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The Works of Balzac

CENTENARY EDITION

VOLUME III.

FAME AND SORROW

AND OTHER STORIES

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Scenes from Private Life

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

FAME AND SORROW
COLONEL CHABERT
THE ATHEIST'S MASS
LA GRANDE BRETÈCHE
THE PURSE
LA GRENADIÈRE
A DOUBLE LIFE
THE RURAL BALL
THE DESERTED WOMAN

Illustrated by

LAURENT-DESROUSSEAUX
AND GEORGES CAIN

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1899

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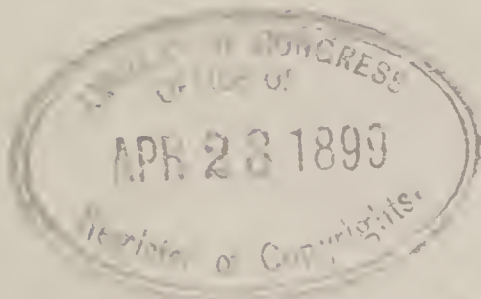
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ILLUSTRATIONS.

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“THE SHOP WAS NOT YET LIGHTED UP” . . . *Frontispiece*

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Designed by LAURENT-DESROUSSEAUX.

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DENT AGITATION” 419

Designed by GEORGES CAIN.

FAME AND SORROW.¹

DEDICATED TO MADEMOISELLE MARIE DE MONTHEAU.

ABOUT the middle of the rue Saint-Denis, and near the corner of the rue du Petit Lion, there stood, not very long ago, one of those precious houses which enable historians to reconstruct by analogy the Paris of former times. The frowning walls of this shabby building seemed to have been originally decorated by hieroglyphics. What other name could a passing observer give to the X's and the Y's traced upon them by the transversal or diagonal pieces of wood which showed under the stucco through a number of little parallel cracks? Evidently, the jar of each passing carriage shook the old joists in their plaster coatings.

¹ This was the title (*Gloire et Malheur*) under which the story was first published in 1830. The name was changed in 1842 to *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*. The awkwardness of the title in English (*The House of the Cat-playing-ball*) leads the translator to use the original name given by Balzac.

The venerable building was covered with a triangular roof, a shape of which no specimen will exist much longer in Paris. This roof, twisted out of line by the inelemencies of Parisian weather, overhung the street by about three feet, as much to protect the door-steps from the rain as to shelter the wall of the garret and its frameless window; for the upper storey was built of planks, nailed one above the other like slates, so as not to overweight the construction beneath it.

On a rainy morning in the month of March, a young man carefully wrapped in a cloak was standing beneath the awning of a shop directly opposite to the old building, which he examined with the enthusiasm of an archæologist; for, in truth, this relic of the bourgeoisie of the sixteenth century presented more than one problem to the mind of an intelligent observer. Each storey had its own peculiarity; on the first were four long, narrow windows very close to each other, with wooden squares in place of glass panes to the lower sash, so as to give the uncertain light by which a clever shopkeeper can make his goods match any color desired by a customer.

The young man seemed to disdain this important part of the house; in fact, his eyes had not even rested on it. The windows of the second floor, the raised outer blinds of which gave to sight through large panes of Bohemian glass small muslin curtains of a reddish tinge, seemed also not to interest him. His attention centred

on the third storey, — on certain humble windows, the wooden frames of which deserved a place in the Conservatory of Arts and Manufactures as specimens of the earliest efforts of French joinery. These windows had little panes of so green a glass that had he not possessed an excellent pair of eyes the young man could not have seen the blue-checked curtains which hid the mysteries of the room from the gaze of the profane. Occasionally the watcher, as if tired of his abortive watch, or annoyed by the silence in which the house was buried, dropped his eyes to the lower regions. An involuntary smile would then flicker on his lips as he glanced at the shop, where, indeed, were certain things that were laughable enough.

A formidable beam of wood, resting horizontally on four pillars which appeared to bend under the weight of the decrepit house, had received as many and diverse coats of paint as the cheek of an old duchess. At the middle of this large beam, slightly carved, was an antique picture representing a cat playing ball. It was this work of art which made the young man smile; and it must be owned that not the cleverest of modern painters could have invented a more comical design. The animal held in one of its fore-paws a racket as big as itself, and stood up on its hind paws to aim at an enormous ball which a gentleman in a brocaded coat was tossing to it. Design, colors, and accessories were all

treated in a way to inspire a belief that the artist meant to make fun of both merchant and customers. Time, by altering the crude colors, had made the picture still more grotesque through certain bewildering changes, which could not fail to trouble a conscientious observer. For instance, the ringed tail of the cat was cut apart in such a way that the end might be taken for an onlooker, so thick, long, and well-covered were the tails of the cats of our ancestors. To the right of the picture, on a blue ground, which imperfectly concealed the rotten wood, could be read the name "GUILLAUME," and to the left the words "SUCCESSOR TO THE SIEUR CHEVREL."

Sun and rain had tarnished or washed off the greater part of the gilding parsimoniously bestowed upon the letters of this inscription, in which U's stood in place of V's, and *vice versa*, according to the rules of our ancient orthography. In order to bring down the pride of those who think the world is daily growing cleverer and wittier, and that modern claptrappery surpasses everything that went before, it may be well to mention here that such signs as these, the etymology of which seems fantastic to many Parisian merchants, are really the dead pictures of once living realities by which our lively ancestors contrived to entice customers into their shops. Thus, "The Sow a-Spinning," "The Green Monkey," and so forth, were live animals in cages, whose clever tricks delighted the passers in the streets, and whose

training proved the patience of the shopkeepers of the fifteenth century. Such natural curiosities brought better profits to their fortunate possessors than the fine names, "Good Faith," "Providence," "The Grace of God," "The Decapitation of Saint John the Baptist," which are still to be seen in that same rue Saint-Denis.

However, our unknown young man was certainly not stationed there to admire the cat, which a moment's notice sufficed to fix in his memory. He too, had his peculiarities. His cloak, flung about him after the manner of antique drapery, left to sight the elegant shoes and white silk stockings on his feet, which were all the more noticeable in the midst of that Parisian mud, several spots of which seemed to prove the haste with which he had made his way there. No doubt he had just left a wedding or a ball, for at this early hour of the morning he held a pair of white gloves in his hand, and the curls of his black hair, now uncurled and tumbling on his shoulders, seemed to indicate a style of wearing it called "Caracalla," a fashion set by the painter David and his school, and followed with that devotion to Greek and Roman ideas and shapes which marked the earlier years of this century.

In spite of the noise made by a few belated kitchen-gardeners as they galloped their cartloads of produce to the markets, the street was still hushed in that calm stillness the magic of which is known only to those who

wander about a deserted Paris at the hour when its nightly uproar ceases for a moment, then reawakes and is heard in the distance like the voice of Ocean.

This singular young man must have seemed as odd to the shopkeepers of the Cat-playing-ball as the Cat-playing-ball seemed to him. A dazzling white cravat made his harassed white face even paler than it really was. The fire of his black eyes, that were sparkling and yet gloomy, harmonized with the eccentric outline of his face, and with his large, sinuous mouth, which contracted when he smiled. His forehead, wrinkling under any violent annoyance, had something fatal about it. The forehead is surely the most prophetic feature of the face. When that of this unknown young man expressed anger, the creases which immediately showed upon it excited a sort of terror, through the force of passion which brought them there; but the moment he recovered his calmness, so easily shaken, the brow shone with a luminous grace that embellished the whole countenance, where joy and grief, love, anger, and disdain flashed forth in so communicative a way that the coldest of men was inevitably impressed.

It chanced that the man was so annoyed at the moment when some one hastily opened the garret window, that he missed seeing three joyous faces, plump, and white, and rosy, but also as commonplace as those given to the statues of Commerce on public buildings. These

three heads framed by the open window, recalled the puffy angel faces scattered among the clouds, which usually accompany the Eternal Father. The apprentices were inhaling the emanations from the street with an eagerness which showed how hot and mephitic the atmosphere of their garret must have been. The elder of the three clerks, after pointing out to his companions the stranger in the street, disappeared for a moment and then returned, holding in his hand an instrument whose inflexible metal has lately been replaced by supple leather. Thereupon a mischievous expression came upon all three faces as they looked at the singular watcher, while the elder proceeded to shower him with a fine white rain, the odor of which proved that three chins had just been shaved. Standing back in the room on tiptoe to enjoy their victim's rage, the clerks all stopped laughing when they saw the careless disdain with which the young man shook the drops from his mantle, and the profound contempt apparent on his face when he raised his eyes to the now vacant window.

Just then a delicate white hand lifted the lower part of one of the roughly made windows on the third floor by means of those old-fashioned grooves, whose pulleys so often let fall the heavy sashes they were intended to hold up. The watcher was rewarded for his long waiting. The face of a young girl, fresh as the white lilies that bloom on the surface of a lake, appeared, framed

by a ruffled muslin cap, which gave a delightful look of innocence to the head. Her neck and shoulders, though covered with some brown stuff, were plainly seen through rifts in the garment opened by movements made in sleep. No sign of constraint marred the ingenuous expression of that face nor the calm of those eyes, immortalized already in the sublime conceptions of Raffaele; here was the same grace, the same virgin tranquillity now become proverbial. A charming contrast was produced by the youth of the cheeks, on which sleep had thrown into relief a superabundance of life, and the age of the massive window, with its coarse frame now blackened by time. Like those day-blooming flowers which in the early morning have not as yet unfolded their tunics tightly closed against the chill of night, the young girl, scarcely awake, let her eyes wander across the neighboring roofs and upward to the sky; then she lowered them to the gloomy precincts of the street, where they at once encountered those of her adorer. No doubt her innate coquetry caused her a pang of mortification at being seen in such dishabille, for she quickly drew back, the worn-out sash-pulley turned, the window came down with a rapidity which has earned, in our day, an odious name for that naïve invention of our ancestors, and the vision disappeared. The brightest of the stars of the morning seemed to the young man to have passed suddenly under a cloud.

