noble confidence of a soul, unbroken as yet by the cruel discipline of the life of the world, unfretted by continual scheming to gratify personal ambition and vanity. Gaston was in the flower of his youth, he impressed her as a man with something in him, unaware as yet of the great career that lay before him. So both these two made reflections most dangerous for their peace of mind, and both strove to conceal their thoughts. M. de Nueil saw in the Vicomtesse a rare type of woman, always the victim of her perfection and tenderness; her graceful beauty is the least of her charms for those who are privileged to know the infinite of feeling and thought and goodness in the soul within; a woman, whose instinctive feeling for beauty runs through all the most varied expressions of love, purifying its transports, turning them to something almost holy; wonderful secret of womanhood, the exquisite gift that nature so seldom bestows. And the Vicomtesse, on her side, listening to the ring of sincerity in Gaston's voice, while he told of his youthful troubles, began to understand all that grown children of five-and-twenty suffer from diffidence, when hard work has kept them alike from corrupting influences and intercourse with

men and women of the world whose sophistical reasoning and experience destroy the fair qualities of youth. Here was the ideal of women's dreams, a man unspoiled as yet by the egoism of family or success, or by that narrow selfishness which blights the first impulses of honor, devotion, self-sacrifice, and high demands of self; all the flowers so soon wither that enrich at first the life of delicate but strong emotions, and keep alive the loyalty of the heart.

But these two, once launched forth on the vast sea of sentiment, went far indeed in theory, sounding the depths in either soul, testing the sincerity of their expressions; only, whereas Gaston's experiments were made unconsciously, Mme. de Beauséant had a purpose in all that she said. Bringing her natural and acquired subtlety to the work, she sought to learn M. de Nueil's opinions by advancing, as far as she could do so, views diametrically opposed to her own. So witty and so gracious was she, so much herself with this stranger, with whom she felt completely at ease, because she felt sure that they should never meet again, that, after some delicious epigram of hers, Gaston exclaimed unthinkingly—

“ Oh ! madame, how could any man have left you ? ”

The Vicomtesse was silent. Gaston reddened, he thought that he had offended her; but she was not angry. The first deep thrill of delight since the day of her calamity had taken her by surprise. The skill of the cleverest *roué* could not have made the impression that M. de Nueil made with that cry from the heart. That verdict wrung from a young man's candor gave her back innocence in her own eyes, condemned the world, laid the blame upon the lover who had left her, and justified her subsequent solitary drooping life. The world's absolution, the heartfelt sympathy, the social esteem so longed for, and so harshly refused, nay, all her secret desires were given her to the full in that exclamation, made fairer yet by the heart's sweetest flatteries and the admiration that women always relish eagerly. He understood her, un-

derstood all, and he had given her, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, the opportunity of rising higher through her fall. She looked at the clock.

“Ah! madame, do not punish me for my heedlessness. If you grant me but one evening, vouchsafe not to shorten it, I pray you.”

She smiled at the pretty speech.

“Well, as we must never meet again,” she said, “what signifies a moment more or less? If you were to care for me, it would be a pity.”

“It is too late now,” he said.

“Do not tell me that,” she answered gravely. “Under any other circumstances I should be very glad to see you. I will speak frankly, and you will understand how it is that I do not choose to see you again, and ought not to do so. You have too much magnanimity not to feel that if I were so much as suspected of a second trespass, every one would think of me as a contemptible and vulgar woman; I should be like other women. A pure and blameless life will bring my character into relief. I am too proud not to endeavor to live like one apart in the world, a victim of the law through my marriage, man’s victim through my love. If I were not faithful to the position which I have taken up, then I should deserve all the reproach that is heaped upon me; I should be lowered in my own eyes. I had not enough lofty social virtue to remain with a man whom I did not love. I have snapped the bonds of marriage in spite of the law; it was wrong, it was a crime, it was anything you like, but for me the bonds meant death. I meant to live. Perhaps if I had been a mother I could have endured the torture of a forced marriage of suitability. At eighteen we scarcely know what is done with us, poor girls that we are! I have broken the laws of the world, and the world has punished me; we both did rightly. I sought happiness. Is it not a law of our nature to seek for happiness? I was young, I was beautiful. I thought that I

had found a nature as loving, as apparently passionate. I was loved indeed ; for a little while——”

She paused.

“ I used to think,” she said, “ that no one could leave a woman in such a position as mine. I have been forsaken ; I must have offended in some way. Yes, in some way, no doubt, I failed to keep some law of our nature, was too loving, too devoted, too exacting—I do not know. Evil days have brought light with them? For a long while I blamed another, now I am content to bear the whole blame. At my own expense, I have absolved that other of whom I once thought I had a right to complain. I had not the art to keep him ; fate has punished me heavily for my lack of skill. I only knew how to love ; how can one keep one’s self in mind when one loves? So I was a slave when I should have sought to be a tyrant. Those who know me may condemn me, but they will respect me too, Pain has taught me that I must not lay myself open to this a second time. I cannot understand how it is that I am living yet, after the anguish of that first week of the most fearful crisis in a woman’s life. Only from three years of loneliness would it be possible to draw strength to speak of that time as I am speaking now. Such agony, monsieur, usually ends in death ; but this—well, it was the agony of death with no tomb to end it. Oh ! I have known pain indeed ! ”

The Vicomtesse raised her beautiful eyes to the ceiling ; and the cornice, no doubt, received all the confidences which a stranger might not hear. When a woman is afraid to look at her interlocutor, there is in truth no gentler, meeker, more accommodating confidante than the cornice. The cornice is quite an institution in the boudoir ; what is it but the confessional, *minus* the priest ?

Mme. de Beauséant was eloquent and beautiful at that moment ; nay, “ coquettish,” if the word were not too heavy. By justifying herself, by raising insurmountable barriers be-

tween herself and love, she was stimulating every sentiment in the man before her; nay, more, the higher she set the goal, the more conspicuous it grew. At last, when her eyes had lost the too eloquent expression given to them by painful memories, she let them fall on Gaston.

“ You acknowledge, do you not, that I am bound to find a solitary, self-contained life ? ” she said quietly.

So sublime was she in her reasoning and her madness that M. de Nueil felt a wild longing to throw himself at her feet; but he was afraid of making himself ridiculous, so he held his enthusiasm and his thoughts in check. He was afraid, too, that he might totally fail to express them, and in no less terror of some awful rejection on her part, or of her mockery, an apprehension which strikes like ice to the most fervid soul. The revulsion which led him to crush down every feeling as it sprang up in his heart cost him the intense pain that diffident and ambitious natures experience in the frequent crises when they are compelled to stifle their longings. And yet, in spite of himself, he broke the silence to say in a faltering voice—

“ Madame, permit me to give way to one of the strongest emotions of my life, and own to all that you have made me feel. You set the heart in me swelling high! I feel within me a longing to make you forget your mortifications, to devote my life to this, to give you love for all who have ever given you wounds or hate. But this is a very sudden outpouring of the heart, nothing can justify it to-day, and I ought not——”

“ Enough, monsieur,” said Mme. de Beauséant; “ we have both of us gone too far. By giving you the sad reasons for a refusal which I am compelled to give, I meant to soften it and not to elicit homage. Coquetry only suits a happy woman. Believe me, we must remain strangers to each other. At a later day you will know that ties which must inevitably be broken ought not to be formed at all.”

She sighed lightly, and her brows contracted, but almost immediately grew clear again.

“How painful it is for a woman to be powerless to follow the man she loves through all the phases of his life! And if that man loves her truly, his heart must surely vibrate with pain to the deep trouble in hers. Are they not twice unhappy?”

There was a short pause. Then she rose smiling.

“You little suspected, when you came to Courcelles, that you were to hear a sermon, did you?”

Gaston felt even farther than at first from this extraordinary woman. Was the charm of that delightful hour due after all to the coquetry of the mistress of the house? She had been anxious to display her wit. He bowed stiffly to the Vicomtesse, and went away in desperation.

On the way home he tried to detect the real character of a creature supple and hard as a steel spring; but he had seen her pass through so many phases, that he could not make up his mind about her. The tones of her voice, too, were ringing in his ears; her gestures, the little movements of her head, and the varying expression of her eyes grew more gracious in memory, more fascinating as he thought of them. The Vicomtesse's beauty shone out again for him in the darkness; his reviving impressions called up yet others, and he was enthralled anew by womanly charm and wit, which at first he had not perceived. He fell to wandering musings, in which the most lucid thoughts grow refractory and flatly contradict each other, and the soul passes through a brief frenzy fit. Youth only can understand all that lies in the dithyrambic outpourings of youth when, after a stormy siege of the most frantic folly and coolest commonsense, the heart finally yields to the assault of the latest comer, be it hope or despair, as some mysterious power determines.

At three-and-twenty, diffidence nearly always rules a man's conduct; he is perplexed with a young girl's shyness, a girl's

trouble ; he is afraid lest he should illy express his love, sees nothing but difficulties, and takes alarm at them ; he would be bolder if he loved less, for he has no confidence in himself, and with a growing sense of the cost of happiness comes a conviction that the woman he loves cannot easily be won ; perhaps, too, he is giving himself up too entirely to his own pleasure, and fears that he can give none ; and when, for his misfortune, his idol inspires him with awe, he worships in secret and afar, and, unless his love is guessed, it dies away. Then it often happens that one of these dead early loves lingers on, bright with illusions in many a young heart. What man is there but keeps within him these virgin memories that grow fairer every time they rise before him, memories that hold up to him the ideal of perfect bliss ? Such recollections are like children who die in the flower of childhood, before their parents have known anything of them but their smiles.

So M. de Nueil came home from Courcelles, the victim of a mood fraught with desperate resolutions. Even now he felt that Mme. de Beauséant was one of the conditions of his existence, and that death would be preferable to life without her. He was still young enough to feel the tyrannous fascination which fully developed womanhood exerts over immature and impassioned natures ; and, consequently, he was to spend one of those stormy nights when a young man's thoughts travel from happiness to suicide and back again—nights in which youth rushes through a lifetime of bliss and falls asleep from sheer exhaustion. Fateful nights are they, and the worst misfortune that can happen is to awake a philosopher afterwards. M. de Nueil was far too deeply in love to sleep ; he rose and betook to inditing letters, but none of them were satisfactory, and he burned them all.

The next day he went to Courcelles to make the circuit of her garden walls, but he waited till nightfall ; he was afraid that she might see him. The instinct that led him to act in

this way arose out of so obscure a mood of the soul, that none but a young man, or a man in like case, can fully understand its mute ecstasies and its vagaries, matter to set those people who are lucky enough to see life only in its matter-of-fact aspect shrugging their shoulders. After painful hesitation, Gaston wrote to Mme. de Beauséant. Here is the letter, which may serve as a sample of the epistolary style peculiar to lovers, a performance which, like the drawings prepared with great secrecy by children for the birthdays of father or mother, is found to be insufferable by every mortal except the recipients :

“MADAME:—Your power over my heart, my soul, myself, is so great that my fate depends wholly upon you to-day. Do not throw this letter into the fire ; be so kind as to read it through. Perhaps you may pardon the opening sentence when you see that it is no commonplace, selfish declaration, but that it expresses a simple fact. Perhaps you may feel moved, because I ask for so little, by the submission of one who feels himself so much beneath you, by the influence that your decision will exercise upon my life. At my age, madame, I only know how to love, I am utterly ignorant of ways of attracting and winning a woman’s love, but in my own heart I know raptures of adoration of her. I am irresistibly drawn to you by the great happiness that I feel through you ; my thoughts turn to you with the selfish instinct which bids us draw nearer to the fire of life when we find it. I do not imagine that I am worthy of you ; it seems impossible that I, young, ignorant, and shy, could bring you one-thousandth part of the happiness that I drink in at the sound of your voice and the sight of you. For me you are the only woman in the world. I cannot imagine life without you, so I have made up my mind to leave France, and to risk my life till I lose it in some desperate enterprise, in the Indies, in Africa, I care not where. How can I quell a love that knows no limits

save by opposing to it something as infinite? Yet, if you will allow me to hope, not to be yours, but to win your friendship, I will stay. Let me come, not so very often, if you require it, to spend a few such hours with you as those stolen hours of yesterday. The keen delight of that brief happiness, to be cut short at the least over-ardent word from me, will suffice to enable me to endure the boiling torrent in my veins. Have I presumed too much upon your generosity by this entreaty to suffer an intercourse in which all the gain is mine alone? You could find ways of showing the world, to which you sacrifice so much, that I am nothing to you; you are so clever and so proud! What have you to fear? If I could only lay bare my heart to you at this moment, to convince you that it is with no lurking after-thought that I make this humble request! Should I have told you that my love was boundless, while I prayed you to grant me friendship, if I had any hope of your sharing this feeling in the depths of my soul? No, while I am with you, I will be whatever you will, if only I may be with you. If you refuse (as you have the power to refuse), I will not utter one murmur, I will go. And if, at a later day, any other woman should enter into my life, you will have proof that you were right; but if I am faithful till death, you may feel some regret perhaps. The hope of causing you a regret will soothe my agony, and that thought shall be the sole revenge of a slighted heart."

Only those who have passed through all the exceeding tribulations of youth, who have seized on all the chimeras with two white pinions, the nightmare fancies at the disposal of a fervid imagination, can realize the horrors that seized upon Gaston de Nueil when he had reason to suppose that his ultimatum was in Mme. de Beauséant's hands. He saw the Vicomtesse, wholly untouched, laughing at his letter and his love, as those can laugh who have ceased to believe in love. He could have wished to have his letter back again. It was an absurd

letter. There were a thousand and one things, now that he came to think of it, that he might have said, things infinitely better and more moving than those stilted phrases of his, those accursed, sophisticated, pretentious, fine-spun phrases, though, luckily, the punctuation had been pretty bad, and the lines shockingly crooked. He tried not to think, not to feel; but he felt and thought, and was wretched. If he had been thirty years old, he might have gotten drunk, but the innocent of three-and-twenty knew nothing of the resources of opium nor of the expedients of advanced civilization. Nor had he at hand one of those good friends of the Parisian pattern who understand so well how to say *Pœte, non dolet!* by producing a bottle of champagne, or alleviate the agony of suspense by carrying you off somewhere to make a night of it. Capital fellows are they, always in low water when you are in funds, always off to some watering-place when you go to look them up, always with some bad bargain in horseflesh to sell you; it is true, that when you want to borrow of them, they have always just lost their last louis at play; but in all other respects they are the best fellows on earth, always ready to embark with you on one of the steep down-grades where you lose your time, your soul and your life!

At length M. de Nueil received a missive through the instrumentality of Jacques, a letter that bore the arms of Burgundy on the scented seal, a letter written on vellum note-paper.

He rushed away at once to lock himself in, and read and re-read *her* letter.

“You are punishing me very severely, monsieur, both for the friendliness of my effort to spare you a rebuff, and for the attraction which intellect always has for me. I put confidence in the generosity of youth, and you have disappointed me. And yet, if I did not speak unreservedly (which would have been perfectly ridiculous), at any rate I spoke frankly of my position, so that you might imagine that I was not to be

touched by a young soul. My distress is the keener for my interest in you. I am naturally tender-hearted and kindly, but circumstances force me to act unkindly. Another woman would have flung your letter, unread, in the fire; I read it, and I am answering it. My answer will make it clear to you that while I am not untouched by the expression of this feeling which I have inspired, albeit unconsciously, I am still far from sharing it, and the step which I am about to take will show you still more plainly that I mean what I say. I wish, besides, to use, for your welfare, that authority, as it were, which you give me over your life; and I desire to exercise it this once to draw aside the veil from your eyes.

“I am nearly thirty years old, monsieur; you are barely two-and-twenty. You yourself cannot know what your thoughts will be at my age. The vows that you make so lightly to-day may seem a very heavy burden to you then. I am quite willing to believe that at this moment you would give me your whole life without a regret, you would even be ready to die for a little brief happiness; but at the age of thirty experience will take from you the very power of making daily sacrifices for my sake, and I myself should feel deeply humiliated if I accepted them. A day would come when everything, even nature, would bid you leave me, and I have already told you that death is preferable to desertion. Misfortune has taught me to calculate; as you see, I am arguing perfectly dispassionately. You force me to tell you that I have no love for you; I ought not to love, I cannot, and I will not. It is too late to yield, as women yield, to a blind unreasoning impulse of the heart, too late to be the mistress whom you seek. My consolations spring from God, not from earth. Ah, and besides, with the melancholy insight of disappointed love, I read hearts too clearly to accept your proffered friendship. It is only instinct. I forgive the boyish ruse, for which you are not responsible as yet. In the name of this passing fancy of

yours, for the sake of your career and my own peace of mind, I bid you stay in your own country; you must not spoil a fair and honorable life for an illusion which, by its very nature, cannot last. At a later day, when you have accomplished your real destiny, in the fully developed manhood that awaits you, you will appreciate this answer of mine, though to-day it may be that you blame its hardness. You will turn with pleasure to an old woman whose friendship will certainly be sweet and precious to you then; a friendship untried by the extremes of fashion and the disenchanting processes of life; a friendship which noble thoughts and thoughts of religion will keep pure and sacred. Farewell; do my bidding with the thought that your success will bring a gleam of pleasure into my solitude, and only think of me as we think of absent friends."