While these trifling events were occurring, the heavy inside shutters which protected the thin glass of the windows in the shop, called the House of the Cat-playing-ball, had been opened as if by magic. The door, with its old-fashioned knocker, was set back against the inner wall by a serving-man, who might have been contemporary with the sign itself, and whose shaking hand fastened to the picture a square bit of cloth, on which were embroidered in yellow silk the words, "Guillaume, successor to Chevrel." More than one pedestrian would have been unable to guess the business in which the said Guillaume was engaged. Through the heavy iron bars which protected the shop window on the outside, it was difficult to see the bales wrapped in brown linen, which were as numerous as a school of herrings on their way across the ocean. In spite of the apparent simplicity of this gothic façade, Monsieur Guillaume was among the best known drapers in Paris, one whose shop was always well supplied, whose business relations were widely extended, and whose commercial honor no one had ever doubted. If some of his fellow-tradesmen made contracts with the government without possessing cloth enough to fulfil them, he was always able and willing to lend them enough to make up deficiencies, however large the number contracted for might be. The shrewd dealer knew a hundred ways of drawing the lion's share of profits to

himself without being forced, like the others, to beg for influence, or do base things, or give rich presents. If the tradesmen he thus assisted could not pay the loan except by long drafts on good security, he referred them to his notary, like an accommodating man, and managed to get a double profit out of the affair; an expedient which led to a remark, almost proverbial in the rue Saint-Denis, "God keep us from the notary of Monsieur Guillaume!"

The old dealer happened, as if by some miraculous chance, to be standing at the open door of his shop just as the servant, having finished that part of his morning duty, withdrew. Monsieur Guillaume looked up and down the rue Saint-Denis, then at the adjoining shops, and then at the weather, like a man landing at Havre who sees France again after a long voyage. Having fully convinced himself that nothing had changed since he went to sleep the night before, he now perceived the man doing sentry duty, who, on his side, was examining the patriarch of drapery very much as Humboldt must have examined the first electric eel which he saw in America.

Monsieur Guillaume wore wide breeches of black velvet, dyed stockings, and square shoes with silver buckles; his coat, made with square lappels, square skirts, and square collar, wrapped a figure, slightly bent, in its loose folds of greenish cloth, and was fastened with

large, white, metal buttons tarnished from use ; his gray hair was so carefully combed and plastered to his yellow skull that the two presented somewhat the effect of a ploughed field ; his little green eyes, sharp as gimlets, glittered under lids whose pale red edges took the place of lashes. Care had furrowed his brow with as many horizontal lines as there were folds in his coat. The pallid face bespoke patience, commercial wisdom, and a species of sly cupidity acquired in business.

At the period of which we write it was less rare than it is now to meet with old commercial families who preserved as precious traditions the manners, customs, and characteristics of their particular callings ; and who remained, in the midst of the new civilization, as antediluvian as the fossils discovered by Cuvier in the quarries. The head of the Guillaume family was one of these noteworthy guardians of old customs ; he even regretted the provost-marshal of merchants, and never spoke of a decision in the court of commerce without calling it “ the sentence of the consuls.” Having risen, in accordance with these customs, the earliest in the house, he was now awaiting with a determined air the arrival of his three clerks, intending to scold them if a trifle late. Those heedless disciples of Mercury knew nothing more appalling than the silent observation with which the master scrutinized their faces and their movements of a Monday morning, searching for proofs or traces of their

frolics. But, strange to say, just as they appeared, the old draper paid no attention to his apprentices; he was engaged in finding a motive for the evident interest with which the young man in silk stockings and a cloak turned his eyes alternately on the pictured sign and then into the depths of the shop. The daylight, now increasing, showed the counting-room behind an iron railing covered by curtains of faded green silk, where Monsieur Guillaume kept his huge books, the mute oracles of his business. The too inquisitive stranger seemed to have an eye on them, and also to be scrutinizing the adjoining dining-room, where the family, when assembled for a meal, could see whatever happened at the entrance of the shop. So great an interest in his private premises seemed suspicious to the old merchant, who had lived under the law of the *maximum*. Consequently, Monsieur Guillaume supposed, not unnaturally, that the doubtful stranger had designs upon his strong-box.

The elder of the clerks, after discreetly enjoying the silent duel which was taking place between his master and the stranger, ventured to come out upon the step where stood Monsieur Guillaume, and there he observed that the young man was glancing furtively at the third-floor windows. The clerk made three steps into the street, looked up, and fancied he caught sight of Mademoiselle Augustine Guillaume hastily retiring. Dis-

pleased with this show of perspicacity on the part of his head-clerk, the draper looked askance at his subordinate. Then suddenly the mutual anxieties excited in the souls of lover and merchant were allayed, — the stranger hailed a passing hackney coach, and jumped into it with a deceitful air of indifference. His departure shed a sort of balm into the souls of the other clerks, who were somewhat uneasy at the presence of their victim.

“Well, gentlemen, what are you about, standing there with your arms crossed?” said Monsieur Guillaume to his three neophytes. “In my day, good faith, when I was under the *Sieur Chevrel*, I had examined two pieces of cloth before this time of day!”

“Then it must have been daylight earlier,” said the second clerk, whose duty it was to examine the rolls.

The old dealer could not help smiling. Though two of the three clerks, consigned to his care by their fathers, rich manufacturers at *Louviers* and *Sedan*, had only to ask on the day they came of age for a hundred thousand francs, to have them, Guillaume believed it to be his duty to keep them under the iron rod of an old-fashioned despotism, wholly unknown in these days in our brilliant modern shops, where the clerks expect to be rich men at thirty, — he made them work like negro slaves. His three clerks did as much as would have tired out ten of the modern sybarites whose laziness

swells the columns of a budget. No sound ever broke the stillness of that solemn establishment, where all hinges were oiled, and the smallest article of furniture was kept with a virtuous nicety which showed severe economy and the strictest order. Sometimes the giddiest of the three clerks ventured to scratch upon the rind of the Gruyère cheese, which was delivered to them at breakfast and scrupulously respected by them, the date of its first delivery. This prank, and a few others of a like kind, would occasionally bring a smile to the lips of Guillaume's youngest daughter, the pretty maiden who had just passed like a vision before the eyes of the enchanted watcher.

Though each of the apprentices paid a large sum for his board, not one of them would have dared to remain at table until the dessert was served. When Madame Guillaume made ready to mix the salad, the poor young fellows trembled to think with what parsimony that prudent hand would pour the oil. They were not allowed to pass a night off the premises without giving long notice and plausible reasons for the irregularity. Every Sunday two clerks, taking the honor by turns, accompanied the Guillaume family to mass and to vespers. Mesdemoiselles Virginie and Augustine, Guillaume's two daughters, modestly attired in printed cotton gowns, each took the arm of a clerk and walked in front, beneath the piercing eyes of their mother, who brought

up the domestic procession with her husband, compelled by her to carry two large prayer-books bound in black morocco. The second clerk received no salary ; as to the elder, whom twelve years of perseverance and discretion had initiated into the secrets of the establishment, he received twelve hundred francs a year in return for his services. On certain family fête-days a few gifts were bestowed upon him, the sole value of which lay in the labor of Madame Guillaume's lean and wrinkled hands, — knitted purses, which she took care to stuff with cotton wool to show their patterns, braces of the strongest construction, or silk stockings of the heaviest make. Sometimes, but rarely, this prime minister was allowed to share the enjoyments of the family when they spent a day in the country or, after months of deliberation, they decided to hire a box at the theatre, and use their right to demand some play of which Paris had long been weary.

As to the other clerks, the barrier of respect which formerly separated a master draper from his apprentices was so firmly fixed between them and the old merchant that they would have feared less to steal a piece of cloth than to break through that august etiquette. This deference may seem preposterous in our day, but these old houses were schools of commercial honesty and dignity. The masters adopted the apprentices ; their linen was cared for, mended, and often re-

newed by the mistress of the house. If a clerk fell ill the attention he received was truly maternal ; in case of danger the master spared no money and called in the best doctors, for he held himself answerable to the parents of these young men for their health as well as for their morals and their business training. If one of them, honorable by nature, was overtaken by some disaster, these old merchants knew how to appreciate the real intelligence such a youth had displayed, and often did not hesitate to trust the happiness of a daughter to one to whom they had already confided the care of their business. Guillaume was one of these old-fashioned business men ; if he had their absurdities, he had also their fine qualities. Thus it was that Joseph Lebas, his head-clerk, an orphan without property, was, to his mind, a suitable husband for Virginie, his eldest daughter. But Joseph did not share these cut-and-dried opinions of his master, who, for an empire, would not have married his youngest daughter before the elder. The unfortunate clerk felt that his heart was given to Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger sister. To explain this passion, which had grown up secretly, we must look further into the system of autocratic government which ruled the house and home of the old merchant draper.

Guillaume had two daughters. The eldest, Mademoiselle Virginie, was a reproduction of her mother. Madame Guillaume, daughter of the Sieur Chevrel, sat

so firmly upright behind her counter that she had more than once overheard bets as to her being impaled there. Her long, thin face expressed a sanctimonious piety. Madame Guillaume, devoid of all grace and without amiability of manner, covered her sexagenary head with a bonnet of invariable shape trimmed with long lappets like those of a widow. The whole neighborhood called her "the nun." Her words were few; her gestures sudden and jerky, like the action of a telegraph. Her eyes, clear as those of a cat, seemed to dislike the whole world because she herself was ugly. Mademoiselle Virginie, brought up, like her younger sister, under the domestic rule of her mother, was now twenty-eight years of age. Youth softened the ill-favored, awkward air which her resemblance to her mother gave at times to her appearance; but maternal severity had bestowed upon her two great qualities which counterbalanced the rest of her inheritance, — she was gentle and patient. Mademoiselle Augustine, now scarcely eighteen years old, was like neither father nor mother. She was one of those girls who, by the absence of all physical ties to their parents, seem to justify the saying of prudes, "God sends the children." Augustine was small, or, to give a better idea of her, delicate. Graceful and full of simplicity and candor, a man of the world could have found no fault with the charming creature except that her gestures were unmeaning and her attitudes occasion-

ally common, or even awkward. Her silent and quiescent face expressed the fleeting melancholy which fastens upon all young girls who are too feeble to dare resist the will of a domineering mother.

Always modestly dressed, the two sisters had no way of satisfying the innate coquetry of their woman's nature except by a luxury of cleanliness and neatness which became them wonderfully, and put them in keeping with the shining counters and shelves on which the old servant allowed not a speck of dust to settle, -- in keeping, too, with the antique simplicity of everything about them. Forced by such a life to find the elements of happiness in regular occupation, Augustine and Virginie had up to this time given nothing but satisfaction to their mother, who secretly congratulated herself on the perfect characters of her two daughters. It is easy to imagine the results of such an education as they had received. Brought up in the midst of business, accustomed to hear arguments and calculations that were grievously mercantile, taught grammar, book-keeping, a little Jewish history, a little French history in La Ragois, and allowed to read no books but those their mother sanctioned, it is unnecessary to say that their ideas were limited; but they knew how to manage a household admirably; they understood the value and the cost of things; they appreciated the difficulties in the way of amassing money; they were economical and

full of respect for the faculties and qualities of men of business. In spite of their father's wealth, they were as clever at darning as they were at embroidery ; their mother talked of teaching them to cook, so that they might know how to order a dinner and scold the cook from actual experience.

These girls, who were ignorant of the pleasures of the world and saw only the peaceful current of their parents' exemplary lives, seldom cast their youthful eyes beyond the precincts of that old patrimonial house, which to their mother was the universe. The parties occasioned by certain family solemnities formed the whole horizon of their terrestrial joys. When the large salon on the second floor was thrown open to receive guests, — such as Madame Roguin, formerly Mademoiselle Chevrel, fifteen years younger than her cousin, and who wore diamonds ; young Rabourdin, head-clerk at the ministry of Finance ; Monsieur Cæsar Birotteau, the rich perfumer, and his wife, called Madame Cæsar ; Monsieur Camusot, the richest silk merchant in the rue des Bourdonnais ; his father-in-law, Monsieur Cardot ; two or three old bankers, and certain irreproachable women, — then the preparations in getting out the silver plate, the Dresden china, the wax candles, the choice glass, all carefully packed away, were a diversion to the monotonous lives of the three women, who went and came, with as many steps and as much fuss as though they

were nuns preparing for the reception of their bishop. Then, at night, when all three were tired out with the exertion of wiping, rubbing, unpacking, and putting in their places the ornaments of these festivals, and the young girls were helping their mother to go to bed, Madame Guillaume would say, "My dears, we have really accomplished nothing."

If, at these solemn assemblies, the pious creature allowed a little dancing, and kept the whist and the boston and the tric-trac players to the confines of her own bedroom, the concession was accepted as an un-hoped-for felicity, and gave as much happiness as the two or three public balls to which Guillaume took his daughters during the carnival. Once a year the worthy draper himself gave an entertainment on which he spared no expense. However rich and elegant the invited guests might be, they took care not to miss that fête; for the most important business houses in the city often had recourse to the vast credit, or the wealth, or the great experience of Monsieur Guillaume. The two daughters of the worthy merchant did not, however, profit as much as might be thought from the instructions which society offers to young minds. They wore at these entertainments (bills of exchange, as it were, upon futurity) wreaths and ornaments of so common a kind as to make them blush. Their style of dancing was not of the best, and maternal vigilance allowed them to say

only "Yes" or "No" to their partners. Then the invariable domestic rule of the Cat-playing-ball obliged them to retire at eleven o'clock, just as the party was getting animated. So their pleasures, apparently conformable with their father's wealth, were really dull and insipid through circumstances derived from the habits and principles of their family.

As to their daily life, a single fact will suffice to paint it. Madame Guillaume required her daughters to dress for the day in the early morning, to come downstairs at precisely the same hour, and to arrange their occupations with monastic regularity. Yet, with all this, chance had bestowed upon Augustine a soul that was able to feel the void of such an existence. Sometimes those blue eyes were lifted for a moment as if to question the dark depths of the stairway or the damp shop. Listening to the cloistral silence her ears seemed to hear from afar confused revelations of the passionate life, which counts emotions as of more value than things. At such moments the girl's face glowed; her idle hands let fall the muslin on the polished oaken counter; but soon the mother's voice would say, in tones that were always sharp, even when she intended them to be gentle, "Augustine, my dear, what are you thinking about?"

Perhaps "Hippolyte, Earl of Douglas," and the "Comte de Comminges," two novels which Augustine

had found in the closet of a cook dismissed by Madame Guillaume, may have contributed to develop the ideas of the young girl, who had stealthily devoured those productions during the long nights of the preceding winter. The unconscious expression of vague desire, the soft voice, the jasmine skin, and the blue eyes of Augustine Guillaume had lighted a flame in the soul of poor Lebas as violent as it was humble. By a caprice that is easy enough to understand, Augustine felt no inclination for Joseph; perhaps because she did not know he loved her. On the other hand, the long legs and chestnut hair, the strong hands and vigorous frame of the head-clerk excited the admiration of Mademoiselle Virginie, who had not yet been asked in marriage in spite of a dowry of a hundred and fifty thousand francs. What could be more natural than these inversed loves, born in the silence of that shop like violets in the depths of the woods? The mute contemplation which constantly drew the eyes of these young people together, through their violent need of some relief from the monotonous toil and the religious calm in which they lived, could not fail to excite, sooner or later, the emotions of love. The habit of looking into the face of another leads to an understanding of the noble qualities of the soul, and ends by obliterating all defects.

“At the rate that man carries things,” thought Monsieur Guillaume when he read Napoleon’s first decree on

the classes for conscription, "our daughters will have to go upon their knees for husbands."

It was about that time that the old merchant, noticing that his eldest daughter was beginning to fade, bethought him that he himself had married Mademoiselle Chevrel under very much the same circumstances as those in which Virginie and Joseph Lebas stood to each other. What a fine thing it would be to marry his daughter and pay a sacred debt by returning to the orphaned young man the same benefaction that he himself had received from his predecessor in a like situation? Joseph Lebas, who was thirty-three years of age, was fully conscious of the obstacles that a difference of fifteen years in their ages placed between Augustine and himself. Too shrewd and intelligent not to fathom Monsieur Guillaume's intentions, he understood his master's inexorable principles far too well to suppose for a moment that the younger daughter could be married before the elder. The poor clerk, whose heart was as good as his legs were long and his shoulders high, suffered in silence.

Such was the state of things in this little republic of the rue Saint-Denis, which seemed in many ways like an annex to La Trappe. But to explain external events as we have now explained inward feelings, it is necessary to look back a few months before the little scene which began this history.

One evening at dusk a young man, happening to pass before the shop of the Cat-playing-ball, stopped to look at a scene within those precincts which all the painters of the world would have paused to contemplate. The shop, which was not yet lighted up, formed a dark vista through which the merchant's dining-room was seen. An astral lamp on the dinner-table shed that yellow light which gives such charm to the Dutch pictures. The white table-linen, the silver, the glass, were brilliant accessories, still further thrown into relief by the sharp contrasts of light and shadow. The figures of the father of the family and his wife, the faces of the clerks, and the pure lines of Augustine, near to whom stood a stout, chubby servant-girl, composed so remarkable a picture, the heads were so original, the expression of each character was so frank, it was so easy to imagine the peace, the silence, the modest life of the family, that to an artist accustomed to express nature there was something absolutely commanding in the desire to paint this accidental scene.

The pedestrian, thus arrested, was a young painter who, seven years earlier, had carried off the *prix de Rome*. He had lately returned from the Eternal City. His soul, fed on poesy, his eyes surfeited with Raffaele and Michael-Angelo, were now athirst for simple nature after his long sojourn in the mighty land where art has reached its highest grandeur. True or false, such was

his personal feeling. Carried away for years by the fire of Italian passions, his heart now sought a calm and modest virgin, known to him as yet only upon canvas. The first enthusiasm of his soul at the simple picture before his eyes passed naturally into a deep admiration for the principal figure. Augustine seemed thoughtful, and was eating nothing. By a chance arrangement of the lamp, the light fell full upon her face, and her bust appeared to move in a circle of flame, which threw into still brighter relief the outline of her head, illuminating it in a way that seemed half supernatural. The artist compared her involuntarily to an exiled angel remembering heaven. A mysterious feeling, almost unknown to him, a love limpid and bubbling overflowed his heart. After standing a moment as if paralyzed beneath the weight of these ideas, he tore himself away from his happiness and went home, unable either to eat or sleep.

The next day he entered his studio, and did not leave it again until he had placed on canvas the magic charm of a scene the mere recollection of which had, as it were, laid a spell upon him. But his happiness was incomplete so long as he did not possess a faithful portrait of his idol. Many a time he passed before the house of the Cat-playing-ball; he even entered the shop once or twice on some pretext to get a nearer view of the ravishing creature who was always covered by Madame

Guillaume's wing. For eight whole months, given up to his love and to his brushes, he was invisible to his friends, even to his intimates; he forgot all, — poetry, the theatre, music, and his most cherished habits.

One morning Girodet the painter forced his way in, eluding all barriers as only artists can, and woke him up with the inquiry, "What are you going to send to the Salon?"

The artist seized his friend's arm, led him to the studio, uncovered a little easel picture, and also a portrait. After a slow and eager examination of the two masterpieces, Girodet threw his arms around his friend and kissed him, without finding words to speak. His feelings could only be uttered as he felt them, — soul to soul.

"You love her!" he said at last.

Both knew that the noblest portraits of Titian, Raffaele, and Leonardo da Vinci are due to exalted human feelings, which, under so many diverse conditions, have given birth to the masterpieces of art. For all answer the young painter bowed his head.

"How fortunate, how happy you are to be able to love here, in Paris, after leaving Italy. I can't advise you to send such works as those to the Salon," added the distinguished painter. "You see, such pictures cannot be felt there. Those absolutely true colors, that stupendous labor, will not be understood; the

public is no longer able to see into such depths. The pictures we paint now-a-days, dear friend, are mere screens for decoration. Better make verses, say I, and translate the ancients, — we shall get a truer fame that way than our miserable pictures will ever bring us.”

But in spite of this friendly advice the two pictures were exhibited. That of the interior made almost a revolution in art. It gave birth to the fashion of *genre* pictures which since that time have so filled our exhibitions that one might almost believe they were produced by some mechanical process. As to the portrait, there are few living artists who do not cherish the memory of that breathing canvas on which the general public, occasionally just in its judgment, left the crown of praise which Girodet himself placed there.