Gaston de Nueil read the letter, and wrote the following lines:

"MADAME:—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own——"

When the man returned from his errand, M. de Nueil asked him with whom he left the note?

"I gave it to Mme. le Vicomtesse herself, sir; she was in her carriage and just about to start."

"For the town?"

"I don't think so, sir. Mme. la Vicomtesse had post-horses."

"Ah! then she is going away," said the Baron.

“Yes, sir,” the man answered.

Gaston de Nueil at once prepared to follow Mme. de Beauséant. She led the way as far as Geneva, without a suspicion that he followed. And he? Amid the many thoughts that assailed him during that journey, one all-absorbing problem filled his mind—“Why did she go away?” Theories grew thickly on such ground for supposition, and naturally he inclined to the one that flattered his hopes—“If the Vicomtesse cares for me, a clever woman would, of course, choose Switzerland, where nobody knows either of us, in preference to France, where she would find censorious critics.”

An impassioned lover of a certain stamp would not feel attracted to a woman clever enough to choose her own ground; such women are too clever. However, there is nothing to prove that there was any truth in Gaston’s supposition.

The Vicomtesse took a small house by the side of the lake. As soon as she was installed in it, Gaston came one summer evening in the twilight. Jacques, that flunkey in grain, showed no sign of surprise, and announced “M. le Baron de Nueil” like a discreet domestic well acquainted with good society. At the sound of the name, at the sight of its owner, Mme. de Beauséant let her book fall from her hands; her surprise gave him time to come close to her, and to say in tones that sounded like music in her ears—

“What joy it was to me to take the horses that brought you on this journey!”

To have the inmost desires of the heart so fulfilled! Where is the woman who could resist such happiness as this? An Italian woman, one of those divine creatures who, psychologically, are as far removed from the Parisian as if they lived at the Antipodes, a being who would be regarded as profoundly immoral on this side the Alps, an Italian (to resume) made the following comment on some French novels which she had been reading: “I cannot see,” she remarked, “why these poor lovers take such a time over coming to an arrange-

ment which ought to be the affair of a single morning." Why should not the novelist take a hint from this worthy lady, and refrain from exhausting the theme and the reader? Some few passages of coquetry it would certainly be pleasant to give in outline; the story of *Mme. de Beauséant's* demurs and sweet delayings, that, like the vestal virgins of antiquity, she might fall gracefully, and by lingering over the innocent raptures of first love draw from it its utmost strength and sweetness. *M. de Nueil* was at an age when a man is the dupe of these caprices, of the fence which women delight to prolong; either to dictate their own terms, or to enjoy the sense of their power yet longer, knowing instinctively as they do that it must soon grow less. But, after all, these little boudoir protocols, less numerous than those of the Congress of London, are too small to be worth mentioning in the history of this passion.

For three years *Mme. de Beauséant* and *M. de Nueil* lived in the villa on the lake of Geneva. They lived quite alone, received no visitors, caused no talk, rose late, went out together upon the lake, knew, in short, the happiness of which we all of us dream. It was a simple little house, with green shutters, and broad balconies shaded with awnings, a house contrived of set purpose for lovers, with its white couches, soundless carpets, and fresh hangings, everything within it reflecting their joy. Every window looked out on some new view of the lake; in the far distance lay the mountains, fantastic visions of changing color and evanescent cloud; above them spread the sunny sky, before them stretched the broad sheet of water, never the same in its fitful changes. All their surroundings seemed to dream for them, all things smiled upon them.

Then weighty matters recalled *M. de Nueil* to France. His father and brother died, and he was obliged to leave Geneva. The lovers bought the house; and, if they could have had their way, they would have removed the hills piece-

meal, drawn off the lake with a siphon, and taken everything away with them.

Mme. de Beauséant followed M. de Nueil. She realized her property, and bought a considerable estate near Manerville, adjoining Gaston's lands, and here they lived together; Gaston very graciously giving up Manerville to his mother for the present in consideration of the bachelor freedom in which she left him.

Mme. de Beauséant's estate was close to a little town in one of the most picturesque spots in the valley of the Auge. Here the lovers raised barriers between themselves and social intercourse, barriers which no creature could overleap, and here the happy days of Switzerland were lived over again. For nine whole years they knew happiness which it serves no purpose to describe; happiness which may be divined from the outcome of the story by those whose souls can comprehend poetry and prayer in their infinite manifestations.

All this time Mme. de Beauséant's husband, the present Marquis (his father and elder brother having died), enjoyed the soundest health. There is no better aid to life than a certain knowledge that our demise would confer a benefit on some fellow-creature. M. de Beauséant was one of those ironical and wayward beings who, like holders of life-annuities, wake with an additional sense of relish every morning to a consciousness of good health. For the rest, he was a man of the world, somewhat methodical and ceremonious, and a calculator of consequences, who could make a declaration of love as quietly as a lackey announces that "Madame is served."

This brief biographical notice of his lordship the Marquis de Beauséant is given to explain the reasons why it was impossible for the Marquise to marry M. de Nueil.

So, after a nine years' lease of happiness, the sweetest agreement to which a woman ever put her hand, M. de Nueil and Mme. de Beauséant were still in a position quite

as natural and quite as false as at the beginning of their adventure. And yet they had reached a fatal crisis, which may be stated as clearly as any problem in mathematics.

Mme. le Comtesse de Nueil, Gaston's mother, a straight-laced and virtuous person, who had made the late Baron happy in strictly legal fashion, would never consent to meet Mme. de Beauséant. Mme. de Beauséant quite understood that the worthy dowager must of necessity be her enemy, and that she would try to draw Gaston from his unhallowed and immoral way of life. The Marquise de Beauséant would willingly have sold her property and gone back to Geneva, but she could not bring herself to do it; it would mean that she distrusted M. de Nueil. Moreover, he had taken a great fancy to this very Valleroy estate, where he was making plantations and improvements. She would not deprive him of a piece of pleasurable routine-work, such as women always wish for their husbands, and even for their lovers.

A Mlle. de Rodière, twenty-two years of age, an heiress with a rent-roll of forty thousand livres, had come to live in the neighborhood. Gaston always met her at Manerville whenever he was obliged to go thither. These various personages being to each other as the terms of a proportion sum, the following letter will throw light on the appalling problem which Mme. de Beauséant had been trying for the past month to solve:

“My beloved angel, it seems like nonsense, does it not, to write to you when there is nothing to keep us apart, when a caress so often takes the place of words, and words too are caresses? Ah, well, my love. There are some things that a woman cannot say when she is face to face with the man she loves; at the bare thought of them her voice fails her, and the blood goes back to her heart; she has no strength, no intelligence left. It hurts me to feel like this when you are near me, and it happens often. I feel that my heart should

be wholly sincere for you ; that I should disguise no thought, however transient, in my heart ; and I love the sweet carelessness, which suits me so well, too much to endure this embarrassment and constraint any longer. So I will tell you about my anguish—yes, it is anguish. Listen to me ! do not begin with the little ‘ Tut, tut, tut,’ that you use to silence me, an impertinence that I love, because anything from you pleases me. Dear soul from heaven, wedded to mine, let me first tell you that you have effaced all memory of the pain that once was crushing the life out of me. I did not know what love was before I knew you. Only the candor of your beautiful young life, only the purity of that great soul of yours, could satisfy the requirements of an exacting woman’s heart. Dear love, how very often I have thrilled with joy to think that in these nine long, swift years, my jealousy has not been once awakened. All the flowers of your soul have been mine, all your thoughts. There has not been the faintest cloud in our heaven ; we have not known what sacrifice is ; we have always acted on the impulses of our hearts. I have known happiness, infinite for a woman. Will the tears that drench this sheet tell you all my gratitude ? I could wish that I had knelt to write the words ! Well, out of this felicity has arisen torture more terrible than the pain of desertion. Dear, there are very deep recesses in a woman’s heart ; how deep in my own heart, I did not know myself until to-day, as I did not know the whole extent of love. The greatest misery which could overwhelm us is a light burden compared with the mere thought of harm for him whom we love. And how if we cause the harm, is it not enough to make one die?— This is the thought that is weighing upon me. But it brings in its train another thought that is heavier far, a thought that tarnishes the glory of love, and slays it, and turns it into a humiliation which sullies life as long as it lasts. You are thirty years old ; I am forty. What dread this difference in age calls up in a woman who loves ! It is possible that, first

of all unconsciously, afterwards in earnest, you have felt the sacrifices that you have made by renouncing all in the world for me. Perhaps you have thought of your future from the social point of view, of the marriage which would, of course, increase your fortune, and give you avowed happiness and children who would inherit your wealth; perhaps you have thought of reappearing in the world, and filling your place there honorably. And then, if so, you must have repressed those thoughts, and felt glad to sacrifice heiress and fortune and a fair future to me without my knowledge. In your young man's generosity, you must have resolved to be faithful to the vows which bind us each to each in the sight of God. My past pain has risen up before your mind, and the misery from which you rescued me has been my protection. To owe your love to your pity! The thought is even more painful to me than the fear of spoiling your life for you. The man who can bring himself to stab his mistress is very charitable if he gives her her death-blow while she is happy and ignorant of evil, while illusions are in full blossom—— Yes, death is preferable to the two thoughts which have secretly saddened the hours for several days. To-day, when you asked 'What ails you?' so tenderly, the sound of your voice made me shiver. I thought that, after your wont, you were reading my very soul, and I waited for your confidence to come, thinking that my presentiments had come true, and that I had guessed at all that was going on in your mind. Then I began to think over certain little things that you always do for me, and I thought I could see in you the sort of affectation by which a man betrays a consciousness that his loyalty is becoming a burden. And in that moment I paid very dear for my happiness. I felt that nature always demands the price for the treasure called love. Briefly, has not fate separated us? Can you have said, 'Sooner or later I must leave poor Claire; why not separate in time?' I read that thought in the depths of your eyes, and went away to cry by myself,

Hiding my tears from you! the first tears that I have shed for sorrow for these ten years; I am too proud to let you see them, but I did not reproach you in the least.

“Yes, you are right. I ought not to be so selfish as to bind your long and brilliant career to my so-soon worn-out life. And yet—how if I have been mistaken? How if I have taken your love melancholy for a deliberation? Oh, my love, do not leave me in suspense; punish this jealous wife of yours, but give her back the sense of her love and yours; the whole woman lies in that—that consciousness sanctifies everything.

“Since your mother came, since you paid a visit to Mlle. de Rodière, I have been gnawed by doubts dishonoring to us both. Make me suffer for this, but do not deceive me; I want to know everything that your mother said and what you think! If you have hesitated between some alternative and me, I give you back your liberty. I will not let you know what happens to me; I will not shed tears for you to see; only—I will not see you again. Ah! I cannot go on, my heart is breaking——

“I have been sitting benumbed and stupid for some moments. Dear love, I do not find that any feeling of pride rises against you; you are so kind-hearted, so open; you would find it impossible to hurt me or to deceive me; and you will tell me the truth, however cruel it may be. Do you wish me to encourage your confession? Well, then, heart of mine, I shall find comfort in a woman’s thought. Has not the youth of your being been mine, your sensitive, wholly gracious, beautiful, and delicate youth? No woman shall find henceforth the Gaston whom I have known, nor the delicious happiness that he has given me—— No; you will never love again as you have loved, as you love me now; no, I shall never have a rival, it is impossible. There will be no bitterness in my memories of our love, and I shall think of nothing else. It is out of your power to enchant any woman henceforth by the childish provocations, the charming ways of a

young heart, the soul's winning charm, the body's grace, the swift communion of rapture, the whole divine cortège of young love, in fine.

“ Oh, you are a man now, you will obey your destiny, weighing and considering all things. You will have cares, and anxieties, and ambitions, and concerns that will rob *her* of the unchanging smile that made your lips fair for me. The tones that were always so sweet for me will be troubled at times; and your eyes that lighted up with radiance from heaven at the sight of me will often be lustreless for *her*. And besides, as it is impossible to love you as I love you, you will never care for that woman as you have cared for me. She will never keep a constant watch over herself as I have done; she will never study your happiness at every moment with an intuition which has never failed me. Ah, yes, the man, the heart and soul, which I shall have known will exist no longer. I shall bury him deep in my memory, that I may have the joy of him still; I shall live happy in that fair past life of ours, a life hidden from all but our inmost selves.

“ Dear treasure of mine, if all the while no least thought of liberty has risen in your mind, if my love is no burden on you, if my fears are chimerical, if I am still your Eve—the one woman in the world for you—come to me as soon as you have read this letter; come quickly! Ah! in one moment I will love you more than I have ever loved you, I think, in these nine years. After enduring the needless torture of these doubts of which I am accusing myself, every added day of love, yes, every single day, will be a whole lifetime of bliss. So speak, and speak openly; do not deceive me, it would be a crime. Tell me, do you wish for your liberty? Have you thought of all that a man's life means? Is there any regret in your mind? That *I* should cause you a regret! I should die of it. I have said it: I love you enough to set your happiness above mine, your life before my own. Leave on one side, if you can, the wealth of memories of our nine

years' happiness, that they may not influence your decision, but speak! I submit myself to you as to God, the one Consoler who remains if you forsake me."

When Mme. de Beauséant knew that her letter was in M. de Nueil's hands, she sank in such utter prostration, the overpressure of many thoughts so numbed her faculties that she seemed almost drowsy. At any rate, she was suffering from a pain not always proportioned in its intensity to a woman's strength; pain which women alone know. And while the unhappy Marquise awaited her doom, M. de Nueil, reading her letter, felt that he was "in a very difficult position," to use the expression that young men apply to a crisis of this kind.

By this time he had all but yielded to his mother's importunities and to the attractions of Mlle. de la Rodière, a somewhat insignificant, pink-and-white young person, as straight as a poplar. It is true that, in accordance with the rules laid down for marriageable young ladies, she scarcely opened her mouth, but her rent-roll of forty thousand livres spoke quite sufficiently for her. Mme. de Nueil, with a mother's sincere affection, tried to entangle her son in virtuous courses. She called his attention to the fact that it was a flattering distinction to be preferred by Mlle. de la Rodière, who had refused so many great matches; it was quite time, she urged, that he should think of his future, such a good opportunity might not repeat itself, some day he would have eighty thousand livres of income from land; money made anything bearable; if Mme. de Beauséant loved him for his own sake, she ought to be the first to urge him to marry. In short, the well-intentioned mother forgot no arguments which the feminine intellect can bring to bear upon the masculine mind, and by these means she had brought her son into a wavering condition.

Mme. de Beauséant's letter arrived just as Gaston's love of her was holding out against the temptations of a settled life

conformable to received ideas. That letter decided the day. He made up his mind to break off with the Marquise and to marry.

“One must live a man’s life,” said he to himself.

Then followed some inkling of the pain that this decision would give to Mme. de Beauséant. The man’s vanity and the lover’s conscience further exaggerated this pain, and a sincere pity for her seized upon him. All at once the immensity of the misery became apparent to him, and he thought it necessary and charitable to deaden the deadly blow. He hoped to bring Mme. de Beauséant to a calm frame of mind by gradually reconciling her to the idea of separation; while Mlle. de la Rodière, always like a shadowy third between them, should be sacrificed to her at first, only to be imposed upon her later. His marriage should take place later, in obedience to Mme. de Beauséant’s expressed wish. He went so far as to enlist the Marquise’s nobleness and pride and all the great qualities of her nature to help him to succeed in this compassionate design. He would write a letter at once to allay her suspicions. *A letter!* For a woman with the most exquisite feminine perception, as well as the intuition of passionate love, a letter in itself was a sentence of death.

So when Jacques came and brought Mme. de Beauséant a sheet of paper folded in a triangle, she trembled, poor woman, like a snared swallow. A mysterious sensation of physical cold spread from head to foot, wrapping her about in an icy winding-sheet. If he did not rush to her feet, if he did not come to her in tears, and pale, and like a lover, she knew that all was lost. And yet, so many hopes are there in the heart of a woman who loves, that she is only slain by stab after stab, and loves on till the last drop of life-blood drains away.

“Does madame need anything?” Jacques asked gently, as he went away.

“No,” she said.

“Poor fellow!” she thought, brushing a tear from her eyes, “he guesses my feelings, servant though he is!”

She read: “My beloved, you are inventing idle terrors for yourself——” The Marquise gazed at the words, and a thick mist spread before her eyes. A voice in her heart cried, “He lies!” Then she glanced down the page with the clairvoyant eagerness of passion, and read these words at the foot, “*Nothing has been decided as yet——*” Turning to the other side with convulsive quickness, she saw the mind of the writer distinctly through the intricacies of the wording; this was no spontaneous outburst of love. She crushed it in her fingers, twisted it, tore it with her teeth, flung it in the fire, and cried aloud, “Ah! base that he is! I was his, and he has ceased to love me!”