The two pictures were surrounded by crowds. People killed themselves, as women say, to look at them. Speculators and great lords would have covered both canvases with double-napoleons, but the artist obstinately refused to sell them, declining also to make copies. He was offered an immense sum if he would allow them to be engraved ; but the dealers were no more successful than the amateurs. . Though this affair engrossed the social world, it was not of a nature to penetrate the depths of Egyptian solitude in the rue Saint-Denis. It so chanced, however, that the wife of a notary, paying

a visit to Madame Guillaume, spoke of the exhibition before Augustine, of whom she was very fond, and explained what it was. Madame Roguin's chatter naturally inspired Augustine with a desire to see the pictures, and with the boldness to secretly ask her cousin to take her to the Louvre. Madame Roguin succeeded in the negotiation she undertook with Madame Guillaume, and was allowed to take her little cousin from her daily tasks for the short space of two hours.

Thus it was that the young girl, passing through the crowd, stood before the famous picture. A quiver made her tremble like a birch-leaf when she recognized her own self. She was frightened, and looked about to rejoin Madame Roguin, from whom the crowd had parted her. At that instant her eyes encountered the flushed face of the young painter. She suddenly remembered a man who had frequently passed the shop and whom she had often remarked, thinking he was some new neighbor.

“ You see there the inspiration of love,” said the artist in a whisper to the timid creature, who was terrified by his words.

She summoned an almost supernatural courage to force her way through the crowd and rejoin her cousin.

“ You will be suffocated,” cried Augustine. “ Do let us go ! ”

But there are certain moments at the Salon when two women are not able to move freely through the galleries. Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin were blocked and pushed by the swaying crowd to within a few feet of the second picture. The exclamation of surprise uttered by Madame Roguin was lost in the noises of the room; but Augustine involuntarily wept as she looked at the marvellous scene. Then, with a feeling that is almost inexplicable, she put her finger on her lips as she saw the ecstatic face of the young artist within two feet of her. He replied with a motion of his head toward Madame Roguin, as if to show Augustine that he understood her. This pantomime threw a fire of burning coals into the being of the poor girl, who felt she was criminal in thus allowing a secret compact between herself and the unknown artist. The stifling heat, the sight of the brilliant dresses, a giddiness which the wonderful combinations of color produced in her, the multitude of figures, living and painted, which surrounded her, the profusion of gold frames, — all gave her a sense of intoxication which redoubled her terrors. She might have fainted if there had not welled up from the depths of her heart, in spite of this chaos of sensations, a mysterious joy which vivified her whole being. Still, she fancied she was under the dominion of that demon whose dreadful snares were threats held out to her by the thundered words of the preach-

ers. The moment seemed like one of actual madness to her. She saw she was accompanied to her cousin's carriage by the mysterious young man, resplendent with love and happiness. A new and unknown excitement possessed her, an intoxication which delivered her, as it were, into the hands of Nature; she listened to the eloquent voice of her own heart, and looked at the young painter several times, betraying as she did so the agitation of her thoughts. Never had the carnation of her cheeks formed a more charming contrast to the whiteness of her skin. The artist then beheld that beauty in its perfect flower, that virgin modesty in all its glory.

Augustine became conscious of a sort of joy mingling with her terror as she thought how her presence had brought happiness to one whose name was on every lip and whose talent had given immortality to a passing scene. Yes, she was beloved! she could not doubt it! When she ceased to see him, his words still sounded in her ear: "You see the inspiration of love!" The palpitations of her heart were painful, so violently did the now ardent blood awaken unknown forces in her being. She complained of a severe headache to avoid replying to her cousin's questions about the pictures; but when they reached home, Madame Roguin could not refrain from telling Madame Guillaume of the celebrity given to the establishment of the Cat-playing-ball, and Augus-

tine trembled in every limb as she heard her mother say she should go to the Salon and see her own house. Again the young girl complained of her headache, and received permission to go to bed.

“That’s what you get by going to shows!” exclaimed Monsieur Guillaume. “Headaches! Is it so very amusing to see a picture of what you see every day in the street? Don’t talk to me of artists; they are like authors, — half-starved beggars. Why the devil should that fellow choose my house to villify in his picture?”

“Perhaps it will help to sell some of our cloth,” said Joseph Lebas.

That remark did not save art and literature from being once more arraigned and condemned before the tribunal of commerce. It will be readily believed that such discourse brought little encouragement to Augustine, who gave herself up in the night-time to the first revery of love. The events of the day were like those of a dream which she delighted to reproduce in thought. She learned the fears, the hopes, the remorse, all those undulations of feeling which rock a heart as simple and timid as hers. What a void she felt within that gloomy house, what a treasure she found within her soul! To be the wife of a man of talent, to share his fame! Imagine the havoc such a thought would make in the heart of a child brought up in the bosom of such a fam-

ily! What hopes would it not awaken in a girl who lived among the vulgarities of life, and yet longed for its elegancies. A beam of light had come into her prison. Augustine loved, loved suddenly. So many repressed feelings were gratified that she succumbed at once, without an instant's reflection. At eighteen love flings its prism between the world and the eyes of a maiden. Incapable of imagining the harsh experience which comes to every loving woman married to a man gifted with imagination, she fancied herself called to make the happiness of such a man, seeing no disparity between them. For her the present was the whole future.

When Monsieur and Madame Guillaume returned the next day from the Salon, their faces announced disappointment and annoyance. In the first place, the artist had withdrawn the picture; in the next, Madame Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. The news that the pictures had been withdrawn after her visit to the Salon was to Augustine the revelation of a delicacy of sentiment which all women appreciate, if only instinctively.

The morning on which, returning from a ball, Théodore de Sommervieux (such was the name which celebrity had now placed in Augustine's heart), was showered with soapy water by the clerks of the Cat-playing-ball, as he awaited the apparition of his innocent beauty, — who certainly did not know he was

there, — was only the fourth occasion of their seeing each other since that first meeting at the Salon. The obstacles which the iron system of the house of Guillaume placed in the way of the ardent and impetuous nature of the artist, added a violence to his passion for Augustine, which will be readily understood. How approach a young girl seated behind a counter between two such women as Mademoiselle Virginie and Madame Guillaume? How was it possible to correspond with her if her mother never left her? Ready, like all lovers, to invent troubles for himself, Théodore selected a rival among the clerks, and suspected the others of being in their comrade's interests. If he escaped their Argus eyes he felt he should succumb to the stern glances of the old merchant or Madame Guillaume. Obstacles on all sides, despair on all sides! The very violence of his passion prevented the young man from inventing those clever expedients which, in lovers as well as in prisoners, seem to be crowning efforts of intellect roused either by a savage desire for liberty or by the ardor of love. Then Théodore would rush round the corner like a madman, as if movement alone could suggest a way out of the difficulty.

After allowing his imagination to torment him for weeks, it came into his head to bribe the chubby servant-girl. A few letters were thus exchanged during the fortnight which followed the unlucky morning when

Monsieur Guillaume and Théodore had first met. The loving pair had now agreed to see each other daily at a certain hour, and on Sunday at the church of Saint-Leu, during both mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her dear Théodore a list of the friends and relatives of the family to whom the young painter was to gain access. He was then to endeavor to interest in his loving cause some one of those money-making and commercial souls to whom a real passion would otherwise seem a monstrous and unheard-of speculation.

In other respects nothing happened and no change took place in the habits of the Cat-playing-ball. If Augustine was absent-minded; if, against every law of the domestic charter, she went up to her bedroom to make the signals under cover of the flower-pots; if she sighed, if she brooded, — no one, not even her mother, found it out. This may cause some surprise to those who have understood the spirit of the household, where a single idea tinged with poetry would have contrasted sharply with the beings and with the things therein contained, and where no one was able to give a look or gesture that was not seen and analyzed. And yet, as it happened, nothing was really more natural. The tranquil vessel which navigated the seas of Parisian commerce under the flag of the Cat-playing-ball, was at this particular moment tossed about in one of those

storms which may be called equinoctial, on account of their periodical return.

For the last fifteen days the five men of the establishment, with Madame Guillaume and Mademoiselle Virginie, had devoted themselves to that severe toil which goes by the name of "taking an inventory." All bales were undone, and the length of each piece of goods was measured, to learn the exact value of what remained on hand. The card attached to each piece was carefully examined to know how long the different goods had been in stock. New prices were affixed. Monsieur Guillaume, always standing up, yard-measure in hand, his pen behind his ear, was like a captain in command of a ship. His sharp voice, passing down a hatchway to the ware-rooms below, rang out that barbarous jargon of commerce expressed in enigmas: "How many H-N-Z?" "Take it away!" "How much left of Q-X?" "Two yards." "What price?" "Five-five-three." "Put at three A all J-J, all M-P, and the rest of V-D-O." A thousand other such phrases, all equally intelligible, resounded across the counters, like those verses of modern poetry which the romanticists recite to each other to keep up their enthusiasm for a favorite poet. At night Monsieur Guillaume locked himself and his head-clerk and his wife into the counting-room, went over the books, opened the new accounts, notified the dilatory debtors, and made out all bills.

The results of this immense toil, which could be noted down on one sheet of foolscap paper, proved to the house of Guillaume that it owned so much in money, so much in merchandise, so much in notes and cheques; also that it did not owe a sou, but that so many hundred thousand francs were owing to it; that its capital had increased; that its farms, houses, and stocks were to be enlarged, repaired, or doubled. Hence came a sense of the necessity of beginning once more with renewed ardor the accumulation of more money; though none of these brave ants ever thought of asking themselves, "What's the good of it?"

Thanks to this annual tumult, the happy Augustine was able to escape the observation of her Arguses. At last, one Saturday evening, the "taking of the inventory" was an accomplished fact. The figures of the total assets showed so many ciphers that in honor of the occasion Monsieur Guillaume removed the stern embargo which reigned throughout the year at desert. The sly old draper rubbed his hands and told the clerks they might remain at table. They had hardly swallowed their little glass of a certain home-made liqueur, however, when carriage-wheels were heard in the street. The family were going to the Variétés to see "Cinderella," while the two younger clerks each received six francs and permission to go where they liked, provided they were at home by midnight.

The next morning, in spite of this debauch, the old merchant-drapeer shaved at six o'clock, put on his fine maroon coat, — the lustre of its cloth causing him, as usual, much satisfaction, — fastened his gold buckles to the knee-band of his ample silk breeches, and then, toward seven o'clock, while every one in the house was still asleep, he went to the little office adjoining the shop on the first floor. It was lighted by a window protected by thick iron bars, and looked out upon a little square court formed by walls so black that the place was like a well. The old merchant opened an inner blind that was clamped with iron, and raised a sash of the window. The chill air of the court cooled the hot atmosphere of the office, which exhaled an odor peculiar to all such places. Monsieur Guillaume remained standing, one hand resting on the greasy arm of a cane-chair covered with morocco, the primitive color of which was now effaced ; he seemed to hesitate to sit down. The old man glanced with a softened air at the tall double desk, where his wife's seat was arranged exactly opposite to his own, in a little arched alcove made in the wall. He looked at the numbered paper-boxes, the twine, the various utensils, the irons with which they marked the cloth, the safe, — all objects of immemorial origin, — and he fancied himself standing before the evoked shade of the late Chevrel. He pulled out the very stool on which he formerly sat in presence of his now defunct

master. That stool, covered with black leather, from which the horsehair had long oozed at the corners (but without falling out), he now placed with a trembling hand on the particular spot where his predecessor had once placed it; then, with an agitation difficult to describe, he pulled a bell which rang at the bed's head of Joseph Lebas. When that decisive deed was done, the old man, to whom these memories may have been oppressive, took out three or four bills of exchange which had been presented to him the day before, and was looking them over, but without seeing them, when Joseph Lebas entered the office.

“Sit there,” said Monsieur Guillaume, pointing to the stool.

As the old master-draper had never before allowed a clerk to sit in his presence, Joseph trembled.

“What do you think of these drafts?” asked Guillaume.

“They will not be paid.”

“Why not?”

“I heard yesterday that Étienne and Company were making their payments in gold.”

“Ho! ho!” cried the draper. “They must be very ill to show their bile. Let us talk of something else, Joseph; the inventory is finished?”

“Yes, monsieur, and the dividend is the finest you have ever had.”

“Pray don’t use those new-fangled words. Say ‘proceeds,’ Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that we owe that result partly to you? Therefore, I do not wish you to have a salary any longer. Madame Guillaume has put it into my head to offer you a share in the business. Hey, Joseph, what do you say? ‘Guillaume and Lebas,’ — don’t the names make a fine partnership? and we can add ‘and Company’ to complete the signature.”

Tears came into Joseph’s eyes, though he tried to hide them. “Ah, Monsieur Guillaume,” he said, “how have I deserved such goodness? I have only done my duty. It was enough that you should even take an interest in a poor orph — ”

He brushed the cuff of his left sleeve with his right sleeve, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this modest young fellow no doubt needed, as he himself once needed, to be helped and encouraged to make the explanation complete.

“It is true, Joseph,” said Virginie’s father, “that you do not quite deserve that favor. You do not put as much confidence in me as I do in you” (here the clerk looked up hurriedly). “You know my secrets. For the last two years I have told you all about the business. I have sent you travelling to the manufactories. I have nothing to reproach myself with as to you. But you! You have a liking in your mind, and

you have never said a word to me about it" (Joseph colored). "Ha! ha!" cried Guillaume, "so you thought you could deceive an old fox like me? Me! when you knew how I predicted the Lecocq failure!"

"Oh, monsieur!" replied Joseph Lebas, examining his master as attentively as his master examined him, "is it possible that you know whom I love?"

"I know all, you good-for-nothing fellow," said the worthy and astute old dealer, twisting the lobe of the young man's ear; "and I forgive it, for I did as much myself."

"Will you give her to me?"

"Yes, with a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and I will leave you as much more; and we will meet our new expenses under the new firm name. Yes, boy, we will stir up the business finely and put new life into it," cried the old merchant, rising and gesticulating with his arms. "There is nothing like business, son-in-law. Those who sneer and ask what pleasures can be found in it are simply fools. To have the cue of money-matters, to know how to govern the market, to wait with the anxiety of gamblers till Étienne and Company fail, to see a regiment of Guards go by with our cloth on their backs, to trip up a neighbor, — honestly, of course, — to manufacture at a lower price than others, to follow up an affair when we've planned it, to watch it begin, increase, totter, and succeed, to under-

stand, like the minister of police, all the ways and means of all the commercial houses so as to make no false step, to stand up straight when others are wrecked and ruined, to have friends and correspondents in all the manufacturing towns and cities — Ha, Joseph! is n't that perpetual pleasure? I call that living! Yes, and I shall die in that bustle like old Chevrel himself."

In the heat of his allocution Père Guillaume scarcely looked at his clerk, who was weeping hot tears; when he did so he exclaimed, "Hey, Joseph, my poor boy, what is the matter?"

"Ah! I love her so, Monsieur Guillaume, that my heart fails me, I believe."

"Well, my boy," said the old man, quite moved, "you are happier than you think you are; for, by the powers, she loves you. I know it; yes, I do!"

And he winked his two little green eyes as he looked at Joseph.

"Mademoiselle Augustine! Mademoiselle Augustine!" cried Joseph Lebas in his excitement. He was about to rush out of the office when he felt himself grasped by an iron arm, and his astonished master pulled him vigorously in front of him.

"What has Augustine got to do with it?" asked Guillaume, in a voice that froze the unfortunate young man.

"It is she — whom — I love," stammered the clerk.

Disconcerted at his own lack of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down and put his pointed head into his two hands to reflect upon the queer position in which he found himself. Joseph Lebas, ashamed, mortified, and despairing, stood before him.

“Joseph,” said the merchant, with cold dignity, “I was speaking to you of Virginie. Love is not to be commanded; I know that. I trust your discretion; we will forget the whole matter. I shall never allow Augustine to be married before Virginie. Your interest in the business will be ten per cent.”

The head-clerk, in whom love inspired a mysterious degree of courage and eloquence, clasped his hands, opened his lips, and spoke to Guillaume for fifteen minutes with such ardor and deep feeling that the situation changed. If the matter had concerned some business affair the old man would have had a fixed rule by which to settle it; but suddenly cast upon the sea of feelings, a thousand miles from business and without a compass, he floated irresolutely before the wind of an event so “out of the way,” as he kept saying to himself. Influenced by his natural paternal kindness, he was at the mercy of the waves.

“Hey, the deuce, Joseph, you know of course that my two children came with ten years between them. Mademoiselle Chevrel was not handsome, no; but I never gave her any reason to complain of me. Do as

I did. Come, don't fret, — what a goose you are! Perhaps we can manage it; I'll try. There's always some way to do a thing. We men are not exactly Celadons to our wives, — you understand, don't you? Madame Guillaume is pious, and — There, there, my boy, you may give Augustine your arm this morning when we go to mass."

Such were the sentences which Père Guillaume scattered at random. The last of them filled the lover's soul with joy. He was already thinking of a friend who would do for Mademoiselle Virginie as he left the smoky office, after pressing the hand of his future father-in-law and saying, in a confidential way, that it would all come right.

"What will Madame Guillaume say?" That idea was terribly harrassing to the worthy merchant when he found himself alone.

At breakfast, Madame Guillaume and Virginie, whom the draper had left, provisionally, in ignorance of her disappointment, looked at Joseph with so much meaning that he became greatly embarrassed. His modesty won him the good-will of his future mother-in-law. The matron grew so lively that she looked at Monsieur Guillaume with a smile, and allowed herself a few little harmless pleasantries customary from time immemorial in such innocent families. She discussed the relative heights of Joseph and Virginie, and placed them side

by side to be measured. These little follies brought a cloud to the paternal brow; in fact, the head of the family manifested such a sense of decorum that he ordered Augustine to take the arm of his head-clerk on their way to church. Madame Guillaume, surprised at so much masculine delicacy, honored her husband's act with an approving nod. The procession left the house in an order that suggested no gossiping constructions to the neighbors.

“Do you not think, Mademoiselle Augustine,” said the head-clerk in a trembling voice, “that the wife of a merchant in high standing, like Monsieur Guillaume for example, ought to amuse herself rather more than — than your mother amuses herself? She ought surely to wear diamonds, and have a carriage. As for me, if I should ever marry I should want to take all the cares myself, and see my wife happy; I should not let her sit at any counter of mine. You see, women are no longer as much needed as they used to be in draper's shops. Monsieur Guillaume was quite right to do as he did, and besides, Madame likes it. But if a wife knows how to help in making up the accounts at times, and looking over the correspondence; if she can have an eye to a few details and to the orders, and manage her household, so as not to be idle, that's enough. As for me, I should always wish to amuse her after seven o'clock, when the shop is closed. I should take her to the theatre and

the picture galleries, and into society, — but you are not listening to me.”

“Oh, yes I am, Monsieur Joseph. What were you saying about painters? It is a noble art.”

“Yes, I know one, a master painter, Monsieur Lourdois; he makes money.”

Thus conversing, the family reached Saint-Leu; there, Madame Guillaume recovered her rights. She made Augustine, for the first time, sit beside her; and Virginie took the fourth chair, next to that of Lebas. During the sermon all went well with Augustine and with Théodore, who stood behind a column and prayed to his madonna with great fervor; but when the Host was raised, Madame Guillaume perceived, somewhat tardily, that her daughter Augustine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She was about to scold her vigorously when, suddenly raising her veil, she postponed her lecture and looked in the direction which her daughter's eyes had taken. With the help of her spectacles, she then and there beheld the young artist, whose fashionable clothes bespoke an officer of the army on furlough rather than a merchant belonging to the neighborhood. It is difficult to imagine the wrath of Madame Guillaume, who flattered herself she had brought up her daughters in perfect propriety, on detecting this clandestine love in Augustine's heart, the evils of which she magnified out of ignorance and prudery. She

concluded instantly that her daughter was rotten to the core.

“In the first place, hold your book straight, mademoiselle,” she said in a low voice, but trembling with anger; then she snatched the tell-tale prayer-book, and turned it the right way. “Don’t dare to raise your eyes off those prayers,” she added; “otherwise you will answer for it to me. After service, your father and I will have something to say to you.”

These words were like a thunderbolt to poor Augustine. She felt like fainting; but between the misery she endured and the fear of creating a disturbance in church, she gathered enough courage to hide her suffering. Yet it was easy enough to guess the commotion of her mind by the way the book shook in her hands and by the tears which fell on the pages as she turned them. The artist saw, from the incensed look which Madame Guillaume flung at him, the perils which threatened his love, and he left the church with rage in his heart, determined to dare all.

“Go to your room, mademoiselle!” said Madame Guillaume when they reached home. “Don’t dare to leave it; you will be called when we want you.”