She sank half-dead upon the couch.

M. de Nueil went out as soon as he had written his letter. When he came back, Jacques met him on the threshold with a note. “Madame la Marquise has left the château,” said the man.

M. de Nueil, in amazement, broke the seal and read:

“MADAME:—If I could cease to love you, to take the chances of becoming an ordinary man which you hold out to me, you must admit that I should thoroughly deserve my fate. No, I shall not do as you bid me; the oath of fidelity which I swear to you shall only be absolved by death. Ah! take my life, unless indeed you do not fear to carry a remorse all through your own——”

It was his own letter, written to the Marquise as she set out for Geneva nine years before. At the foot of it Claire de Bourgogne had written, “Monsieur, you are free.”

M. de Nueil went to his mother at Manerville. In less than three weeks he married Mlle. Stéphanie de la Rodière.

If this commonplace story of real life ended here, it would

be to some extent a sort of mystification. The first man you meet can tell you a better. But the widespread fame of the catastrophe (for, unhappily, this is a true tale), and all the memories which it may arouse in those who have known the divine delights of infinite passion, and lost them by their own deed, or through the cruelty of fate—these things may perhaps shelter the story from criticism.

Mme. la Marquise de Beauséant never left Valleroy after her parting from M. de Nueil. After his marriage she still continued to live there, for some inscrutable woman's reason; any woman is at liberty to assign the one which most appeals to her. Claire de Bourgogne lived in such complete retirement that none of the servants, save Jacques and her own woman, ever saw their mistress. She required absolute silence all about her, and only left her room to go to the chapel on the Valleroy estate, whither a neighboring priest came to say mass every morning.

The Comte de Nueil sank a few days after his marriage into something like conjugal apathy, which might be interpreted to mean either happiness or unhappiness.

“My son is perfectly happy,” his mother said everywhere.

Mme. Gaston de Nueil, like a great many young women, was a rather colorless character, sweet and passive. A month after her marriage she had expectations of becoming a mother. All this was quite in accordance with ordinary views. M. de Nueil was very nice to her; but two months after his separation from the Marquise, he grew notably thoughtful and abstracted. But then he always had been serious, his mother said.

After seven months of this tepid happiness, a little thing occurred, one of those seemingly small matters which imply such great development of thought and such widespread trouble of soul, that only the bare fact can be recorded; the interpretation of it must be left to the fancy of each individual mind. One day, when M. de Nueil had been shooting over the lands of Manerville and Valleroy, he crossed

Mme. de Beauséant's park on his way home, summoned Jacques, and when the man came, asked him, "Whether the Marquise was as fond of game as ever?"

Jacques, answering in the affirmative, Gaston offered him a good round sum (accompanied by plenty of specious reasoning) for a very little service. Would he set aside for the Marquise the game that the Count would bring? It seemed to Jacques to be a matter of no great importance whether the partridge on which his mistress dined had been shot by her keeper or by M. de Nueil, especially since the latter particularly wished that the Marquise should know nothing about it.

"It was killed on her land," said the Count, and for some days Jacques lent himself to the harmless deceit. Day after day M. de Nueil went shooting, and came back at dinner-time with an empty bag. A whole week went by in this way. Gaston grew bold enough to write a long letter to the Marquise, and had it conveyed to her. It was returned to him unopened. The Marquise's servant brought it back about nightfall. The Count, sitting in the drawing-room listening, while his wife at the piano mangled a *Caprice* of Hérold's, suddenly sprang up and rushed to the Marquise, as if he were flying to an assignation. He dashed through a well-known gap into the park, and went slowly along the avenues, stopping now and again for a little to still the rapid beatings of his heart. Smothered sounds as he came nearer the château told him that the servants must be at supper, and he went straight to Mme. de Beauséant's room.

Mme. de Beauséant never left her bedroom. M. de Nueil could gain the doorway without making the slightest sound. There, by the light of two wax-candles, he saw the thin, white Marquise in a great armchair; her head was bowed, her hands hung listlessly, her eyes gazing fixedly at some object which she did not seem to see. Her whole attitude spoke of hopeless pain. There was a vague something like hope in her bearing, but it was impossible to say whither

Claire de Bourgogne was looking—forwards to the tomb or backwards into the past. Perhaps M. de Nueil's tears glittered in the deep shadows; perhaps his breathing sounded faintly; perhaps unconsciously he trembled, or again it may have been impossible that he should stand there, his presence unfelt by that quick sense which grows to be an instinct, the glory, the delight, the proof of perfect love. However it was, Mme. de Beauséant slowly turned her face towards the doorway, and beheld her lover of bygone days. Then Gaston de Nueil came forward a few paces.

“If you come any farther, sir,” exclaimed the Marquise, growing paler, “I shall fling myself out of the window!”

She sprang to the window, flung it open, and stood with one foot on the ledge, her hand upon the iron balustrade, her face turned towards Gaston.

“Go out! go out!” she cried, “or I will throw myself over.”

At that dreadful cry the servants began to stir, and M. de Nueil fled like a criminal.

When he reached his home again he wrote a few lines and gave them to his own man, telling him to give the letter himself into Mme. de Beauséant's hands, and to say that it was a matter of life and death for his master. The messenger went. M. de Nueil went back to the drawing-room where his wife was still murdering the *Caprice*, and sat down to wait until the answer came. An hour later, when the *Caprice* had come to an end, and the husband and wife sat in silence on opposite sides of the hearth, the man came back from Valleroy and gave his master his own letter, unopened.

M. de Nueil then arose, went into a small room beyond the drawing-room, where he had left his rifle, and shot himself.

The swift and fatal ending of the drama, contrary as it is to all the habits of young France, is only what might have been expected. Those who have closely observed, or known

for themselves by delicious experience, all that is meant by the perfect union of two beings, will understand Gaston de Nueil's suicide perfectly well. A woman does not bend and form herself in a day to the caprices of passion. The pleasure of loving, like some rare flower, needs the most careful ingenuity of culture. Time alone, and two souls attuned each to each, can discover all its resources, and call into being all the tender and delicate delights for which we are steeped in a thousand superstitions, imagining them to be inherent in the heart that lavishes them upon us. It is this wonderful response of one nature to another, this religious belief, this certainty of finding peculiar or excessive happiness in the presence of one we love, that accounts in part for perdurable attachments and long-lived passion. If a woman possesses the genius of her sex, love never comes to be a matter of use and wont. She brings all her heart and brain to love, clothes her tenderness in forms so varied, there is such art in her most natural movements, or so much nature in her art, that in absence her memory is almost as potent as her presence. All other women are as shadows compared with her. Not until we have lost or known the dread of losing a love so vast and glorious, do we prize it at its just worth. And if a man who has once possessed this love shuts himself out from it by his own act and deed, and sinks to some loveless marriage; if, by some incident, hidden in the obscurity of married life, the woman with whom he hoped to know the same felicity makes it clear that it will never be revived for him; if, with the sweetness of divine love still on his lips, he has dealt a deadly wound to *her*, his wife in truth, whom he forsook for a social chimera—then he must either die or take refuge in a materialistic, selfish, and heartless philosophy, from which impassioned souls shrink in horror.

As for Mme. de Beauséant, she doubtless did not imagine that her friend's despair could drive him to suicide, when he

had drunk deep of love for nine years. Possibly she may have thought that she alone was to suffer. At any rate, she did quite rightly to refuse the most humiliating of all positions; a wife may stoop for weighty social reasons to a kind of compromise which a mistress is bound to hold in abhorrence, for in the purity of her passion lies all its justification.

ANGOULÊME, *September*, 1832.



# THE IMAGINARY MISTRESS.

(*La Fausse Maîtresse.*)

*Dedicated to the Comtesse Clara Maffei.*

IN the month of September, 1835, one of the richest heiresses of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, the only child of the Marquis du Rouvre, married Count Adam Mitgislas Laginski, a young Polish exile.

I allow myself to spell the names as they are pronounced, to spare the reader the sight of the fortifications of consonants by which, in the Slav languages, the vowels are protected, no doubt to secure them against loss, seeing how few they are.

The Marquis du Rouvre had dissipated almost the whole of one of the finest fortunes of the nobility, to which he had formerly owed his alliance with a Mademoiselle de Ronquerolles. Hence Clémentine had for her uncle, on her mother's side, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and for her aunt Madame de Sérizy. On her father's side she possessed another uncle in the eccentric person of the Chevalier du Rouvre, the younger son of the house, an old bachelor who had grown rich by speculations in land and houses.

The Marquis de Ronquerolles was so unhappy as to lose both his children during the visitation of cholera. Madame de Sérizy's only son, a young officer of the highest promise, was killed in Africa at the fight by the Macta. In these days rich families run the risk of ruining their children if they have too many, or of becoming extinct if they have but one or two, a singular result of the Civil Code not foreseen by Napoleon. Thus, by accident, and in spite of Monsieur du

Rouvre's reckless extravagances for Florine, one of the most charming of Paris actresses, Clémentine had become an heir-ess. The Marquis de Ronquerolles, one of the most accomplished diplomats of the new dynasty, his sister, Madame de Sérizy, and the Chevalier du Rouvre agreed that, to rescue their fortunes from the Marquis' clutches, they would leave them to their niece, to whom they each promised ten thousand francs a year on her marriage.

It is quite unnecessary to say that the Pole, though a refugee, cost the French government absolutely nothing. Count Adam belonged to one of the oldest and most illustrious families of Poland, connected with most of the princely houses of Germany, with the Sapiéhas, the Radziwills, the Mniszechs, the Rzewuskis, the Czartoryskis, the Leszinskis, the Lubomirskis; in short, all the great Sarmatian *skis*. But a knowledge of heraldry is not a strong point in France under Louis Philippe, and such nobility could be no recommendation to the *bourgeoisie* then in power. Besides, when, in 1833, Adam made his appearance on the Boulevard des Italiens, at Frascati's, at the Jockey Club, he led the life of a man who, having lost his political prospects, falls back on his vices and his love of pleasure. He was taken for a student.

The Polish nationality, as the result of an odious government reaction, had fallen as low as the Republicans had tried to think it high. The strange struggle of *movement* against *resistance*—two words which thirty years hence will be inexplicable—made a farce of what ought to have been so worthy: the name, that is, of a vanquished nation to which France gave hospitality, for which entertainments were devised, for which every one danced or sang by subscription; a nation, in short, which at the time when, in 1796, Europe was fighting France, had offered her six thousand men, and such men!

Do not conclude from this that I mean to represent the Emperor Nicholas as being in the wrong as regards Poland, or Poland as regards the Emperor Nicholas. In the first place,

it would be a silly thing enough to slip a political discussion into a tale which ought to interest or to amuse. Besides, Russia and Poland were equally right: one for aiming at unity of empire, the other for desiring to be free again. It may be said, in passing, that Poland might have conquered Russia by the influence of manners instead of beating her with weapons; thus imitating the Chinese, who at last Chinesified the Tartars, and who, it is to be hoped, will do the same by the English. Poland ought to have *polished* the Russians; Poniatowski had tried it in the least temperate district of the empire. But that gentleman was a misunderstood king—all the more so because he did not, perhaps, understand himself.

How was it possible not to hate the poor people who were the cause of the horrible deceit committed on the occasion of the review when all Paris was eager to rescue Poland? People affected to regard the Poles as allies of the Republican party, forgetting that Poland was an aristocratic republic. Thenceforth the party of wealth poured ignoble contempt on the Pole, who had been deified but a few days since. The wind of a riot has always blown the Parisians round from north to south under every form of government. This weathercock temper of Paris opinion must be remembered if we would understand how, in 1835, the name of Pole was a word of ridicule among the race who believe themselves to be the wittiest and politest in the world, and its central luminary, in a city which, at this day, wields the sceptre of art and literature.

There are, alas! two types of Polish refugees—the republican Pole, the son of Lelewel, and the noble Pole of the party led by Prince Czartoryski. These two kinds of Pole are as fire and water, but why blame them? Are not such divisions always to be observed among refugees whatever nation they belong to, and no matter what country they go to? They carry their country and their hatreds with them. At Brussels two French emigrant priests expressed the greatest

aversion for each other ; and when one of them was asked his reasons, he replied, pointing to his companion in misery, " He is a Jansenist ! " Dante, in his exile, would gladly have stabbed any adversary of the " Bianchi. " In this lies the reason of the attacks made on the venerable Prince Adam Czartoryski by the French radicals, and that of the disapproval shown to a section of the Polish emigrants by the Cæsars of the counter and the Alexanders by letters patent.

In 1834 Adam Mitgislas Laginski was the butt of Parisian witticisms. " He is a nice fellow though he is a Pole," said Rastignac. " All the Poles are great lords," said Maxime de Trailles, " but this one pays his gambling debts ; I begin to think that he must have had an estate. "

And without offense to the exiles, it may be remarked that the levity, the recklessness, the fluidity of the Sarmatian character justified the calumnies of the Parisians, who, indeed, in similar circumstances, would be exactly like the Poles. The French aristocracy, so admirably supported by the Polish aristocracy during the Revolution, certainly made no equivalent return to those who were forced to emigrate in 1832. We must have the melancholy courage to say that, in this, the Faubourg Saint-Germain remains Poland's debtor.

Was Count Adam rich, was he poor, was he an adventurer ? The problem long remained unsolved. Diplomatic circles, faithful to their instructions, imitated the silence observed by the Emperor Nicholas, who at that time counted every Polish emigrant as dead. The Tuileries, and most of those who took their cue from thence, gave an odious proof of this characteristic policy dignified by the name of prudence. A Russian prince, with whom they had smoked many cigars at the time of the emigration, was ignored because, as it seemed, he had fallen into disgrace with the Emperor Nicholas.

Thus placed between the prudence of the court and that of diplomatic circles, Poles of good family lived in the Biblical solitude of *Super flumina Babylonis*, or frequented certain

drawing-rooms which served as neutral territory for every variety of opinion. In a city of pleasure like Paris, where amusement is to be had in every rank, Polish recklessness found twice as many pretexts as it needed for leading a dissipated bachelor life. Besides, it must be said that Count Adam Laginski had against him at first both his appearance and his manners.

There are two types of Pole, as there are two types of Englishwoman. When an Englishwoman is not a beauty, she is horribly ugly—and Count Adam belongs to the second category. His face is small, somewhat sour, and looks as if it had been squeezed in a vise. His short nose, fair hair, red moustache and beard give him the expression of a goat; all the more so because he is short and thin, and his eyes, tinged with dingy yellow, startle you by the oblique leer which Virgil's line has made famous. How is it that, in spite of such unfavorable conditions, he has such exquisite manners and style? The solution of this mystery is given by his dress, that of a finished dandy, and by the education he owes to his mother, a Radziwill. If his courage carries him to the point of rashness, his mind is not above the current and trivial pleasantries of Paris conversation; still, he does not often find a young fellow who is his superior among men of fashion. These young men nowadays talk far too much of horses, income, taxes, and deputies, for French conversation to be what it once was. Wit needs leisure, and certain inequalities of position. Conversation is better perhaps at St. Petersburg and Vienna than it is in Paris. Equals need no subtleties; they tell each other everything straight out, just as it is. Hence the ironical laughters of Paris could scarcely discern a man of family in a light-hearted student, as he seemed, who in talking passed carelessly from one subject to another, who pursued amusement with all the more frenzy because he had just escaped from great perils, and who, having left the country where his family was known, thought himself at liberty to

lead an irresponsible life without risking a loss of consideration.

One fine day in 1834, Adam bought a large house in the Rue de la Pépinière. Six months later it was on as handsome a footing as the richest houses in Paris. Just at the time when Laginski was beginning to be taken seriously he saw Clémentine at the Italian opera, and fell in love with her. A year later he married her. Madame d'Espard's circle set the fashion of approval. Mothers of families then learned, too late, that ever since the year 900, the Laginskis had ranked with the most illustrious families of the north. By a stroke of prudence, most unlike a Pole, the young Count's mother had, at the beginning of the rebellion, mortgaged her estates for an immense sum advanced by two Jewish houses, and invested in the French funds. Count Adam Laginski had an income of more than eighty thousand francs. This put an end to the astonishment expressed in some drawing-rooms at the rashness of Madame de Sérizy, of old de Ronquerolles, and of the Chevalier du Rouvre in yielding to their niece's mad passion.

As usual, the world rushed from one extreme to the other. During the winter of 1836, Count Adam became the fashion, and Clémentine Laginski one of the queens of Paris. Madame de Laginski, at the present time, is one of the charming group of young married women among whom shine Mesdames de Lestorade, de Portenduère, Marie de Vandenesse, du Guénic, and de Maufrigneuse, the very flower of Paris society, who live high above the parvenus, bourgeois, and wire-pullers of recent politics.

This preamble was needful to define the sphere in which was carried through one of those sublime efforts, less rare than the detractors of the present time imagine—pearls hidden in rough shells, and lost in the depths of that abyss, that ocean, that never-resting tide called the world—the age—Paris, London, or St. Petersburg—whichever you will.