The conference of husband and wife was held in secret, and at first nothing transpired. But after a while Virginie, who had comforted her sister with many tender suggestions, carried her kindness so far

as to slip down to the door of her mother's bedroom, where the discussion was taking place, hoping to overhear a few sentences. At her first trip from the third to the second floor she heard her father exclaim, "Madame, do you wish to kill your daughter?"

"My poor dear," said Virginie, running back to her disconsolate sister, "papa is defending you!"

"What will they do to Théodore?" asked the innocent little thing.

Virginie went down again; but this time she stayed longer; she heard that Lebas loved Augustine.

It was decreed that on this memorable day that usually calm house should become a hell. Monsieur Guillaume brought Joseph Lebas to the verge of despair by informing him of Augustine's attachment to the artist. Lebas, who by that time had met his friend and advised him to ask for Mademoiselle Virginie in marriage, saw all his hopes overthrown. Virginie, overcome by the discovery that Joseph had, as it were, refused her, was taken with a violent headache. And finally, the jar between husband and wife, resulting from the explanation they had together, when for the third time only in their lives they held different opinions, made itself felt in a really dreadful manner. At last, about four o'clock in the afternoon Augustine, pale, trembling, and with red eyes, was brought before her father and mother. The poor child related

artlessly the too brief story of her love. Reassured by her father, who promised to hear her through in silence, she gathered enough courage to utter the name of her dear Théodore de Sommervieux, dwelling with some diplomacy on the aristocratic particle. As she yielded to the hitherto unknown delight of speaking out her feelings, she found courage to say with innocent boldness that she loved Monsieur de Sommervieux and had written to him, adding, with tears in her eyes: "It would make me unhappy for life to sacrifice me to any one else."

"But Augustine, you do not know what a painter is," cried her mother, in horror.

"Madame Guillaume!" said the old father, imposing silence on his wife — "Augustine," he went on, "artists are generally poor, half-starved creatures. They squander what they have, and are always worthless. I know, for the late Monsieur Joseph Vernet, the late Monsieur Lekain, and the late Monsieur Noverre were customers of mine. My dear, if you knew the tricks that very Monsieur Noverre, and Monsieur le chevalier de Saint-Georges, and above all, Monsieur Philidor played upon my predecessor Père Chevrel! They are queer fellows, very queer. They all have a glib way of talking and fine manners. Now your Monsieur Sumer — Som —"

"De Sommervieux, papa."

"Well, so be it, — de Sommervieux, he never could

be as charming with you as Monsieur le chevalier de Saint-Georges was with me the day I obtained a consular sentence against him. That's how it was with people of good-breeding in those days."

"But papa, Monsieur Théodore is a nobleman, and he writes me that he is rich; his father was called the Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words Monsieur Guillaume looked at his terrible better-half, who was tapping her foot and keeping a dead silence with the air of a thwarted woman; she would not even cast her indignant eyes at Augustine, and seemed determined to leave the whole responsibility of the misguided affair to Monsieur Guillaume, inasmuch as her advice was not listened to. However, in spite of her apparent phlegm, she could not refrain from exclaiming, when she saw her husband playing such a gentle part in a catastrophe that was not commercial: "Really, monsieur, you are as weak as your daughter, but —"

The noise of a carriage stopping before the door interrupted the reprimand which the old merchant was dreading. A moment more, and Madame Roguin was in the middle of the room looking at the three actors in the domestic drama.

"I know all, cousin," she said, with a patronizing air.

If Madame Roguin had a fault, it was that of think-

ing that the wife of a Parisian notary could play the part of a great lady.

“I know all,” she repeated, “and I come to Noah’s Ark like the dove, with an olive-branch, — I read that allegory in the ‘Genius of Christianity,’” she remarked, turning to Madame Guillaume; “therefore the comparison ought to please you. Let me tell you,” she added, smiling at Augustine, “that Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man. He brought me this morning a portrait of myself, done with a masterly hand. It is worth at least six thousand francs.”

At these words she tapped lightly on Monsieur Guillaume’s arm. The old merchant could not refrain from pushing out his lips in a manner that was peculiar to him.

“I know Monsieur de Sommervieux very well,” continued the dove. “For the last fortnight he has attended my parties, and he is the present attraction of them. He told me all his troubles, and I am here on his behalf. I know that he adores Augustine, and is determined to have her. Ah! my dear cousin, don’t shake your head. Let me tell you that he is about to be made a baron, and that the Emperor himself, on the occasion of his visit to the Salon, made him a chevalier of the Legion of honor. Roguin is now his notary and knows all his affairs. Well, I can assure you that Monsieur de Sommervieux has good, sound property

which brings him in twelve thousand a year. Now, the father-in-law of a man in his position might count on becoming something of importance, — mayor of the arrondissement, for instance. Don't you remember how Monsieur Dupont was made count of the Empire and senator merely because, as mayor, it was his duty to congratulate the Emperor on his entrance to Vienna? Yes, yes, this marriage must take place. I adore the young man, myself. His behavior to Augustine is hardly met with now-a-days outside of a novel. Don't fret, my dear child, you will be happy, and everybody will envy you. There 's the Duchesse de Carigliano, she comes to my parties and delights in Monsieur de Sommervieux. Gossiping tongues do say she comes to my house only to meet him, — just as if a duchess of yesterday was out of place in the salon of a Chevrel whose family can show a hundred years of good, sound bourgeoisie behind it. Augustine," added Madame Roguin, after a slight pause, "I have seen the portrait. Heavens! it is lovely. Did you know the Emperor had asked to see it? He said, laughing, to the vice-chamberlain, that if he had many women like that at his court so many kings would flock there that he could easily keep the peace of Europe. Was n't that flattering?"

The domestic storms with which the day began were something like those of nature, for they were followed

by calm and serene weather. Madame Roguin's arguments were so seductive, she managed to pull so many cords in the withered hearts of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume that she at least found one which enabled her to carry the day. At this singular period of our national history, commerce and finance were to a greater degree than ever before possessed with an insane desire to ally themselves with the nobility, and the generals of the Empire profited immensely by this sentiment. Monsieur Guillaume, however, was remarkable for his opposition to this curious passion. His favorite axioms were that if a woman wanted happiness she ought to marry a man of her own class; that persons were always sooner or later punished for trying to climb too high; that love could ill endure the petty annoyances of home-life, and that persons should look only for solid virtues in each other; that neither of the married pair should know more than the other, because the first requisite was complete mutual understanding; and that a husband who spoke Greek and a wife who spoke Latin would be certain to die of hunger. He promulgated that last remark as a sort of proverb. He compared marriages thus made to those old-fashioned stuffs of silk and wool in which the silk always ended by wearing out the wool. And yet, there was so much vanity at the bottom of his heart that the prudence of the pilot who had guided with such wisdom the affairs of the

Cat-playing-ball succumbed to the aggressive volubility of Madame Roguin. The stern Madame Guillaume was the first to derogate from her principles and to find in her daughter's inclinations an excuse for so doing. She consented to receive Monsieur de Sommervieux at her house, resolving in her own mind to examine him rigorously.

The old merchant went at once to find Joseph Lebas and explain to him the situation of things. At half-past six that evening the dining-room immortalized by the painter contained under its skylight Monsieur and Madame Roguin, the young artist and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who found his comfort in submission, and Mademoiselle Virginie, whose headache had disappeared. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume beheld in perspective the establishment of both their daughters, and the certainty that the fortunes of the Cat-playing-ball were likely to pass into good hands. Their satisfaction was at its height when, at dessert, Théodore presented to them the marvellous picture, representing the interior of the old shop (which they had not yet seen), to which was due the happiness of all present.

“Is n't it pretty!” cried Monsieur Guillaume; “and they give you thirty thousand francs for it?”

“Why, there are my lappets!” exclaimed Madame Guillaume.

“And the goods unfolded!” added Lebas; “you might take them in your hand.”

“All kinds of stuffs are good to paint,” replied the painter. “We should be only too happy, we modern artists, if we could approach the perfection of ancient draperies.”

“Ha! so you like drapery?” cried Père Guillaume. “Shake hands, my young friend. If you value commerce we shall soon understand each other. Why, indeed, should persons despise it? The world began with trade, for did n’t Adam sell Paradise for an apple? It did not turn out a very good speculation, by the bye!”

And the old merchant burst into a hearty laugh, excited by the champagne which he was circulating liberally. The bandage over the eyes of the young lover was so thick that he thought his new parents very agreeable. He was not above amusing them with a few little caricatures, all in good taste. He pleased every one. Later, when the party had dispersed, and the salon, furnished in a way that was “rich and warm,” to use the draper’s own expression, was deserted, and while Madame Guillaume was going about from table to table and from candelabra to candlestick, hastily blowing out the lights, the worthy merchant who could see clearly enough when it was a question of money or of business, called his daughter Augus-

tine, and, placing her on his knee, made her the following harangue:—

“ My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux since you wish it; I give you permission to risk your capital of happiness. But I am not taken in by those thirty thousand francs, said to be earned by spoiling good canvas. Money that comes so quickly goes as quickly. Didn't I hear that young scatterbrain say this very evening that if money was coined round it was meant to roll? Ha! if it is round for spendthrifts, it is flat for economical folks who pile it up. Now, my child, your handsome youth talks of giving you carriages and diamonds. If he has money and chooses to spend it on you, *bene sit*; I have nothing to say. But as to what I shall give you, I don't choose that any of my hard-earned money shall go for carriages and trumpery. He who spends too much is never rich. Your dowry of three hundred thousand francs won't buy all Paris, let me tell you; and you need n't reckon on a few hundred thousand more, for I'll make you wait for them a long time yet, God willing! So I took your lover into a corner and talked to him; and a man who manœuvred the failure of Lecocq did n't have much trouble in getting an artist to agree that his wife's property should be settled on herself. I shall have an eye to the contract and see that he makes the proper settlements upon you. Now, my dear, I hope you'll make

me a grandfather, and for that reason, faith, I'm beginning to think about my grandchildren. Swear to me, therefore, that you will not sign any paper about money without first consulting me; and if I should go to rejoin Père Chevrel too soon, promise me to consult Lebas, who is to be your brother-in-law. Will you promise and swear these two things?"

"Oh, yes, papa, I swear it."

At the words, uttered in a tender voice, the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night all the lovers slept as peacefully as Monsieur and Madame Guillaume.