If ever the truth that architecture is the expression of the manners of a race was fully demonstrated, is it not since the revolution of 1830, under the reign of the House of Orleans? Great fortunes have shrunk in France, and majestic mansions of our fathers are constantly being demolished and replaced by a sort of tenement-houses, in which a peer of France of July dwells on the third floor, over some newly enriched empiric. Styles are mingled in confusion. As there is no longer any court, any nobility to set a "tone," no harmony is to be seen in the productions of art. On the other hand, architecture has never found more economical tricks for imitating what is genuine and thorough, never displayed more ingenuity and resource in arrangement. Ask an artist to deal with a strip of the garden of an old "hôtel" now destroyed, and he will build you a little Louvre crushed under its ornamentation; he will give you a courtyard, stables, and, if you insist, a garden; inside he contrives such a number of little rooms and corridors, and cheats the eye so effectually, that you fancy yourself comfortable; in fact, there are so many bedrooms that a ducal retinue can live and move in what was only the bake-house of a president of a law court.

The Comtesse Laginski's house is one of these modern structures, with a courtyard in front and a garden behind. To the right of the courtyard are the servants' quarters, balanced on the left by the stables and coach-houses. The porter's lodge stands between two handsome gates. The chief luxury of this house consists in a delightful conservatory at the end of a boudoir on the ground-floor, where all the beautiful reception-rooms are. It was a philanthropist driven out of England who built this architectural gem, constructed the conservatory, planned the garden, varnished the doors, paved the out-buildings with brick, filled the windows with green glass, and realized a vision like that—in due proportion—of George IV. at Brighton. The inventive, industrious, and ready Paris artisan had carved his doors and window-

frames; his ceilings were imitated from those of the middle ages or of Venetian palaces, and there was a lavish outlay of marble slabs in external paneling. Steinbock and François Souchet had carved the cornices of the doors and chimney-shelves; Schinner had painted the ceilings with the brush of a master. The wonders of the stairs—marble as white as a woman's arm—successfully defied those of the famous Hôtel Rothschild.

In consequence of the disturbances, the price of this folly was not more than eleven hundred thousand francs. For an Englishman this was giving it away. All this splendor, called princely by people who do not know what a real prince is, stood in the garden of a contractor—a Cræsus of the Revolution, who had died at Brussels a bankrupt after a sudden convulsion of the Bourse. The Englishman died at Paris—died of Paris—for to many people Paris is a disease; sometimes it is several diseases. His widow, a Methodist, had a perfect horror of the nabob's little house—this philanthropist had been a dealer in opium. The virtuous widow ordered that the scandalous property should be sold just at the time when the disturbances made peace doubtful on any terms. Count Adam took advantage of the opportunity; and you shall be told how it happened, for nothing could be less consonant with his lordly habits.

Behind this house, built of stone fretted like a melon, spreads the green velvet of an English lawn, shaded at the farther end by an elegant clump of exotic trees, among which rises a Chinese pavilion with its mute bells and pendent gilt eggs. The greenhouse and its fantastic decorations screen the outer wall on the south side. The other wall, opposite the greenhouse, is hung with creepers grown in arcades over poles and cross-beams painted green. This meadow, this realm of flowers, these graveled paths, this mimic forest, these aerial trellises cover an area of about twenty-five square perches, of which the present value would be four hundred

thousand francs, as much as a real forest. In the heart of this silence won from Paris birds sing; there are blackbirds, nightingales, bullfinches, chaffinches, and numbers of sparrows. The conservatory is a vast flower-bed, where the air is loaded with perfume, and where you may walk in winter as though summer was blazing with all its fires. The means by which an atmosphere is produced at will of the tropics, China or Italy, are ingeniously concealed from view. The pipes in which the boiling water circulates—the steam, hot air, what-not—are covered with soil, and look like garlands of growing flowers.

The boudoir is spacious. On a small plot of ground the miracle wrought by the Paris fairy called Architecture is to produce everything on a large scale. The young Countess' boudoir was the pride of the artist to whom Count Adam intrusted the task of redecorating the house. To sin there would be impossible, there are too many pretty trifles. Love would not know where to alight amid work-tables of Chinese carving, where the eye can find thousands of droll little figures wrought in the ivory—the outcome of the toil of two families of Chinese artists; vases of burnt topaz mounted on filigree stands; mosaics that invite to theft; Dutch pictures, such as Schinner now paints again; angels imagined as Steinbock conceives of them (but does not always work them out himself); statuettes executed by geniuses pursued by creditors (the true interpretation of the Arab myths); sublime first sketches by our greatest artists; fronts of carved chests let into the wainscot, and alternating with the inventions of India embroidery; gold-colored curtains draped over the doors from an architrave of black oak wrought with the swarming figures of a hunting scene; chairs and tables worthy of Madame de Pompadour; a Persian carpet, and so forth. And finally, as a crowning touch, all this splendor, seen under a softened light filtering in through lace curtains, looks all the more beautiful. On a marble slab, among some

antiques, a lady's whip, with a handle carved by Mademoiselle de Fauveau, shows that the Countess is fond of riding.

Such is a boudoir in 1837, a display of property to divert the eye, as though ennui threatened to invade the most restless and unresting society in the world. Why is there nothing individual, intimate, nothing to invite reverie and repose? Why? Because no one is sure of the morrow, and every one enjoys life as a prodigal spends a life-interest.

One morning Clémentine affected a meditative air, as she lounged on one of those deep siesta chairs from which we cannot bear to rise, so cleverly has the upholsterer who invented them contrived to fit them to the curves of laziness and the comfort of the *Dolce far niente*. The doors to the conservatory were open, admitting the scent of vegetation and the perfumes of the tropics. The young wife watched Adam, who was smoking an elegant narghileh, the only form of pipe she allowed in this room. Over the other door, curtains, caught back by handsome ropes, showed two magnificent rooms beyond: one in white and gold, resembling that of the Hôtel Forbin-Janson, the other in the taste of the Renaissance. The dining-room, unrivaled in Paris by any but that of the Baron de Nucingen, is at the end of a corridor, with a ceiling and walls decorated in a mediæval style. This corridor is reached, on the courtyard front, through a large anteroom, through whose glass door the splendor of the stairs is seen.

The Count and Countess had just breakfasted; the sky was a sheet of blue without a cloud; the month of April was drawing to a close. The household had already known two years of happiness, and now, only two days since, Clémentine had discovered in her home something resembling a secret, a mystery. A Pole, let it be repeated to his honor, is generally weak in the presence of a woman; he is so full of tenderness that, in Poland, he becomes her inferior; and though Polish women are admirable creatures, a Pole is even more quickly

routed by a Parisienne. Hence, Count Adam, pressed hard with questions, had not enough artless cunning to sell his secret dear to his wife. With a woman there is always something to be got for a secret ; and she likes you the better for it, as a rogue respects an honest man whom he has failed to take in. The Count, more ready with his sword than with his tongue, only stipulated that he should not be required to answer till he had finished his narghileh full of *tombaki*.

“When we were traveling,” said she, “you replied to every difficulty by saying, ‘Paz will see to that!’ You never wrote to anybody but Paz. On my return, every one refers me to *the captain*. I want to go out. The captain! Is there a bill to be paid! The captain. If my horse’s pace is rough, they will speak to Captain Paz. In short, here I feel as if it were a game of dominoes ; everywhere Paz! I hear no one talked of but Paz, but I can never see Paz. What is Paz? Let our Paz be brought to see me.”

“Then is not everything as it ought to be?” said the Count, relinquishing the mouthpiece of his narghileh.

“Everything is so quite what it ought to be, that if we had two hundred thousand francs a year, we should be ruined by living in the way we do with a hundred and ten thousand,” said she. She pulled the bell-handle embroidered in tent-stitch, a marvel of skill. A manservant dressed like a Minister at once appeared.

“Tell Monsieur le Capitaine Paz that I wish to speak to him,” said she.

“If you fancy you will find anything out in that way——” said Count Adam with a smile.

It may be useful to say that Adam and Clémentine, married in December, 1835, after spending the winter in Paris, had during 1836 traveled in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. They returned home in November, and during the winter just past the Countess had for the first time received her friends, and then had discovered the existence—the almost speechless

and unacknowledged, but most useful presence—of a factotum whose person seemed to be invisible—this Captain Paz or Paç.

“Monsieur le Capitaine Paz begs Madame la Comtesse to excuse him; he is round at the stables, and in a dress which does not allow of his coming at this minute. But as soon as he is dressed Count Paz will come,” said the manservant deferentially.

“Why, what was he doing?”

“He was showing Constantine how to groom the Countess’ horse; the man did not do it to his mind,” replied the servant.

The Countess looked at the man; he was quite serious, and took good care not to imply by a smile the comment which inferiors so often allow themselves on a superior who seems to have descended to their level.

“Ah, he was brushing down Cora?”

“You are not riding out this morning, madame?” said the servant; but he got no answer, and went.

“Is he a Pole?” asked Clémentine of her husband, who bowed affirmatively.

Clémentine lay silent, examining Adam. Her feet, almost at full length on a cushion, her head in the attitude of a bird listening on the edge of its nest to the sounds of the grove, she would have seemed charming to the most blasé of men. Fair and slight, her hair curled English fashion, she looked like one of the almost fabulous figures in “Keepsakes,” especially as she was wrapped in a morning gown of Persian silk, of which the thick folds did not so effectually disguise the graces of her figure and the slenderness of her waist, as that they could not be admired through the thick covering of flowers and embroidery. As she crossed the brightly colored stuff over her chest, the hollow of her throat remained visible, the white skin contrasting in tone with the handsome lace trimming over the shoulders. Her eyes, fringed with black lashes,

emphasized the expression of curiosity that puckered a pretty mouth. On her well-formed brow were traced the characteristic curves of the Paris woman, willful, light-hearted, well-educated, but invulnerable to vulgar temptations. Her hands, almost transparent, hung from each arm of her deep chair; the taper fingers, curved at the tips, showed nails like pink almonds that caught the light.

Adam smiled at his wife's impatience, gazing at her with a look which conjugal satiety had not yet made lukewarm. This slim little Countess had known how to be mistress in her own house, for she scarcely acknowledged Adam's admiration. In the glances she stole at him there was perhaps a dawning consciousness of the superiority of a Parisienne to this spruce, lean, and red-haired Pole.

"Here comes Paz," said the Count, hearing a step that rang in the corridor.

The Countess saw a tall, handsome man come in, well-built, bearing in his features the marks of the grief which comes of strength and misfortune. Paz had dressed hastily in one of those tightly fitting coats, fastened by braid straps and oval buttons, which used to be called *polonaises*. Thick, black hair, but ill-kempt, covered his squarely-shaped head, and Clémentine could see his broad forehead as shiny as a piece of marble, for he held his peaked cap in his hand. That hand was like the hand of the Hercules carrying the infant Mercury. Robust health bloomed in a face equally divided by a large Roman nose, which reminded Clémentine of the handsome Trasteverini. A black silk stock put a finishing touch of martial appearance to this mystery of nearly six feet high, with jet-black eyes as lustrous as an Italian's. The width of his full trousers, hiding all but the toes of his boots, showed that Paz still was faithful to the fashions of Poland. Certainly, to a romantic woman, there must have been something burlesque in the violent contrast observable between the captain and the Count, between the little Pole with his

narrow frame and this fine soldier, between the carpet-knight and the knight servitor.

“Good-morning, Adam,” he said to the Count with familiarity.

Then he bowed gracefully, asking Clémentine in what way he could serve her.

“Then you are Laginski’s friend?” asked the lady.

“For life and death,” replied Paz, on whom the young Count shed his most affectionate smile, as he exhaled his last fragrant puff of smoke.

“Well, then, why do you not eat with us? Why did you not accompany us to Italy and to Switzerland? Why do you hide yourself so as to avoid the thanks I owe you for the constant services you do us?” said the young Countess, with a sort of irritation, but without the slightest feeling.

In fact, she detected a kind of volunteer slavery on the part of Paz. At that time such an idea was inseparable from a certain disdain for a socially amphibious creature, a being at once secretary and bailiff, neither wholly bailiff nor wholly secretary, some poor relation—inconvenient as a friend.

“The fact is, Countess,” he replied with some freedom, “that no thanks are owing to me. I am Adam’s friend, and I find my pleasure in taking charge of his interests.”

“And is it for your pleasure too that you remain standing?” said Count Adam.

Paz sat down in an armchair near the doorway.

“I remember having seen you on the occasion of our marriage, and sometimes in the courtyard,” said the lady; “but why do you, a friend of Adam’s, place yourself in a position of inferiority?”

“The opinion of the Paris world is to me a matter of indifference,” said he. “I live for myself, or, if you choose, for you two.”

“But the opinion of the world as regards my husband’s friend cannot be a matter of indifference to me——”

“Oh, madame, the world is easily satisfied by one word: Eccentric—say that.”

After a short pause he asked, “Do you propose going out?”

“Will you come to the Bois?” said the Countess.

“With pleasure,” and so saying Paz bowed and went out.

“What a good soul! He is as simple as a child,” said Adam.

“Tell me now how you became friends,” said Clémentine.

“Paz, my dearest, is of a family as old, as noble, and as illustrious as our own. At the time of the fall of the Pazzi a member of the family escaped from Florence into Poland, where he settled with some little fortune, and founded the family of the Paz, on which the title of Count was conferred.

“This family, having distinguished itself in the days of our royal republic, grew rich. The cutting from the tree felled in Italy grew with such vigor that there are several branches of the house of the Counts Paz. It will not, therefore, surprise you to be told that there are rich and poor members of the family. Our Paz is the son of a poor branch. As an orphan, with no fortune but his sword, he served under the Grand Duke Constantine at the time of our Revolution. Carried away by the Polish party, he fought like a Pole, like a patriot, like a man who has nothing—three reasons for fighting well. In the last skirmish, believing his men were following him, he rushed on a Russian battery, and was taken prisoner. I was there. This feat of courage roused my blood. ‘Let us go and fetch him!’ cried I to my horsemen. We charged the battery like freebooters, and I rescued Paz, I being the seventh. We were twenty when we set out, and eight when we came back, including Paz.

“When Warsaw was betrayed we had to think of escaping from the Russians. By a singular chance Paz and I found ourselves together at the same hour and in the same place on the other side of the Vistula. I saw the poor captain arrested by

some Prussians, who at that time had made themselves blood-hounds for the Russians. When one has fished a man out of the Styx, one gets attached to him. This new danger threatening Paz distressed me so much that I allowed myself to be taken with him, intending to be of service to him! Two men can sometimes escape when one alone is lost. Thanks to my name and some family connection with those on whom our fate depended—for we were then in the power of the Prussians—my flight was winked at. I got my dear captain through as a common soldier and a servant of my house, and we succeeded in reaching Dantzic. We stowed ourselves in a Dutch vessel sailing for England, where we landed two months later.

“My mother had fallen ill in England, and awaited me there; Paz and I nursed her till her death, which was accelerated by the disasters to our cause.

“We then left England, and I brought Paz to France; in such adversities two men become brothers. When I found myself in Paris with sixty-odd thousand francs a year, not to mention the remains of a sum derived from the sale of my mother’s diamonds and the family pictures, I wished to secure a living to Paz before giving myself up to the dissipations of Paris life. I had discerned some sadness in the captain’s eyes, sometimes even a suppressed tear floated there. I had had opportunities of appreciating his soul, which is thoroughly noble, lofty, and generous. Perhaps it was painful to him to find himself bound by benefits to a man six years younger than himself without being able to repay him. I, careless and light-hearted as a boy, might ruin myself at play, or let myself be ensnared by some woman; Paz and I might some day be sundered. Though I promised myself that I would always provide for all his needs, I foresaw many chances of forgetting, or being unable to pay Paz an allowance. In short, my angel, I wished to spare him the discomfort, the humiliation, the shame of having to ask me for money, or of seeking

in vain for his comrade in some day of necessity. *Dunque*, one morning after breakfast, with our feet on the fire-dogs, each smoking his pipe, after many blushes, and with many precautions, till I saw he was looking at me quite anxiously, I held out to him a bond to bearer producing two thousand four hundred francs interest yearly——”

Clémentine quickly rose, seated herself on Adam's knees, and putting her arm round his neck, kissed him on the brow, saying—

“Dear heart, how noble I think you! And what did Paz say?”

“Thaddeus?” said the Count; “he turned pale and said nothing.”

“Thaddeus—is that his name?”

“Yes. Thaddeus folded up the paper and returned it to me, saying, ‘I thought, Adam, that we were as one in life and death, and that we should never part; do you wish to see no more of me.’ ‘Oh,’ said I, ‘is that the way you take it? Well, then, say no more about it. If I am ruined, you will be ruined.’ Said he, ‘You are not rich enough to live as a Laginski should; and do you not need a friend to take care of your concerns, who will be father and brother to you, and a trusted confidant?’ My dear girl, Paz, as he uttered the words, spoke with a calmness of tone and look which covered a motherly feeling, but which betrayed the gratitude of an Arab, the devotion of a dog, and the friendship of a savage, always ready and always unassuming. On my honor! I took him in our Polish fashion, laying my hand on his shoulder, and I kissed him on the lips. ‘For life and death then,’ said I. ‘All I have is yours, do just as you will.’

“It was he who found me this house for almost nothing. He sold my shares when they were high, and bought when they were low, and we purchased this hovel out of the difference. He is a connoisseur in horses, and deals in them so well that my stable has cost me very little, and yet I have the

finest beasts and the prettiest turn-out in Paris. Our servants, old Polish soldiers whom he found, would pass through the fire for us. While I seem to be ruining myself, Paz keeps my house with such perfect order and economy that he has even made good some losses at play, the follies of a young man. My Thaddeus is as cunning as two Genoese, as keen for profit as a Polish Jew, as cautious as a good housekeeper. I have never been able to persuade him to live as I did when I was a bachelor. Sometimes it has needed the gentle violence of friendship to induce him to come to the play when I was going alone, or to one of the dinners I was giving at an eating-house to a party of congenial companions. He does not like the life of drawing-rooms."

"Then what does he like?" asked Clémentine.

"He loves Poland, and weeps over her. His only extravagance has been money sent, more in my name than in his own, to some of our poor exiles."

"Dear, how fond I shall be of that good fellow," said the Countess. "He seems to me as simple as everything that is truly great."

"All the pretty things you see here," said Adam, praising his friend with the most generous security, "have been found by Paz; he has bought them at sales, or by some chance. Oh! he is keener at a bargain than a trader. If you see him rubbing his hands in the courtyard, it is because he has exchanged a good horse for a better. He lives in me; his delight is to see me well-dressed, in a dazzlingly smart carriage. He performs all the duties he imposes on himself without fuss or display. One night I had lost twenty thousand francs at whist. 'What will Paz say?' thought I to myself as I reached home. Paz gave me the sum, not without a sigh; but he did not blame me even by a look. This sigh checked me more than all the remonstrances of uncles, wives, or mothers in similar circumstances. 'You regret the money?' I asked him. 'Oh, not for you, nor for myself; no, I was only think-

ing that twenty poor relations of mine could have lived on it for a year.'

"The family of Paz, you understand, is quite equal to that of Laginski, and I have never regarded my dear Paz as an inferior. I have tried to be as magnanimous in my degree as he in his. I never go out or come in without going to Paz, as if he were my father. My fortune is his. In short, Thaddeus knows that at this day I would rush into danger to rescue him, as I have done twice before."

"That is not a small thing to say, my dear," remarked the Countess. "Devotion is a lightning-flash. Men devote themselves in war, but they no longer devote themselves in Paris."

"Well, then," said Adam, "for Paz I am always in war. Our two natures have preserved their asperities and their faults, but the mutual intimacy of our souls has tightened the bonds, already so close, of our friendship. A man may save his comrade's life, and kill him afterwards if he finds him a bad companion; but we have gone through what makes friendship indissoluble. There is between us that constant exchange of pleasing impressions on both sides which makes friendship, from that point of view, a richer joy, perhaps, than love."

A pretty little hand shut the Count's mouth so suddenly that the movement was almost a blow.

"Yes, indeed, my darling," said he. "Friendship knows nothing of the bankruptcy of sentiment, the insolvency of pleasures. Love, after giving more than it has, ends by giving less than it receives?"

"On both sides alike then," said Clémentine, smiling.

"Yes," said Adam. "While friendship can but increase. You need not pout. We, my angel, are as much friends as lovers; we, at least, I hope, have combined the two feelings in our happy marriage."

"I will explain to you what has made you two such good friends," said Clémentine. "The difference in your lives

arises from a difference in your tastes, and not from compulsory choice; from preference, and not from the necessity of position. So far as a man can be judged from a glimpse, and from what you tell me, in this instance the subaltern may at times be the superior."

"Oh! Paz is really my superior," replied Adam simply. "I have no advantage over him but that of luck."

His wife kissed him for this generous avowal.

"The perfect skill with which he conceals the loftiness of his soul is an immense superiority," the Count went on. "I say to him, 'You are a sly fellow; you have vast domains in your mind to which you retire.' He has a right to the title of Count Paz; in Paris he will only be called captain."

"In short, a Florentine of the middle ages has resuscitated after three centuries," said the Countess. "There is something of Dante in him, and something of Michael Angelo."

"Indeed, you are right; he is at heart a poet," replied Adam.

"And so I am married to two Poles," said the young Countess, with a gesture resembling that of a genius on the stage.

"Darling child!" said Adam, clasping Clémentine to him, "you would have distressed me very much if you had not liked my friend. We were both afraid of that, though he was delighted at my marrying. You will make him very happy by telling him that you love him—oh! as an old friend."

"Then I will go to dress; it is fine, we will all three go out," said Clémentine, ringing for her maid.

Paz led such an underground life that all the fashion of Paris wondered who it was that accompanied Clémentine Laginski when they saw her driving to the Bois and back between him and her husband. During the drive Clémentine had insisted that Thaddeus was to dine with her. This whim of a despotic sovereign compelled the captain to make an

unwonted toilet. On returning from her drive Clémentine dressed with some coquettish care, in such a way as to produce an effect even on Adam as she entered the room where the two friends were awaiting her.

“Count Paz,” said she, “we will go to the opera together.”

It was said in the tone which from a woman conveys, “If you refuse, we shall quarrel.”

“With pleasure, madame,” replied the captain. “But as I have not a count’s fortune, call me captain.”

“Well, then, captain, give me your arm,” said she, taking it and leading him into the dining-room with a suggestion of the caressing familiarity which usually so greatly enraptures a lover.

The Countess placed the captain next her, and he sat like a poor sub-lieutenant dining with a wealthy general. Paz left it to Clémentine to talk, listening to her with all the air of deference to a superior, contradicting her in nothing, and waiting for a positive question before making any reply. In short, to the Countess he seemed almost stupid, and her graces all fell flat before this icy gravity and diplomatic dignity. In vain did Adam try to rouse him by saying, “Come, cheer up, captain. It might be supposed that you were not at home. You must have laid a bet that you would disconcert Clémentine?” Thaddeus remained heavy and half-asleep.

When the three were alone at dessert the captain explained that his life was planned diametrically unlike that of other people; he went to bed at eight o’clock, and rose at day-break; and he thus excused himself, saying he was very sleepy.

“My intention in taking you to the opera was only to amuse you, Captain Paz; but do just as you please,” said Clémentine, a little nettled.

“I will go,” said Paz.

“Duprez is singing in *William Tell*,” said Adam. “Would you prefer the *Variétés*?”

The captain smiled and rang the bell; the manservant appeared. “Tell Constantine,” said Paz, “to take out the large carriage instead of the coupé. We cannot sit comfortably in it,” he added, turning to the Count.

“A Frenchman would not have thought of that,” said Clémentine, smiling.

“Ah, but we are Florentines transplanted to the north,” replied Thaddeus, with a meaning and an expression which showed that his dullness at dinner had been assumed.

But by a very conceivable want of judgment, there was too great a contrast between the involuntary self-betrayal of this speech and the captain’s attitude during dinner. Clémentine examined him with one of those keen flashes by which a woman reveals at once her surprise and her observancy. Thus, during the few minutes while they were taking their coffee in the drawing-room, silence reigned—an uncomfortable silence for Adam, who could not divine its cause. Clémentine no longer disturbed Thaddeus. The captain, for his part, retired again into military rigidity, and came out of it no more, either on the way, or in the box, where he affected to be asleep.

“You see, madame, that I am very dull company,” said he, during the ballet in the last act of *William Tell*. “Was I not right to ‘stick to my last,’ as the proverb says?”

“On my word, my dear captain, you are neither a coxcomb nor a chatterbox; you are perhaps a Pole.”

“Leave me then to watch over your pleasures,” he replied, “to take care of your fortune and your house; that is all I am good for.”

“Tartufe! begone!” cried Adam, smiling. “My dear, he is full of heart, well informed—he could, if he chose, hold his own in any drawing-room. Clémentine, do not believe what his modesty tells you.”

“Good-night, Countess. I have proved my willingness, and now will avail myself of your carriage to go to bed at once. I will send it back for you.”

Clémentine bowed slightly, and let him go without replying.

“What a bear!” said she to the Count. “You are much, much nicer.”

Adam pressed his wife’s hand unseen.

“Poor, dear Thaddeus, he has endeavored to be a foil when many men would have tried to seem more attractive than I.”

“Oh!” said she, “I am not sure that was not intentional; his behavior would have mystified an ordinary woman.”

Half an hour later, while Boleslas the groom was calling “Gate,” and the coachman, having turned the carriage to drive in, was waiting for the gates to be opened, Clémentine said to the Count—

“Where does the captain roost?”

“Up there,” said Adam, pointing to an elegantly constructed attic extending on both sides of the gateway with a window looking on to the street. “His rooms are over the coach-houses.”

“And who lives in the other half?”

“No one as yet,” replied Adam. “The other little suite, over the stables, will do for our children and their tutor.”

“He is not in bed,” said the Countess, seeing a light in the captain’s room when the carriage was under the pillared portico—copied from that at the Tuileries, and taking the place of the ordinary zinc awning painted to imitate striped ticking.

Paz, in his dressing-gown, and pipe in hand, was watching Clémentine as she disappeared into the hall. The day had been a cruel one to him. And this is the reason: Thaddeus had felt a fearful shock to his heart on the day when, Adam

having taken him to the opera to pronounce his opinion, he first saw Mademoiselle du Rouvre; and again, when he saw her in the mayor's office and at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, and recognized in her the woman whom a man must love to the exclusion of all others—for Don Juan himself preferred one among the *mille e tre!*

Hence Paz had strongly advocated the classical bridal tour after the wedding. Fairly easy all the time while Clémentine was absent, his tortures began again on the return of the happy couple. And this was what he was thinking as he inhaled his latakia from a cherry-stem pipe, six feet long, a gift from Adam: "Only I and God, who will reward me for suffering in silence, may ever know how I love her! But how can I manage to avoid alike her love or her hatred?"

And he sat thinking, thinking, over this problem of the strategy of love.

It must not be supposed that Thaddeus lived bereft of all joy in the midst of his pain. The triumphant cunning of this day was a source of secret satisfaction. Since the Count's return with his wife, day by day he felt ineffable happiness in seeing that he was necessary to the couple, who, but for him, would have rushed inevitably into ruin. What fortune can hold out against the extravagance of Paris life? Clémentine, brought up by a reckless father, knew nothing of household management, which nowadays the richest women and the highest in rank are obliged to undertake themselves. Who in these days can afford to keep a steward? Adam, on his part, as the son of one of the great Polish nobles who allowed themselves to be devoured by the Jews, and who was incapable of husbanding the remains of one of the most enormous fortunes in Poland—where fortunes were enormous—was not of a temper to restrict either his own fancies or his wife's. If he had been alone, he would probably have ruined himself before his marriage. Paz had kept him from gambling on the Bourse, and does not that say all?

Consequently, when he found that, in spite of himself, he was in love with Clémentine, Paz had not the choice of leaving the house and traveling to forget his passion. Gratitude, the clue to the mystery of his life, held him to the house where he alone could act as man of business to this heedless couple. Their long absence made him hope for a calmer spirit: but the Countess came back more than ever lovely, having acquired that freedom of thought which marriage confers on the Paris woman, and displaying all the charms of a young wife, with the indefinable something which comes of happiness, or of the independence allowed her by a man as trusting, as chivalrous, and as much in love as Adam was.

The consciousness of being the working hub of this magnificent house, the sight of Clémentine stepping out of her carriage on her return from a party, or setting out in the morning for the Bois de Boulogne, a glimpse of her on the Boulevards in her pretty carriage, like a flower in its nest of leaves, filled poor Thaddeus with deep, mysterious ecstasies which blossomed at the bottom of his heart without the slightest trace appearing in his features. How, during these five months, should the Countess ever have seen the captain? He hid from her, concealing the care he took to keep out of her way.

Nothing is so near divine love as a hopeless love. Must not a man have some depth of soul thus to devote himself in silence and obscurity? This depth, where lurks the pride of a father—or of God—enshrines the worship of love for love's sake, as power for power's sake was the watchword of the Jesuits; a sublime kind of avarice, since it is perennially generous, and modeled indeed on the mysterious Being of the first principles of the world. Is not their result nature? And nature is an enchantress; she belongs to man, to the poet, the painter, the lover; but is not the cause superior to nature in the sight of certain privileged souls, and some stupendous thinkers? The cause is God. In that sphere of causes dwelt

the spirits of Newton, of Laplace, of Kepler, of Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Buffon, of the true poets and saints of the second century of our era, of Saint Theresa of Spain and the sublime mystics. Every human emotion contains some analogy with the frame of mind in which the effect is neglected in favor of the cause, and Thaddeus has risen to the height whence all things look different. Abandoned to the unspeakable joys of creative energy, Thaddeus was, in love, what we recognize as greatest in the records of genius.

“No, she is not altogether deceived,” thought he, as he watched the smoke curl from his pipe. “She might involve me in an irremediable quarrel with Adam if she spited me; and if she should flirt to torment me, what would become of me?”

The fatuity of this hypothesis was so unlike the captain's modest nature, and his somewhat German shyness, that he was vexed with himself for its having occurred to him, and went to bed determined to await events before taking any decisive steps.

Next morning Clémentine breakfasted very well without Thaddeus, and made no remark on his disobedience. That day, as it happened, was her day for being “at home,” and this, with her, demanded a royal display. She did not observe the absence of Captain Paz, on whom devolved all the arrangements for these great occasions.

“Well and good!” said Paz to himself, as he heard the carriages rumble out at two in the morning; “the Countess was only prompted by a Parisian's whim or curiosity.”

So the captain fell back into his regular routine, disturbed for a day by this incident. Clémentine, diverted by the details of life in Paris, seemed to have forgotten Paz. For do you suppose that it is a mere trifle to reign over this inconstant city? Do you imagine, by any means, that a woman risks nothing but her fortune playing at that absorbing game?

The winter is to a woman of fashion what, of yore, a campaign was to the soldiers of the empire. What a work of art—of genius—is a costume or a head-dress created to make a sensation! A fragile, delicate woman wears her hard and dazzling armor of flowers and diamonds, silk and steel, from nine in the evening till two or often three in the morning. She eats little, to attract the eye by her slender shape; she cheats the hunger that attacks her during the evening with debilitating cups of tea, sweet cakes, heating ices, or heavy slices of pastry. The stomach must submit to the commands of vanity. She awakes late, and thus everything is in contradiction to the laws of nature, and nature is ruthless.

No sooner is she up than the woman of fashion begins to dress for the morning, planning her dress for the afternoon. Must she not receive and pay visits, and go to the Bois on horseback or in her carriage? Must she not always be practicing the drill of smiles, and fatigue her brain in inventing compliments which shall seem neither stale nor studied? And it is not every woman who succeeds. And then you are surprised, when you see a young woman, whom the world has welcomed in her freshness, faded and blighted at the end of three years. Six months spent in the country are barely enough to heal the wounds inflicted by the winter. We hear nothing talked of but dyspepsia and strange maladies, unknown to women who devote themselves to their household. Formerly a woman was sometimes seen; now she is perpetually on the stage.

Clémentine had to fight her way; she was beginning to be quoted, and amid the cares of this struggle between her and her rivals there was hardly a place for love of her husband! Thaddeus might well be forgotten. However, a month later, in May, a few days before her departure to stay at Ronquerolles in Burgundy, as she was returning from her drive she saw Thaddeus in a side alley of the Champs-Élysées—Thaddeus, carefully dressed, and in raptures at seeing his Countess

so beautiful in her phaeton, with champing horses, splendid liveries ; in short, the dear people he admired so much.

“ There is the captain,” said she to Adam.

“ Happy fellow ! ” said the Count. “ These are his great treats ! There is not a smarter turn-out than ours, and he delights in seeing everybody envying us our happiness. You have never noticed him before, but he is there almost every day.”

“ What can he be thinking of ? ” said Clémentine.

“ He is thinking at this moment that the winter has cost a great deal, and that we shall save a little by staying with your old uncle Ronquerolles,” said Adam.

The Countess had the carriage stopped in front of Paz, and desired him to take the seat by her side in the carriage. Thaddeus turned as red as a cherry.

“ I shall poison you,” he said ; “ I have just been smoking cigars.”

“ And does not Adam poison me ? ” she replied quickly.

“ Yes, but he is Adam,” replied the captain.

“ And why should not Thaddeus enjoy the same privilege ? ” said the Countess with a smile.