A few months after that memorable Sunday the high altar of Saint-Leu witnessed two marriages very unlike each other. Augustine and Théodore approached it beaming with happiness, their eyes full of love, elegantly attired, and attended by a brilliant company. Virginie, leaning on the arm of her father, followed her young sister in humbler guise, like a shadow needed for the harmony of the picture. Monsieur Guillaume had taken infinite pains to so arrange the wedding that Virginie's marriage should take precedence of Augustine's; but he had the grief of seeing that the higher and lesser clergy one and all addressed the younger and more elegant of the brides first. He overheard some of his neighbors highly commending Mademoiselle

Virginie's good sense in making, as they said, a solid marriage and remaining faithful to "the quarter;" and he also overheard a few sneers, prompted by envy, about Augustine who had chosen to marry an artist, a nobleman, coupled with a pretended fear that if the Guillaumes were becoming ambitious the draper's trade was ruined. When an old dealer in fans declared that the young spendthrift would soon bring his wife to poverty, Monsieur Guillaume congratulated himself *in petto* for his prudence as to the marriage settlements.

That night, after an elegant ball followed by one of those sumptuous suppers that are almost forgotten by the present generation, Monsieur and Madame Guillaume remained at a house belonging to them in the rue du Colombier, where the wedding party took place, and where they intended to live in future; Monsieur and Madame Lebas returned in a hired coach to the rue Saint-Denis and took the helm of the Cat-playing-ball; while the artist, intoxicated with his happiness, caught his dear Augustine in his arms as their coupé reached the rue des Trois-Frères, and carried her to an apartment decorated with the treasures of all the arts.

The raptures of passion to which Théodore now delivered himself up carried the young household through one whole year without a single cloud to dim the blue of the sky beneath which they lived. To such lovers existence brought no burden; each day some new and

exquisite *floriture* of pleasure were evolved by Théodore, who delighted in varying the transports of love with the soft languor of those moments of repose when souls float upward into ecstasy and there forget corporeal union. Augustine, wholly incapable of reflection, gave herself up to the undulating current of her happiness; she felt she could not yield too much to the sanctioned and sacred love of marriage; simple and artless, she knew nothing of the coquetry of denial, still less of the ascendancy a young girl of rank obtains over a husband by clever caprices; she loved too well to calculate the future, and never once imagined that so enchanting a life could come to an end. Happy in being all the life and all the joy of her husband, she believed his inextinguishable love would forever crown her with the noblest of wreaths, just as her devotion and her obedience would remain a perpetual attraction. In fact, the felicity of love had made her so brilliant that her beauty filled her with pride and inspired her with a sense that she could always reign over a man so easy to impassion as Monsieur de Sommervieux. Thus her womanhood gave her no other instructions than those of love. In the bosom of her happiness she was still the ignorant little girl who lived obscurely in the rue Saint-Denis, with no thought of acquiring the manners, or the education, or the tone of the world in which she was to live. Her words were the words of love, and

there, indeed, she did display a certain suppleness of mind and delicacy of expression ; but she was using a language common to all womankind when plunged into a passion which seems their element. If, by chance, Augustine gave utterance to some idea that jarred with those of Théodore, the artist laughed, just as we laugh at the first mistakes of a stranger speaking our language, though they weary us if not corrected.

In spite of all this ardent love, Sommervieux felt, at the end of a year as enchanting as it had been rapid, the need of going back to his work and his old habits. Moreover, his wife was *enceinte*. He renewed his relations with his friends. During the long year of physical suffering, when, for the first time, a young wife carries and nurses an infant, he worked, no doubt, with ardor ; but occasionally he returned for some amusement to the distractions of society. The house to which he preferred to go was that of the Duchesse de Carigliano, who had finally attracted the now celebrated artist to her parties.

When Augustine recovered, and her son no longer required assiduous cares which kept his mother from social life, Théodore had reached a point where self-love roused in him a desire to appear before the world with a beautiful woman whom all men should envy and admire. The delight of showing herself in fashionable salons decked with the fame she derived from her hus-

band, was to Augustine a new harvest of pleasures, but it was also the last that conjugal happiness was to bring her.

She began by offending her husband's vanity; for, in spite of all his efforts, her ignorance, the incorrectness of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas, viewed from the standpoint of her present surroundings, were manifest. The character of de Sommervieux, held in check for nearly two years and a half by the first transports of love, now took, under the calm of a possession no longer fresh, its natural bent, and he returned to the habits which had for a time been diverted from their course. Poetry, painting, and the exquisite enjoyments of the imagination possess inalienable rights over minds that can rise to them. These needs had not been balked in Théodore during those two and a half years; they had simply found another nourishment. When the fields of love were explored, when the artist, like the children, had gathered the roses and the wake-robins with such eagerness that he did not notice his hands were full, the scene changed. It now happened that when the artist showed his wife a sketch of his most beautiful compositions, he took notice that she answered, in the tone of Monsieur Guillaume, "Oh, how pretty!" Such admiration, without the slightest warmth, did not come, he felt, from an inward feeling, it was the expression of blind love. Augustine preferred a glance

of love to the noblest work of art. The only sublimity she was able to perceive was that in her own heart.

At last Théodore could not blind himself to the evidence of a bitter truth; his wife had no feeling for poetry; she could not live in his sphere of thought; she could not follow in the flight of his caprices, his impulses, his joys, his sorrows; she walked the earth in a real world, while his head sought the heavens. Ordinary minds cannot appreciate the ever-springing sufferings of one who, being united to another by the closest of all ties, is compelled to drive back within his own soul the precious overflow of his thoughts, and to crush into nothingness the images which some magic force compels him to create. To such a one the torture is the more cruel when his feeling for his companion commands him, as his first duty, to keep nothing from her, neither the outcome of his thoughts nor the effusions of his soul. The will of nature is not to be evaded; it is inexorable, like necessity, which is, as it were, a sort of social law. Sommervieux took refuge in the silence and solitude of his studio, hoping that the habit of living among artists might train his wife and develop the benumbed germs of mind which all superior souls believe to exist in other souls.

But, alas, Augustine was too sincerely religious not to be frightened at the tone of the artist-world. At the first dinner given by Théodore, a young painter said to

her, with a juvenile light-heartedness she was unable to understand, but which really absolves all jests about religion: "Why, madame, your paradise is not as glorious as Raffaele's Transfiguration, but I get a little tired of looking even at that." Augustine, consequently, met this brilliant and artistic society in a spirit of disapproval, which was at once perceived. She became a constraint upon it. When artists are constrained they are pitiless; they either fly, or they stay and scoff.

Madame Guillaume had, among other absurdities, that of magnifying the dignity she considered to be an appanage of a married woman; and though Augustine had often laughed about it she was unable to keep herself from a slight imitation of the maternal prudery. This exaggeration of purity, which virtuous women do not always escape, gave rise to a few harmless caricatures and epigrams, innocent nonsense in good taste, with which de Sommervieux could scarcely be angry. In fact, such jests were only reprisals on the part of his friends. Still, nothing could be really a jest to a soul so ready as that of Théodore to receive impressions from without. Thus he was led, perhaps insensibly, to a coldness of feeling which went on increasing. Whoso desires to reach perfect conjugal happiness must climb a mountain along a narrow way close to a sharp and slippery precipice; down that precipice

the artist's love now slid. He believed his wife incapable of understanding the moral considerations which justified, to his mind, the course he now adopted towards her; and he thought himself innocent in hiding thoughts she could not comprehend, and in doing acts which could never be justified before the tribunal of her commonplace conscience.

Augustine retired into gloomy and silent sorrow. These secret feelings drew a veil between the married pair which grew thicker day by day. Though her husband did not cease his attentions to her, Augustine could not keep from trembling when she saw him reserving for society the treasures of mind and charm which he had hitherto bestowed on her. Soon she took fatally to heart the lively talk she heard in the world about man's inconstancy. She made no complaint, but her whole bearing was equivalent to a reproach. Three years after her marriage this young and pretty woman, who seemed so brilliant in her brilliant equipage, who lived in a sphere of fame and wealth, always envied by careless and unobserving people who never rightly estimate the situations of life, was a prey to bitter grief; her color faded; she reflected, she compared; and then, at last, sorrow revealed to her the axioms of experience.

She resolved to maintain herself courageously within the circle of her duty, hoping that such generous conduct would, sooner or later, win back her husband's

love; but it was not to be. When Sommervieux, tired of work, left his studio, Augustine never hid her work so quickly that the artist did not see her mending the household linen or his own with the minute care of a good housekeeper. She supplied, generously and without a word, the money required for her husband's extravagances; but in her desire to save her dear Théodore's own fortune she was too economical on herself and on certain details of the housekeeping. Such conduct is incompatible with the free and easy ways of artists, who, when they reach the end of their tether, have enjoyed life so much that they never ask the reason of their ruin.

It is useless to note each lowered tone of color through which the brilliancy of their honeymoon faded and then expired, leaving them in deep darkness. One evening poor Augustine, who had lately heard her husband speaking with enthusiasm of the Duchesse de Carigliano, received some ill-natured information on the nature of de Sommervieux's attachment to that celebrated coquette of the imperial court. At twenty-one, in the glow of youth and beauty, Augustine learned she was betrayed for a woman of thirty-six. Feeling herself wretched in the midst of society and of *fêtes* that were now a desert to her, the poor little creature no longer noticed the admiration she excited nor the envy she inspired. Her face took another expression. Sorrow laid

upon each feature the gentleness of resignation and the pallor of rejected love. It was not long before men, known for their seductive powers, courted her ; but she remained solitary and virtuous. A few contemptuous words which escaped her husband brought her to intolerable despair. Fatal gleams of light now showed her the points where, through the pettiness of her education, complete union between her soul and that of Théodore had been prevented ; and her love was great enough to absolve him and blame herself. She wept tears of blood as she saw, too late, that there are ill-assorted marriages of minds as well as of habits and of ranks.