This heavenly smile had a power which was too much for his heroic resolutions ; he gazed at Clémentine with all the fire of his soul in his eyes, but tempered by the angelic expression of his gratitude—that of a man who lived solely by gratitude. The Countess folded her arms in her shawl, leaned back pensively against the cushions, crumpling the feathers of her handsome bonnet, and gazed out at the passers-by. This flash from a soul so noble, and hitherto so resigned, appealed to her feelings. What, after all, was Adam’s great merit ? Was it not natural that he should be brave and generous ? But the captain ! Thaddeus possessed, or seemed to possess, an immense superiority over Adam. What sinister thoughts distressed the Countess when she once more observed the contrast between the fine, complete physical nature which

distinguished Thaddeus and the frail constitution which, in her husband, betrayed the inevitable degeneration of aristocratic families which are so mad as to persist in intermarrying ! But the devil alone knew these thoughts, for the young wife sat with vague meditation in her eyes, saying nothing till they reached home.

“ You must dine with us, or I shall be angry with you for having disobeyed me,” said she as she went in. “ You are Thaddeus to me, as you are to Adam. I know the obligations you feel to him, but I also know all we owe to you. In return for two impulses of generosity which are so natural, you are generous at all hours and day after day. My father is coming to dine with us, as well as my uncle Ronquerolles and my aunt de Sérizy ; dress at once,” she said, pressing the hand he offered to help her out of the carriage.

Thaddeus went to his room to dress, his heart at once rejoicing and oppressed by an agonizing flutter. He came down at the last moment, and all through dinner played his part of a soldier fit for nothing but to fulfill the duties of a steward. But this time Clémentine was not his dupe. His look had enlightened her. Ronquerolles, the cleverest of ambassadors next to Talleyrand, and who served de Marsay so well during his short ministry, was informed by his niece of the high merits of Count Paz, who had so modestly made himself his friend’s steward.

“ And how is it that this is the first time I have ever seen Count Paz ? ” asked the Marquis de Ronquerolles.

“ Eh ! he is very sly and underhand,” replied Clémentine, with a look at Paz to desire him to change his demeanor.

Alas ! it must be owned, at the risk of making the captain less interesting to the reader, Paz, though superior to his friend Adam, was not a man of strong temper. He owed his apparent superiority to his misfortunes. In his days of poverty and isolation at Warsaw he had read and educated himself, had compared and thought much ; but the creative power which

makes a great man he did not possess—can it ever be acquired? Paz was great only through his feelings, and there could rise to the sublime; but in the sphere of sentiment, being a man of action rather than of ideas, he kept his thoughts to himself. His thoughts, then, did nothing but eat his heart out.

And what, after all, is an unuttered thought?

At Clémentine's speech the Marquis de Ronquerolles and his sister exchanged glances, with a side-look at their niece, Count Adam, and Paz. It was one of those swift dramas which are played only in Italy or in Paris. Only in these two parts of the world—excepting at all courts—can the eyes say as much. To infuse into the eye all the power of the soul, to give it the full value of speech and throw a poem or a drama into a single flash, excessive servitude or excessive liberty is needed.

Adam, the Marquis du Rouvre, and the Countess did not perceive this flash of observation between a past coquette and an old diplomat; but Paz, like a faithful dog, understood its forecast. It was, you must remember, an affair of two seconds. To describe the hurricane that ravaged the captain's heart would be too elaborate for these days.

“What! the uncle and aunt already fancy that she perhaps loves me?” said he to himself. “My happiness then depends only on my own audacity. And Adam!——”

Ideal love and mere desire, both quite as potent as friendship and gratitude, rent his soul, and for a moment love had the upper hand. This poor heroic lover longed to have his day! Paz became witty; he intended to please, and in answer to some question from Monsieur de Ronquerolles he sketched in grand outlines the Polish rebellion. Thus, at dessert, Paz saw Clémentine drinking in every word, regarding him as a hero, and forgetting that Adam, after sacrificing a third of his immense fortune, had taken the risks of exile. At nine o'clock, having taken coffee, Madame de Sérizy kissed

her niece on the forehead and took leave, carrying off Count Adam with an assertion of authority, and leaving the Marquis du Rouvre and M. de Ronquerolles, who withdrew ten minutes later. Paz and Clémentine were left together.

“I will bid you good-night, madame,” said Thaddeus; “you will join them at the opera.”

“No,” replied she. “I do not care for dancing, and they are giving an odious ballet this evening, ‘The Revolt of the Seraglio.’”

There was a moment’s silence.

“Two years ago Adam would not have gone without me,” she went on, without looking at Paz.

“He loves you to distraction——” Thaddeus began.

“Oh! it is because he loves me to distraction that by to-morrow he will perhaps have ceased to love me!” exclaimed the Countess.

“The women of Paris are inexplicable,” said Thaddeus. “When they are loved to distraction, they want to be loved rationally; when they are loved rationally, they accuse a man of not knowing how to love.”

“And they are always right, Thaddeus,” she replied with a smile. “I know Adam well; I owe him no grudge for it; he is fickle, and, above all, a great gentleman; he will always be pleased to have me for his wife, and will never thwart me in any of my tastes; but——”

“What marriage was ever without a but?” said Thaddeus gently, trying to give the Countess’ thoughts another direction.

The least conceited man would perhaps have had the thought which nearly drove this lover mad: “If I do not tell her that I love her,” said he to himself, “I am an idiot!”

There was silence between these two, one of those terrible pauses which seem bursting with thoughts. The Countess fixed a covert gaze on Paz, and Paz watched her in a mirror.

Sitting back in his armchair, like a man given up to digestion, in the attitude of an old man or an indifferent husband, the captain clasped his hands over his stomach, and mechanically twirled his thumbs, looking stupidly at their rapid movement.

“But say something good about Adam!” exclaimed Clémentine. “Tell me that he is not fickle, you who know him so well.”

The appeal was sublime.

“This is the opportunity for raising an insurmountable barrier between us,” thought the unhappy Paz, devising a heroic lie. “Something good,” he said aloud. “I love him too well, you would not believe me. I am incapable of telling you any evil of him. And so, madame, I have a hard part to play between you two.”

Clémentine looked down, fixing her eyes on his patent-leather shoes.

“You northerners have mere physical courage, you have no constancy in your decisions,” said she in a low tone.

“What are you going to do alone, madame?” replied Paz, with a perfectly ingenuous expression.

“You are not going to keep me company?”

“Forgive me for leaving you.”

“Why! where are you going?”

“I am going to the circus; it is the first night, in the Champs-Élysées, and I must not fail to be there——”

“Why not?” asked Clémentine, with a half-angry flash.

“Must I lay bare my heart?” he replied coloring, “and confide to you what I conceal from my dear Adam, who believes that I love Poland alone?”

“What! our dear noble captain has a secret?”

“A disgrace which you will understand, and for which you can comfort me.”

“A disgrace! You?——”

“Yes, I—Count Paz—am madly in love with a girl who was touring round France with the Bouthor family, people

who have a circus after the pattern of Franconi's, but who only perform at fairs! I got her an engagement from the manager of the Cirque-Olympe."

"Is she handsome?" asked the Countess.

"In my eyes," he replied sadly. "Malaga, that is her name to the public, is strong, nimble, and supple. Why do I prefer her to every other woman in the world? Indeed, I cannot tell you. When I see her with her black hair tied back with blue ribbons that float over her bare, olive-tinted shoulders, dressed in a white tunic with a gilt border, and silk tights which make her appear a living Greek statue, her feet in frayed satin slippers, flourishing flags in her hand to the sound of a military band, and flying through an enormous hoop covered with paper which crashes in the air—when her horse rushes round at a gallop, and she gracefully drops on to him again, applauded, honestly applauded, by a whole people—well, it excites me."

"More than a woman at a ball?" said Clémentine, with insinuating surprise.

"Yes," said Paz in a choked voice. "This splendid agility, this unfailing grace in constant peril, seem to me the greatest triumph of woman. Yes, madame, Cinti and Malibran, Grisi and Taglioni, Pasta and Elsler, all who reign or ever reigned on the boards, seem to me unworthy to untie Malaga's shoe-strings—Malaga, who can mount or dismount a horse at a mad gallop, who slips under him from the left to reappear on the right, who flutters about the most fiery steed like a white will-o'-the-wisp, who can stand on the tip of one toe and then drop, sitting with her feet hanging, on a horse still galloping round, and who finally stands on his back without any reins, knitting a stocking, beating eggs, or stirring an omelette, to the intense admiration of the people, the true people, the peasantry and soldiers. During the walk round, madame, that enchanting Columbine used to carry chairs balanced on the tip of her nose, the prettiest Greek nose I

ever saw. Malaga is dexterity personified. Her strength is Herculean; with her tiny fist or her little foot she can shake off three or four men. She is the goddess of the athletes."

"She must be stupid."

"Oh!" cried Paz, "she is as amusing as the heroine of 'Peveril of the Peak.' As heedless as a gypsy, she says everything that comes into her head; she cares no more for the future than you care for the halfpence you throw to a beggar, and she lets out really sublime things. Nothing will ever convince her that an old diplomat is a handsome young man, and a million of francs would not make her change her opinion. Her love for a man is a perpetual flattery. Enjoying really insolent health, her teeth are two-and-thirty Oriental pearls set in coral. Her 'snout'—so she calls the lower part of her face—is, as Shakespeare has it, as fresh and sweet as a heifer's muzzle. And it can give bitter pain! She respects fine men, strong men—an Adolphus, an Augustus, an Alexander—acrobats and tumblers. Her teacher, a horrible Cassandro, thrashed her unmercifully; it costs thousands of blows to give her such agility, grace, and intrepidity."

"You are drunk with Malaga!" said the Countess.

"Her name is Malaga only on the posters," said Paz, with a look of annoyance. "She lives in the Rue Saint-Lazare, in a little apartment on the third floor, in velvet and silk, like a princess. She leads two lives—one as a dancer, and one as a pretty woman."

"And does she love you?"

"She loves me—you will laugh—solely because I am a Pole. She sees in every Pole a Poniatowski, as he is shown in the print, jumping into the Elster; for to every Frenchman the Elster, in which it is impossible to drown, is a foaming torrent which swallowed up Poniatowski. And with all this I am very unhappy, madame——"

Clémentine was touched by a tear of rage in the captain's eye.

“You love the extraordinary, you men,” said she.

“And you?” asked Thaddeus.

“I know Adam so well that I know he could forget me for some acrobatic tumbler like your Malaga. But where did you find her?”

“At Saint-Cloud, last September, at the fair. She was standing in a corner of the platform covered with canvas where the performers walk round. Her comrades, all dressed as Poles, were making a terrific Babel. I saw her silent and dreamy, and fancied I could guess that her thoughts were melancholy. Was there not enough to make her so—a girl of twenty? That was what touched me.”

The Countess was leaning in a bewitching attitude, pensive, almost sad.

“Poor, poor Thaddeus!” she exclaimed. And with the good-fellowship of a really great lady, she added, not without a meaning smile, “Go; go to the circus!”

Thaddeus took her hand and kissed it, dropping a hot tear, and then went out. After having invented a passion for a circus-rider, he must give it some reality. Of his whole story nothing had been true but the minute attention he had given to the famous Malaga, the rider of the Bouthor troupe at Saint-Cloud; her name had just caught his eye on an advertisement of the circus. The clown, bribed by a single five-franc piece, had told Paz that the girl was a foundling, or had perhaps been stolen.

Thaddeus now went to the circus and saw the handsome horsewoman again. For ten francs, a groom—they fill the place of dressers at a circus—informed him that Malaga's name was Marguerite Turquet, and that she lived in the Rue des Fossés-de-Temple, on a fifth floor.

Next day, with death in his soul, Paz found his way to that quarter, and asked for Mademoiselle Turquet, in summer the understudy of the principal rider at the cirque, and in winter “a super” in a Boulevard theatre.

“Malaga!” shouted the doorkeeper, rushing into the attic, “here is a fine gentleman for you! He is asking Chapuzot all about you; and Chapuzot is cramming him to give me time to let you know.”

“Thank you, Madame Chapuzot; but what will he say to find me ironing my gown?”

“Pooh, stuff! When a man is in love, he loves everything about you.”

“Is he an Englishman? They are fond of horses.”

“No. He looks to me like a Spaniard.”

“So much the worse. The Spaniards are down in the market they say. Stay here, Madame Chapuzot, I shall not look so left to myself.”

“Who were you wanting, monsieur?” said the woman, opening the door to Thaddeus.

“Mademoiselle Turquet.”

“My child,” said the porter’s wife, wrapping her shawl round her, “here is somebody asking for you.”

A rope on which some linen was airing knocked off the captain’s hat.

“What is your business, monsieur?” asked Malaga, picking it up.

“I saw you at the circus; you remind me, mademoiselle, of a daughter I lost; and out of affection for my Héloïse, whom you are so wonderfully like, I should wish to be of use to you, if you will allow me.”

“Well, to be sure! But sit down, Monsieur le Général,” said Madame Chapuzot. “You cannot say fairer—nor handsomer.”

“I am not by way of love-making, my good lady,” said Paz. “I am a father in deep distress, eager to be cheated by a likeness.”

“And so I am to pass as your daughter?” said Malaga, very roguishly, and without suspecting the absolute truth of the statement.

“Yes,” said Paz. “I will come sometimes to see you; and that the illusion may be perfect, I will place you in handsome lodgings, nicely furnished——”

“I shall have furniture of my own?” said Malaga, looking at Madame Chapuzot.

“And servants,” Paz went on; “and live quite at your ease.”

Malaga looked at the stranger from under her brow.

“From what country are you, monsieur?”

“I am a Pole.”

“Then I accept,” said she.

Paz went away, promising to call again.

“That is a tough one!” said Marguerite Turquet, looking at Madame Chapuzot. “But I am afraid this man is wheedling me to humor some fancy. Well, I will risk it.”

A month after this whimsical scene, the fair circus-rider was established in rooms charmingly furnished by Count Adam’s upholsterer, for Paz wished that his folly should be talked about in the Laginski household. Malaga, to whom the adventure was like an Arabian Night’s dream, was waited on by the Chapuzot couple—at once her servants and her confidants. The Chapuzots and Marguerite Turquet expected some startling climax; but at the end of three months, neither Malaga nor the Chapuzots could account for the Polish Count’s fancy. Paz would spend about an hour there once a week, during which he sat in the drawing-room, never choosing to go either into Malaga’s boudoir nor into her bedroom, which, in fact, he never entered in spite of the cleverest manoeuvring on her part and on that of the Chapuzots. The Count inquired about the little incidents that varied the horsewoman’s life, and on going away he always left two forty-franc pieces on the chimney-shelf.

“He looks dreadfully bored,” said Madame Chapuzot.

“Yes,” replied Malaga, “that man is as cold as frost after a thaw.”

“He is a jolly good fellow, all the same,” cried Chapuzot, delighted to see himself dressed in blue Elbeuf cloth, and as smart as a minister’s office-messenger.

Paz, by his periodical tribute, made Marguerite Turquet an allowance of three hundred and twenty francs a month. This sum, added to her small earnings at the circus, secured her a splendid existence as compared with her past squalor. Strange tales were current among the performers at the circus as to Malaga’s good fortune. The girl’s vanity allowed her rent to be stated at sixty thousand francs, instead of the modest six thousand which her rooms cost the prudent captain. According to the clowns and supers, Malaga ate off silver plate; and she certainly came to the circus in pretty burnouses, in shawls, and elegant scarfs. And, to crown all, the Pole was the best fellow a circus-rider could come across; never tiresome, never jealous, leaving Malaga perfect freedom.

“Some women are so lucky!” said Malaga’s rival. “Such a thing would never happen to me, though I bring in a third of the receipts.”

Malaga wore smart “coal-scuttles,” and sometimes gave herself airs in a carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, where the youth of fashion began to observe her. In short, Malaga was talked about in the flash world of equivocal women, and her good fortune was attacked by calumny. She was reported to be a somnambulist, and the Pole was said to be a magnetizer in search of the philosopher’s stone. Other comments of a far more venomous taint made Malaga more inquisitive than Psyche; she reported them, with tears, to Paz.

“When I owe a woman a grudge,” said she to conclude, “I do not calumniate her, I do not say that a man magnetizes her to find stones. I say that she is a bad lot, and I prove it. Why do you get me into trouble?”

Paz was cruelly speechless.

Madame Chapuzot succeeded at last in discovering his name and title. Then, at the Hôtel Laginski, she ascertained

some positive facts: Thaddeus was unmarried; he was not known to have a dead daughter either in Poland or France. Malaga could not help feeling a thrill of terror.

“My dear child,” exclaimed Madame Chapuzot, “that monster——”

A man who was satisfied with gazing at a beautiful creature like Malaga—gazing at her by stealth—from under his brows—not daring to come to any decision—without any confidence; such a man, in Madame Chapuzot’s mind, must be a monster. “That monster is breaking you in, to lead you on to something illegal or criminal. God above us! if you were to be brought up at the assizes—and it makes me shudder from head to foot to think of it, I quake only to speak of it—or in the criminal court, and your name was in the newspapers!—— Do you know what I should do in your place? Well, in your place, to make all safe, I should warn the police.”

One day, when mad notions were fermenting in Malaga’s brain, Paz having laid his gold-pieces on the velvet chimney-shelf, she snatched up the money and flung it in his face, saying, “I will not take stolen money!”

The captain gave the gold to the Chapuzots, and came no more.

Clémentine was spending the summer on the estate of her uncle, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, in Burgundy.

When the troupe at the circus no longer saw Thaddeus in his seat, there was a great talk among the artists. Malaga’s magnanimity was regarded as folly by some, as cunning by others. The Pole’s behavior, as explained to the most experienced of the women, seemed inexplicable. In the course of a single week, Thaddeus received thirty-seven letters from women of the town. Happily for him, his singular reserve gave rise to no curiosity in fashionable circles, and remained the subject of discussion in the flash set only.

Two months later, the handsome rider, swamped in debt,

wrote to Count Paz the following letter, which the dandies of the day regarded as a masterpiece :

“ You, whom I still venture to call my friend, will you not take pity on me after what passed between us, which you took so ill? My heart disowns everything that could hurt your feelings. If I was so happy as to make you feel some charm when you sat near me, as you used to do, come again—otherwise, I shall sink into despair. Poverty has come upon me already, and you do not know what stupid things it brings with it. Yesterday I lived on a herring for two sous and one sou’s worth of bread. Is that a breakfast for the woman you love? The Chapuzots have left me after seeming so devoted to me. Your absence has shown me the shallowness of human attachment. A bailiff, who turned a deaf ear to me, has seized everything on behalf of the landlord, who has no pity, and of the jeweler, who will not wait even ten days; for with you men, credit vanishes with confidence. What a position for a woman who has nothing to reproach herself for but a little amusement! My dear friend, I have taken everything of any value to my uncle’s; I have nothing left but my memory of you, and the hard weather is coming on. All through the winter I shall have no fire, since nothing but melodrama is played at the Boulevard, in which I have nothing to do but tiny parts, which do not show a woman off. How could you misunderstand my noble feelings towards you, for, after all, we have not two ways of expressing our gratitude? How is it that you, who seemed so pleased to see me comfortable, could leave me in misery? Oh, my only friend on earth, before I go back to travel from fair to fair with the Bouthors—for so, at any rate, I can make my living—forgive me for wanting to know if I have really lost you for ever. If I should happen to think of you just as I was jumping through the hoop, I might break my legs by missing time. Come what may, I am yours for life. MARGUERITE TURQUET.”

“This letter,” exclaimed Thaddeus, shouting with laughter, “is well worth my ten thousand francs.”

Clémentine came home on the following day, and Paz saw her once more, lovelier and more gracious than ever. During dinner the Countess preserved an air of perfect indifference towards Thaddeus, but a scene took place between the Count and his wife after their friend had left. Thaddeus, with an affectation of asking Adam’s advice, had left Malaga’s letter in his hands, as if by accident.

“Poor Thaddeus!” said Adam to his wife, after seeing Paz make his escape. “What a misfortune for a man of his superior stamp to be the plaything of a ballet-girl of the lowest class! He will love anything; he will degrade himself; he will be unrecognizable before long. Here, my dear, read that,” and he handed her Malaga’s letter.

Clémentine read the note, which smelt of tobacco, and tossed it away with disgust.

“However thick the bandage over his eyes may be, he must have found something out. Malaga must have played him some faithless trick.”

“And he is going back to her!” cried Clémentine. “He will forgive her! You men can have no pity for any but those horrible women!”

“They need it so badly!” said Adam.

“Thaddeus did himself justice—by keeping to himself!” said she.

“Oh, my dearest, you go too far,” said the Count, who, though he was at first delighted to lower his friend in his wife’s eyes, would not be the death of the sinner.

Thaddeus, who knew Adam well, had begged for absolute secrecy; he had only spoken, he said, as an excuse for his dissipations, and to beg his friend to allow him to have a thousand crowns for Malaga.

“He is a man of great pride,” Adam went on.

“What do you mean?”

“ Well, to have spent no more than ten thousand francs on her, and to wait for such a letter as that to rouse him before taking her the money to pay her debts! For a Pole, on my honor!”

“ But he may ruin you!” said Clémentine in the acrid tone of a Parisian woman when she expresses her cat-like distrustfulness.

“ Oh! I understand him,” said Adam. “ He would sacrifice Malaga to us.”

“ We shall see,” replied the Countess.

“ If it were needful for his happiness, I should not hesitate to ask him to give her up. Constantine tells me that during the time when he was seeing her, Paz, usually so sober, sometimes came in quite fuddled. If he allowed himself to take to drink, I should be as much grieved as if he were my son.”

“ Do not tell me any more!” cried the Countess with another gesture of disgust.

Two days later the captain could see in her manner, in the tone of her voice, in her eyes, the terrible results of Adam's betrayal. Scorn had opened gulfs between him and this charming woman. And he fell forthwith into deep melancholy, devoured by this thought, “ You have made yourself unworthy of her.” Life became a burden to him; the bright sunshine was gloomy in his eyes. Nevertheless, under these floods of bitter thought, he had some happy moments: he could now give himself up without danger to his admiration for the Countess, who never paid him the slightest attention when, at a party, hidden in a corner, mute, all eyes and all heart, he did not lose one of her movements, not a note of her song when she sang. He lived in this enchanting life: he might himself groom the horse that she was to ride, and devote himself to the management of her splendid house with redoubled care for its interests.

These unspoken joys were buried in his heart like those of a mother, whose child never knows anything of his mother's

heart: for is it knowledge so long as even one thing remains unknown? Was not this finer than Petrarch's chaste passion for Laura, which, after all, was well repaid by a wealth of glory, and by the triumph of the poetry she had inspired? Was not the emotion which Assas felt in dying, in truth a whole life? This emotion Paz felt every day without dying, but also without the guerdon of immortality.

What is there in love that Paz, notwithstanding these secret delights, was consumed by sorrow? The Catholic religion has so elevated love that she has married it inseparably, so to speak, to esteem and generosity. Love does not exist apart from the fine qualities of which man is proud, and so rarely are we loved if we are contemned, that Thaddeus was perishing of his self-inflicted wounds. Only to hear her say that she could have loved him, and then to die! The hapless lover would have thought his life well paid for. The torments of his previous position seemed to him preferable to living close to her, loading her with his generosity without being appreciated or understood. In short, he wanted the price of his virtue.

He grew thin and yellow, and fell so thoroughly ill, consumed by low fever, that during the month of January he kept his bed, though refusing to see a physician. Count Adam grew extremely uneasy about his poor Thaddeus. The Countess then was so cruel as to say, when they were together one day, "Let him alone; do you not see that he has some Olympian remorse?"

This speech stung Thaddeus to the verge of despair; he got up, went out, tried some amusement, and recovered his health.

In the month of February, Adam lost a rather considerable sum at the Jockey Club, and, being afraid of his wife, he begged Thaddeus to place this sum to the account of his extravagance for Malaga.

"What is there strange in the notion that the ballet-girl

should have cost you twenty thousand francs? It concerns no one but me. Whereas, if the Countess should know that I had lost it at play, I should fall in her esteem, and she would be in alarm for the future."

"This to crown all!" cried Thaddeus, with a deep sigh.

"Ah! Thaddeus, this service would make us quits if I were not already the debtor."

"Adam, you may have children. Give up gambling," said his friend.

"And twenty thousand francs more that Malaga has cost us!" exclaimed the Countess some days after, on discovering Adam's generosity to Paz. "And ten thousand before—that is thirty thousand in all! Fifteen hundred francs a year, the price of my box at the Italian opera, a whole fortune to many people. Oh! you Poles are incomprehensible!" cried she, as she picked some flowers in her beautiful conservatory. "You care no more than that!"

"Poor Paz——"

"Poor Paz, poor Paz!" she echoed, interrupting him. "What good does he do us? I will manage the house myself! Give him the hundred louis a year that he refused, and let him make his own arrangements with the Olympic Circus."

"He is of the greatest use to us; he has saved us at least forty thousand francs this year. In short, my dearest, he has placed a hundred thousand francs for us in Nucingen's bank, and a steward would have netted them."

Clémentine was softened, but she was not the less hard on Thaddeus.

Some days after she desired Paz to come to her in her boudoir, where, a year since, she had been startled by comparing him with the Count. This time she received him alone, without any suspicion of danger.

"My dear Paz," said she, with the careless familiarity of fine folks to their inferiors, "if you love Adam as you say

you do, you will do one thing which he will never ask, but which I, as his wife, do not hesitate to require of you——”

“It is about Malaga,” said Thaddeus with deep irony.

“Well, yes, it is,” she said. “If you want to end your days with us, if you wish that we should remain friends, give her up. How can an old soldier——”

“I am but five-and-thirty, and have not a gray hair!”

“You look as if you had,” said she, “and that is the same thing. How can a man so capable of putting two and two together, so superior——”

What was horrible was that she spoke the word with such an evident intention of rousing in him the nobleness of soul which she believed to be dead.

“So superior as you are,” she went on, after a little pause, which a gesture from Paz forced upon her, “allow yourself to be entrapped like a boy. Your affair with her has made Malaga famous. Well! My uncle wanted to see her, and he saw her. My uncle is not the only one; Malaga is very ready to receive all these gentlemen. I believed you to be high-minded. Take shame to yourself! Come, would she be an irreparable loss to you?”

“Madame, if I knew of any sacrifice by which I might recover your esteem, it would soon be made; but to give up Malaga is not a sacrifice——”

“In your place that is what I should say if I were a man,” replied Clémentine. “Well, but if I take it as a great sacrifice, there is nothing to be angry at.”

Paz went away, fearing he might do some mad act; he felt his brain invaded by crazy notions. He went out for a walk, lightly dressed in spite of the cold, but failed to cool the burning of his face and brow. “I believed you to be high-minded!” He heard the words again and again. “And scarcely a year ago,” said he to himself, “to hear Clémentine, I had beaten the Russians single-handed!” He thought of quitting the Laginski household, of asking to be sent on

service in the Spahi Regiment, and getting himself killed in Africa; but a dreadful fear checked him: "What would become of them without me? They would soon be ruined. Poor Countess, what a horrible life it would be for her to be reduced even to thirty thousand francs a year! Come," said he to himself, "since she can never be yours, courage, finish your work!"

As all the world knows, since 1830 the Carnival in Paris has grown to prodigious proportions, making it European, and burlesque, and animated to a far greater degree than the departed carnivals of Venice. Is this because, since fortunes have so enormously diminished, Parisians have thought of amusing themselves collectively, just as in their clubs they have a drawing-room without any mistress of the house, without politeness, and quite cheap? Be this as it may, the month of March was prodigal of those balls, where dancing, farce, coarse fun, delirium, grotesque figures, and banter made keen by Paris wit, achieved gigantic results. This madness had its pandemonium at that time in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and its Napoleon in Musard, a little man born to rule an orchestra as tremendous as the rampant mob, and to conduct a galop—that whirl of witches at their Sabbath, and one of Auber's triumphs, for the galop derived its form and its poetry from the famous galop in *Gustavus*. May not this vehement finale serve as a symbol of an age when, for fifty years, everything has rushed on with the swiftness of a dream?

Now, our grave Thaddeus, bearing an immaculate image in his heart, went to Malaga to invite her, the queen of carnival dancing, to spend an evening at Musard's as soon as he learned that the Countess, disguised to the teeth, was intending to come with two other young ladies, escorted by their husbands, to see the curious spectacle of one of these monster balls. On Shrove Tuesday night, in the year of grace 1838, at four o'clock in the morning, the Countess, wrapped in a black domino, and seated on a bench of one of the amphi-

theatres of the Babylonian hall where Valentino has since given his concerts, saw Thaddeus, dressed as Robert Macaire, leading the circus-rider in the costume of a savage, her head dressed with nodding plumes like a horse at a coronation, and leaping among the groups like a perfect Jack-o'-lantern.

“Oh !” exclaimed Clémentine to her husband, “you Poles are not men of character. Who would not have felt sure of Thaddeus? He gave me his word, not knowing that I should be here and see all without being seen.”

Some days after this she invited Paz to dinner. After dinner, Adam left them together, and Clémentine scolded Thaddeus in such a way as to make him feel that she would no longer have him about the house.

“Indeed, madame,” said Thaddeus, humbly, “you are quite right. I am a wretch; I had pledged my word. But what can I do? I put off the parting with Malaga till after the Carnival. And I will be honest with you; the woman has so much power over me.”

“A woman who gets herself turned out of Musard’s by the police, and for such dancing?”

“I admit it; I sit condemned; I will quit your house. But you know Adam. If I hand over to you the conduct of your affairs, you will have to exert great energy. Though I have the vice of Malaga, I know how to keep an eye on your concerns, how to manage your household, and superintend the smallest details. Allow me then to remain until I have seen you qualified to continue my system of management. You have now been married three years, and are safe from the first follies consequent on the honeymoon. The ladies of Paris society, even with the highest titles, understand very well in these days how to control a fortune and a household. Well, as soon as I am assured, not of your capacity, but of your firmness, I will leave Paris.”

“It is Thaddeus of Warsaw that speaks, not Thaddeus of the circus. Come back to us cured.”

“Cured? Never!” said Paz, his eye fixed on Clémentine’s pretty feet. “You cannot know, Countess, all the spice, the unexpectedness there is in that woman’s wit.” And feeling his courage fail him, he added: “There is not a single woman of fashion, with her prim airs, who is worth that frank young animal nature.”

“In fact, I should not choose to have anything in me of the animal!” said the Countess, with a flashing look like an adder in a rage.

After that day Count Paz explained to Clémentine all her affairs, made himself her tutor, taught her the difficulties of managing her property, the real cost of things, and the way to avoid being too extensively robbed by her people. She might trust Constantine, and make him her major-domo. Thaddeus had trained Constantine. By the month of May he thought the Countess perfectly capable of administering her fortune; for Clémentine was one of those clear-sighted women whose instincts are alert, with an inborn genius for household rule.

The situation thus naturally brought about by Thaddeus took a sudden turn most distressing for him, for his sufferings were not so light as he made them seem. The hapless lover had not reckoned with accident. Adam fell very seriously ill. Thaddeus, instead of leaving, installed himself as his friend’s sick-nurse. His devotedness was indefatigable. A woman who had had an interest in looking through the telescope of foresight would have seen in the captain’s heroism the sort of punishment which noble souls inflict on themselves to subdue their involuntary thoughts of sin; but women see everything or nothing, according to their frame of mind; love is their sole luminary.

For forty-five days Paz watched and nursed Mitgislas without seeming to have a thought of Malaga, for the excellent reason that he never did think of her. Clémentine, seeing

Adam at death's door, and yet not dead, had a consultation of the most famous doctors.

"If he gets through this," said the most learned of the physicians, "it can only be by an effort of nature. It lies with those who nurse him to watch for the moment and aid nature. The Count's life is in the hands of his attendants."

Thaddeus went to communicate this verdict to Clémentine, who was sitting in the Chinese pavilion, as much to rest after her fatigues as to leave the field free for the doctors, and not to be in their way. As he trod the graveled paths leading from the boudoir to the rockery on which the Chinese summer-house was built, Clémentine's lover felt as though he were in one of the gulfs described by Alighieri. The unhappy man had never foreseen the chance of becoming Clémentine's husband, and he had bogged himself in a swamp of mud. When he reached her his face was set, sublime in its despair. Like Medusa's head, it communicated terror.

"He is dead?" said Clémentine.

"They have given no hope; at least, they leave it to nature. Do not go in just yet. They are still there, and Bianchon himself is examining him."

"Poor fellow! I wonder whether I have ever worried him," she said.

"You have made him very happy; be quite easy on that point," said Thaddeus; "and you have been indulgent to him——"

"The loss will be irreparable."

"But, dear lady, supposing the Count should die, had you not formed your opinion of him?"

"I do not love him blindly," she said; "but I loved as a wife ought to love her husband."

"Then," said Thaddeus, in a voice new to Clémentine's experience of him, "you ought to feel less regret than if you were losing one of those men who are a woman's pride, her love, her whole life! You may be frank with such a friend as

I am—— I shall regret him—I! Long before your marriage I had made him my child, and I have devoted my life to him. I shall have no interest left on earth. But life still has charms for a widow of four-and-twenty.”

“Why, you know very well that I love no one,” said she, with the roughness of sorrow.

“You do not know yet what it is to love,” said Thaddeus.

“Oh! husband for husband, I have sense enough to prefer a child like my poor Adam to a superior man. For nearly a month now we have been asking ourselves, ‘Will he live?’ These fluctuations have prepared me, as they have you, for this end. I may be frank with you? Well, then, I would give part of my life to save Adam. Does not independence for a woman, here in Paris, mean liberty to be gulled by the pretense of love in men who are ruined or profligate? I have prayed God to spare me my husband—so gentle, such a good fellow, so little fractious, and who was beginning to be a little afraid of me.”

“You are honest, and I like you the better for it,” said Thaddeus, taking Clémentine’s hands, which she allowed him to kiss. “In such a solemn moment there is indescribable satisfaction in finding a woman devoid of hypocrisy. It is possible to talk to you. Consider the future; supposing God should not listen to you—and I am one of those who are most ready to cry to Him: Spare my friend!—for these fifty nights past have not made my eyes heavy, and if thirty days and thirty nights more care are needed, you, madame, may sleep while I watch. I will snatch him from death, if, as they say, he can be saved by care. But if, in spite of you, in spite of me, the Count is dead. Well, then, if you were loved, or worshiped, by a man whose heart and character were worthy of yours——”

“I have perhaps madly wished to be loved, but I have never met——”

“Supposing you were mistaken.”

Clémentine looked steadily at Thaddeus, suspecting him less of loving her than of a covetous dream; she poured contempt on him by a glance, measuring him from head to foot, and crushed him with two words, "Poor Malaga!" pronounced in those tones such as fine ladies alone can find in the gamut of their contempt.

She rose and left Thaddeus fainting, for she did not turn round, but walked with great dignity back to her boudoir, and thence up to her husband's room.

An hour later Paz returned to the sick man's bedside, and gave all his care to the Count, as though he had not received his own death-blow.

From that dreadful moment he became silent; he had a duel to fight with disease, and he carried it through in a way that excited the admiration of the doctors. At any hour his eyes were always beaming like two lamps. Without showing the slightest resentment towards Clémentine, he listened to her thanks without accepting them; he seemed deaf. He had said to himself, "She shall owe Adam's life to me!" and these words he had, as it were, written in letters of fire in the sick man's room.

At the end of a fortnight Clémentine was obliged to give up some of the nursing, or risk falling ill from so much fatigue. Paz was inexhaustible. At last, about the end of August, Bianchon, the family doctor, answered for the Count's life—

"Ah, madame," said he to Clémentine, "you are under not the slightest obligation to me. But for his friend we could not have saved him!"

On the day after the terrible scene in the Chinese pavilion, the Marquis de Ronquerolles had come to see his nephew, for he was setting out for Russia with a secret mission; and Paz, overwhelmed by the previous evening, had spoken a few words to the diplomat.

On the very day when Count Adam and his wife went out for the first time for a drive, at the moment when the carriage was turning from the steps, an orderly came into the courtyard and asked for Count Paz. Thaddeus, who was sitting with his back to the horses, turned round to take a letter bearing the stamp of the minister for foreign affairs, and put it into the side-pocket of his coat, with a decision which precluded any questions on the part of Clémentine or Adam. It cannot be denied that persons of good breeding are masters of the language that uses no speech. Nevertheless, as they reached the Porte Maillot, Adam, assuming the privilege of a convalescent whose every whim must be indulged, said to Thaddeus—

“There can be no indiscretions between two brothers who love each other as you and I do; you know what is in that letter; tell me, I am in a fever of curiosity to know it also.”

Clémentine looked at Thaddeus as an angry woman can, and said to her husband, “He has been so sulky with me these two months that I shall take good care not to press him.”

“Oh dear me!” replied Thaddeus, “as I cannot hinder the newspapers from publishing it, I may very well reveal the secret. The Emperor Nicholas does me the favor of appointing me captain on service in a regiment starting with the Khiva Expedition.”

“And you are going?” cried Adam.

“I shall go, my dear fellow. I came as captain, and as captain I return. Malaga might lead me to make a fool of myself. We shall dine together to-morrow for the last time. If I did not set out in September for St. Petersburg, I should have to travel overland, and I am not rich. I must leave Malaga her little independence. How can I fail to provide for the future of the only woman who has understood me? Malaga thinks me a great man? Malaga thinks me hand-

some! Malaga may perhaps be faithless, but she would go through——”

“Through a hoop for you, and fall on her feet on horse-back!” said Clémentine, sharply.

“Oh, you do not know Malaga,” said the captain, with deep bitterness, and an ironical look which made Clémentine uneasy and silent.

“Farewell to the young trees of this lovely Bois de Boulogne, where Parisian ladies drive, and the exiles wander who have found a home here. I know that my eyes will never again see the green trees of the Allée de Mademoiselle, or of the Route des Dames, nor the acacias, nor the cedar at the Ronds-points.

“On the Asiatic frontier, obedient to the schemes of the great Emperor I have chosen to be my master, promoted perhaps to command an army, for sheer courage, for constantly risking my life, I may indeed regret the Champs-Élysées where you, once, made me take a place in the carriage, by your side. Finally, I shall never cease to regret the severity of Malaga—of the Malaga I am at this moment thinking of.”

This was said in a tone that made Clémentine shiver.

“Then you love Malaga very truly?” she said.

“I have sacrificed for her the honor we never sacrifice——”

“Which?”

“That which we would fain preserve at any cost in the eyes of the idol we worship.”

After this speech Thaddeus kept an impenetrable silence; he broke it only when, as they drove down the Champs-Élysées, he pointed to a wooden structure and said, “There is the circus!”

Before their last dinner he went to the Russian embassy for a few minutes, and thence to the minister for foreign affairs, and he started for Havre next morning before the Countess and Adam were up.

“I have lost a friend,” said Adam, with tears in his eyes, when he learned that Count Paz was gone, “a friend in the truest sense of the word, and I cannot think what has made him flee from my house as if it were the plague. . . We are not the sort of friends to quarrel over a woman,” he went on, looking full at Clémentine, “and yet all he said yesterday was about Malaga. But he never laid the tip of his finger on the girl.”

“How do you know?” asked Clémentine.

“Well, I was naturally curious to see Mademoiselle Turquet, and the poor girl cannot account for Thaddeus’ extraordinary reserve——”

“That is enough,” said the Countess, going off to her own room, and saying to herself, “I have surely been the victim of some sublime hoax.”

She had scarcely made the reflection, when Constantine placed in her hands the following letter, which Thaddeus had scrawled in the night :

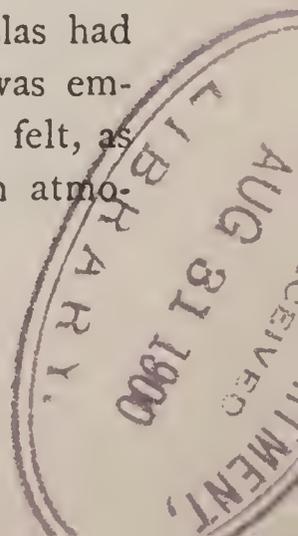
“**COUNTESS:**—To go to be killed in the Caucasus, and to bear the burden of your scorn, is too much ; a man should die un mutilated. I loved you from the first time I saw you, as a man loves the woman he will love for ever, even when she is faithless—I, under obligations to Adam, whom you chose and married—I, so poor, the volunteer steward, devoted to your household. In this dreadful catastrophe I found a delightful existence. To be an indispensable wheel in the machine, to know myself useful to your luxury and comfort, was a source of joy to me ; and if that joy had been keen when Adam alone was my care, think what it must have been when the woman I worshiped was at once the cause and the effect ! I have known all the joys of motherhood in my love ; and I accepted life on those terms. Like the beggars on the high-roads, I built myself a hut of stones on the skirts of your beautiful home, but without hold-

ing out my hand for alms. I, poor and unhappy, but blinded by Adam's happiness, I was the donor. Yes, you were hedged in by a love as pure as that of a guardian angel; it watched while you slept; it caressed you with a look as you passed by; it was glad merely to exist; in short, you were the sunshine of home to the hapless exile who is now writing to you, with tears in his eyes, as he recalls the happiness of those early days.

“At the age of eighteen, with no one to love me, I had chosen as an ideal mistress a charming woman at Warsaw, to whom I referred all my thoughts and my wishes, the queen of my days and nights. This woman knew nothing of it, but why inform her? For my part, what I loved was love.

“You may fancy, from this adventure of my boyhood, how happy I was, living within the sphere of your influence, grooming your horse, picking out new gold-pieces for your purse, superintending the splendor of your table and your entertainments, seeing you eclipse fortunes greater than your own by my good management. With what zeal did I not rush round Paris when Adam said to me, ‘Thaddeus, *she* wants this or that!’ It was one of those joys for which there are no words. You have now and again wished for some trifle within a certain time which has compelled me to feats of expedition, driving for six or seven hours in a cab; and what happiness it has been to walk in your service. When I have watched you smiling in the midst of your flowers without being seen by you, I have forgotten that no one loved me—in short, at such moments I was but eighteen again.

“Sometimes, when my happiness turned my brain, I would go at night and kiss the spot where your feet had left, for me, a luminous trace, just as of old I had stolen, with a thief's miraculous skill, to kiss a key which Countess Ladislas had touched on opening a door. The air you breathed was embalmed; to me it was fresh life to breathe it; and I felt, as they say is the case in the tropics, overwhelmed by an atmo-



sphere surcharged with creative elements. I must tell you all these things to account for the strange fatuity of my involuntary thoughts. I would have died sooner than divulge my secret.

“ You may remember those few days when you were curious, when you wanted to see the worker of the wonders which had at last struck you with surprise. I believed—forgive me, madame—I believed that you would love me. Your kindness, your looks—interpreted by a lover—seemed fraught with so much danger to me that I took up Malaga, knowing that there are *liaisons* which no woman can forgive; I took the girl up at the moment when I saw that my love was inevitably infectious. Overwhelm me now with the scorn which you poured upon me so freely when I did not deserve it; but I think I may be quite sure that if, on the evening when your aunt took the Count out, I had said what I have here written, having once said it I should have been like the tame tiger who has at last set his teeth in living flesh, and who scents warm blood——

“ *Midnight.*

“ I could write no more, the memory of that evening was too vivid! Yes, I was then in a delirium! I saw expectancy in your eyes; victory and its crimson banners may have burned in mine and fascinated yours. My crime was to think such things—and perhaps wrongly. You alone can be judge of that fearful scene when I succeeded in crushing love, desire, the most stupendous forces of manhood under the icy hand of gratitude which must be eternal. Your terrible scorn punished me. You have showed me that neither disgust nor contempt can ever be gotten over. I love you like a madman. I must have gone away if Adam had died. There is all the more reason since Adam is saved. I did not snatch my friend from the grave to betray him. And, indeed, my departure is the due punishment for the thought that came to me that I

would let him die when the physicians said his life depended on his attendants.

“Farewell, madame; in leaving Paris I lose everything, but you lose nothing in parting with yours most faithfully,

“THADDEUS PAZ.”

“If my poor Adam says he has lost a friend, what have I lost?” thought Clémentine, sitting dejected, with her eyes fixed on a flower in the carpet.

This is the note which Constantine delivered privately to his master—

“MY DEAR MITGISLAS:—Malaga has told me all. For the sake of your happiness, never let a word escape you in Clémentine’s presence as to your visits to the circus-rider; let her still believe that Malaga costs me a hundred thousand francs. With the Countess’ character she will not forgive you either your losses at play or your visits to Malaga. I am not going to Khiva, but to the Caucasus. I have a fit of spleen, and at the pace I mean to go, in three months I shall be Prince Paz, or dead. Farewell; though I have drawn sixty thousand francs out of Nucingen’s, we are quits.

“THADDEUS.”

“Idiot that I am! I very nearly betrayed myself just now by speaking of the circus-rider!” said Adam to himself.

Thaddeus has been gone three years, and the papers do not as yet mention any Prince Paz. Countess Laginski takes a keen interest in the Emperor Nicholas’ expeditions; she is a Russian at heart, and reads with avidity all the news from that country. Once or twice a year she says to the ambassador, with an affectation of indifference, “Do you know what has become of our poor friend Paz?”

Alas! most Parisian women, keen-eyed and subtle as they

are supposed to be, pass by—and always will pass by—such an one as Paz without observing him. Yes, more than one Paz remains misunderstood; but, fearful thought! some are misunderstood even when they are loved. The simplest woman in the world requires some little coxcombry in the greatest man; and the most heroic love counts for nothing if it is uncut; it needs the arts of the polisher and the jeweler.

In the month of January, 1842, Countess Laginski, beautified by gentle melancholy, inspired a mad passion in the Comte de la Palférine, one of the most audacious bucks of Paris at this day. La Palférine understood the difficulty of conquering a woman guarded by a chimera; to triumph over this bewitching woman, he trusted to a surprise, and to the assistance of a woman who, being a little jealous of Clémentine, would lend herself to plot the chances of the adventure.

Clémentine, incapable with all her wit of suspecting such treachery, was so imprudent as to go with this false friend to the masked ball at the opera. At about three in the morning, carried away by the excitement of the ball, Clémentine, for whom La Palférine had exhausted himself in attentions, consented to sup with him, and was getting into the lady's carriage. At this critical moment she was seized by a strong arm, and in spite of her cries placed in her own carriage, which was standing with the door open, though she did not know that it was waiting.

“He has not left Paris!” she exclaimed, recognizing Thaddeus, who ran off when he saw the carriage drive away with the Countess.

Had ever another woman such a romance in her life?

Clémentine is always hoping to see Paz again.

PARIS, *January*, 1842.



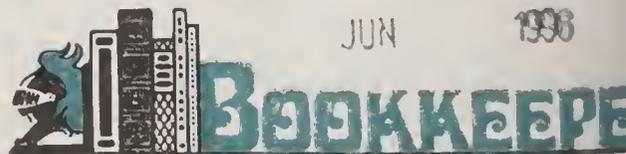








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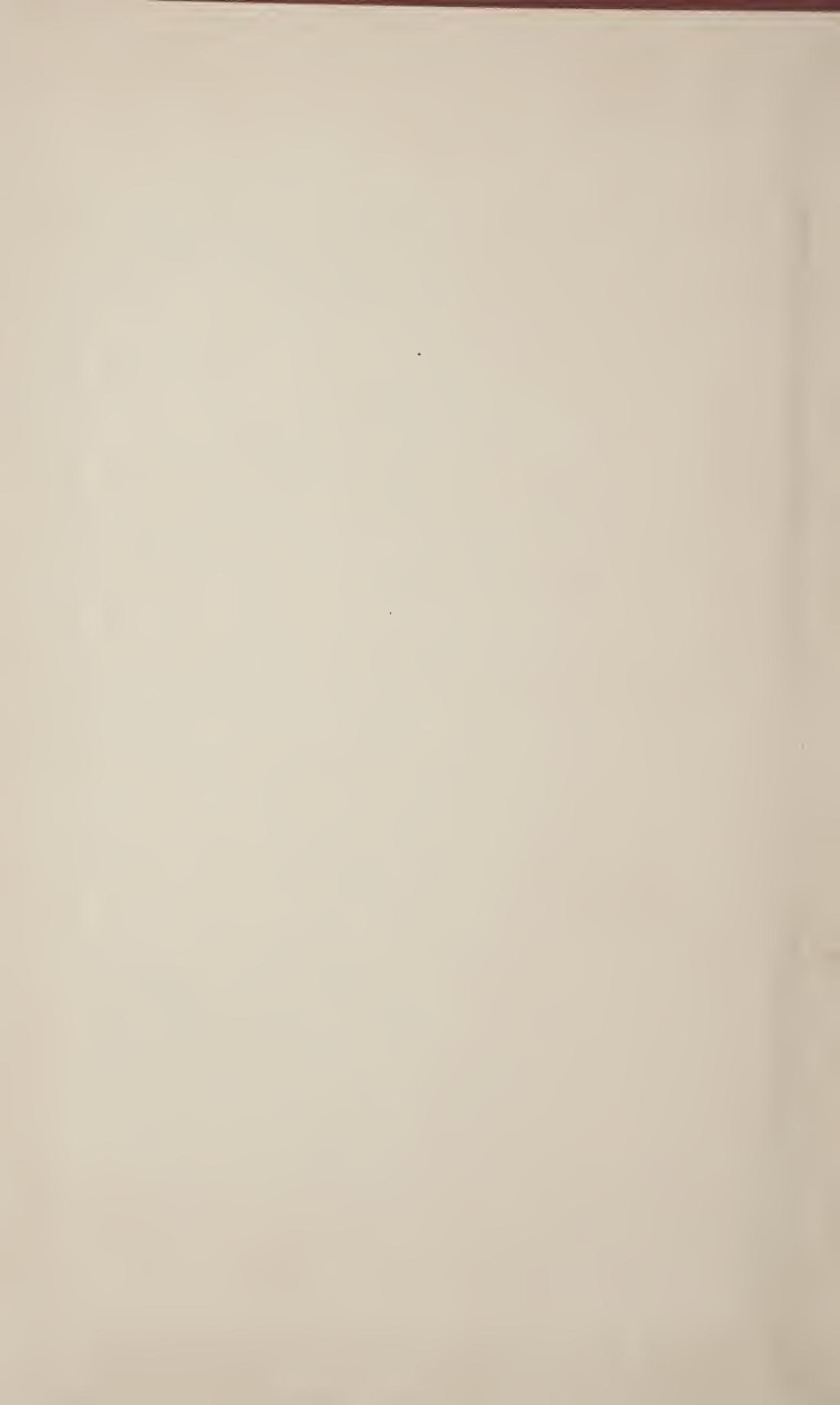
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