Thinking over the spring-tide happiness of their union, she comprehended the fulness of her past joys, and admitted to her own soul that so rich a harvest of love was indeed a lifetime which might well be paid for by her present sorrow. And yet she loved with too single a mind to lose all hope ; and she was brave enough at one-and-twenty to endeavor to educate herself and make her imagination more worthy of the one she so admired. “ If I am not a poet,” she said in her heart, “ at least I will understand poetry.” Employing that force of will and energy which all women possess when they love, Madame de Sommerieux attempted to change her nature, her habits, and her ideas ; but though she read many volumes and

studied with the utmost courage, she only succeeded in making herself less ignorant. Quickness of mind and the charms of conversation are gifts of nature or the fruits of an education begun in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but she could not sing with taste. She understood literature and even the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to train her rebellious memory. She listened with interest to conversation in society, but she contributed nothing to it. Her religious ideas and the prejudices of her early youth prevented the complete emancipation of her mind. And besides all this, a bias against her which she could not conquer had, little by little, glided into her husband's mind. The artist laughed in his heart at those who praised his wife to him, and his laughter was not unfounded. Embarrassed by her strong desire to please him, she felt her mind and her knowledge melt away in his presence. Even her fidelity displeased the unfaithful husband; it seemed as though he would fain see her guilty of wrong when he complained of her virtue as unfeeling. Augustine struggled hard to abdicate her reason, to yield and bend to the fancies and caprices of her husband, and to devote her whole life to soothe the egotism of his vanity, — she never gathered the fruit of her sacrifices. Perhaps they had each let the moment go by when souls can comprehend each other. The day came when the too-sensitive heart of the young wife

received a blow, — one of those shocks which strain the ties of feeling so far that it seems as though they snapped. At first she isolated herself. But soon the fatal thought entered her mind to seek advice and consolation from her own family.

Accordingly, one morning early, she drove to the grotesque entrance of the silent and gloomy house in which her childhood had been passed. She sighed as she looked at the window from which she had sent a first kiss to him who had filled her life with fame and sorrow. Nothing was changed in those cavernous precincts, except that the business had taken a new lease of life. Augustine's sister sat behind the counter in her mother's old place. The poor afflicted woman met her brother-in-law with a pen behind his ear, and he hardly listened to her, so busy was he. The alarming signs of an approaching "inventory" were evident, and in a few moments he left her, asking to be excused.

Her sister received her rather coldly, and showed some ill-will. In fact, Augustine in her palmy days, brilliant in happiness and driving about in a pretty equipage, had never come to see her sister except in passing. The wife of the prudent Lebas now imagined that money was the cause of this early visit, and she assumed a reserved tone, which made Augustine smile. The artist's wife saw that her mother had a counterpart (except for the lappets of her cap) who

would keep up the antique dignity of the Cat-playing-ball. At breakfast, however, she noticed certain changes which did honor to the good sense of Joseph Lebas, — the clerks no longer rose and went away at dessert; they were allowed to use their faculty of speech, and the abundance on the table showed ease and comfort, without luxury. The young woman of society noticed the coupons of a box at the Français, where she remembered having seen her sister from time to time. Madame Lebas wore a cashmere shawl over her shoulders, the elegance of which was a sign of the generosity with which her husband treated her. In short, the pair were advancing with their century.

Augustine was deeply moved to see, during the course of the day, many signs of a calm and equable happiness enjoyed by this well-assorted couple, — a happiness without exaltation, it was true, but also without peril. They had taken life as a commercial enterprise, in which their first duty was to honor their business. Not finding in her husband any great warmth of love, Virginie had set to work to produce it. Led insensibly to respect and to cherish his wife, the time it took for their wedded happiness to blossom now seemed to Joseph Lebas as a pledge of its duration; so, when the sorrowful Augustine told her tale of trouble, she was forced to endure a deluge of the

commonplace ideas which the ethics of the rue Saint-Denis suggested to Virginie.

“The evil is done, wife,” said Joseph Lebas; “we must now try to give our sister the best advice.” Whereupon, the able man of business ponderously explained the relief that the laws and established customs might give to Augustine, and so enable her to surmount her troubles. He numbered, if we may so express it, all the considerations; ranged them in categories, as though they were goods of different qualities; then he put them in the scales, weighed them, and finally came to the conclusion that necessity required his sister-in-law to take a firm stand, — a decision which did not satisfy the love she still felt for her husband, a feeling that was reawakened in full force when she heard Lebas discussing judicial methods of asserting her rights. Augustine thanked her two friends and returned home, more undecided than before she consulted them.

The next day she ventured to the house in the rue du Colombier, intending to confide her sorrows to her father and mother, for she was like those hopelessly ill persons who try all remedies in sheer despair, even the recipes of old women. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume received their daughter with a warmth that touched her; the visit brought an interest which, to them, was a treasure. For four years they had floated

on the sea of life like navigators without chart or compass. Sitting in their chimney-corner, they told each other again and again the disasters of the *maximum*; the story of their first purchases of cloth, the manner in which they escaped bankruptcy, and above all, the tale of the famous Lecocq failure, old Guillaume's battle of Marengo. Then, when these stock stories were exhausted, they recapitulated the profits of their most productive years, or reminded each other of the gossip of the Saint-Denis quarter. At two o'clock Père Guillaume invariably went out to give an eye to the establishment of the Cat-playing-ball; on his way back he stopped at all the shops which were formerly his rivals, whose young proprietors now endeavored to inveigle the old merchant into speculative investments which, according to his usual custom, he never positively declined. Two good Norman horses were dying of plethora in the stable, but Madame Guillaume never used them except to be conveyed on Sundays to high mass at the parish church. Three times a week the worthy couple kept open table.

Thanks to the influence of his son-in-law, de Sommervieux, Père Guillaume had been appointed member of the advisory committee on the equipment of troops. Ever since her husband had held that high post under government, Madame Guillaume had felt it her duty to maintain its dignity; her rooms were therefore encum-

bered with so many ornaments of gold and silver, so much tasteless though costly furniture, that the simplest of them looked like a tawdry chapel. Economy and prodigality seemed fighting for precedence in all the accessories of the house. It really looked as if old Guillaume had considered the purchase of everything in it, down to a candlestick, as an investment. In the midst of this bazaar, de Sommervieux's famous picture held the place of honor, and was a source of consolation to Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, who turned their spectacled eyes twenty times a day on that transcript of their old life, to them so active and so exciting.

The appearance of the house and of these rooms where all things had an odor of old age and mediocrity, the spectacle of the two old people stranded on a rock far from the real world and the ideas that move it, surprised and affected Augustine; she recognized the second half of the picture which had struck her so forcibly at the house of Joseph Lebas, — that of an active life without movement, a sort of mechanical and instinctive existence, like that of rolling on castors; and there came into her mind a sense of pride in her sorrows as she remembered how they sprang from a happiness of eighteen months duration, worth more to her than a thousand existences like this, the void of which now seemed to her horrible. But she hid the rather un-

kindly thought, and displayed her new qualities of mind to her old parents and the endearing tenderness which love had taught her, hoping to win them to listen favorably to her matrimonial trials.

Old people delight in such confidences. Madame Guillaume wished to hear the minutest particulars of that strange life which, to her, was almost fabulous. "The Travels of the Baron de La Houtan," which she had begun many times and never finished, had revealed to her nothing more inconceivable among the savages of Canada.

"But, my dear child," she said, "do you mean to say that your husband shuts himself up with naked women, and you are simple enough to believe he paints them?" With these words she laid her spectacles on a work-table, shook out her petticoats, and laid her clasped hands on her knees, raised by a foot-warmer, — her favorite attitude.

"But, my dear mother, all painters are obliged to employ models."

"He took care not to tell us *that* when he asked you in marriage. If I had known it I would never have given my daughter to a man with such a trade. Religion forbids such horrors; they are immoral. What time of night do you say he comes home?"

"Oh, at one o'clock, — or two, perhaps."

The old people looked at each other in amazement.

“Then he gambles,” said Monsieur Guillaume. “In my day it was only gamblers who stayed out so late.”

Augustine made a little face to deny the accusation.

“You must suffer dreadfully waiting for him,” said Madame Guillaume. “But no, you go to bed, I hope, — don’t you? Then when he has gambled away all his money, the monster comes home and wakes you up?”

“No, mother; on the contrary, he is sometimes very gay; indeed, when the weather is fine, he often asks me to get up and go into the woods with him.”

“Into the woods! — at that hour? Your house must be very small if he has n’t room enough in it to stretch his legs! No, no, it is to give you cold that the villain makes such proposals as that; he wants to get rid of you. Did any one ever know a decent man with a home of his own and a steady business galloping round like a were-wolf!”

“But, my dear mother, you don’t understand that he needs excitements to develop his genius. He loves the scenes which —”

“Scenes! I’d make him fine scenes, I would,” cried Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. “How can you keep on any terms at all with such a man? And I don’t like that idea of his drinking nothing but water. It is n’t wholesome. Why does he dislike to see women eat? what a strange notion! He’s a madman, that’s what he is. All that you say of him proves

it. No sane man leaves his home without a word, and stays away ten days. He told you he went to Dieppe to paint the sea! How can any one paint the sea? He told you such nonsense to blind you."

Augustine opened her lips to defend her husband, but Madame Guillaume silenced her with a motion of her hand which the old habit of obedience led her to obey, and the old woman continued, in a sharp voice: "Don't talk to me of that man. He never set foot in a church except to marry you. Persons who have no religion are capable of anything. Did your father ever venture to hide anything from me, or keep silent three days without saying boo to me, and then begin to chatter like a blind magpie? No!"

"My dear mother, you judge superior men too severely. If they had ideas like other people they would not be men of genius."

"Well! then men of genius should keep to themselves and not marry. Do you mean to tell me that a man can make his wife miserable, and if he has got genius it is all right? Genius! I don't see much genius in saying a thing is black and white in the same breath, and ramming people's words down their throats, and lording it over his family, and never letting his wife know how to take him, and forbidding her to amuse herself unless monsieur, forsooth, is gay, and forcing her to be gloomy as soon as he is —"

“But, my dear mother, the reason for all such imaginations —”

“What do you mean by all such imaginations?” cried Madame Guillaume, again interrupting her daughter. “He has fine ones, faith! What sort of man is he who takes a notion, without consulting a doctor, to eat nothing but vegetables? If he did it out of piety, such a diet might do him some good; but he has no more religion than a Huguenot. Who ever saw a man in his senses love a horse better than he loves his neighbor, and have his hair curled like a pagan image, and cover his statues with muslin, and shut up the windows in the daytime to work by lamplight? Come, come, don’t talk to me; if he were not so grossly immoral he ought to be put in the insane asylum. You had better consult Monsieur Loraux, the vicar of Saint-Sulpice; ask him what he thinks of all this. He’ll tell you that your husband does n’t behave like a Christian man.”

“Oh! mother, how can you think —”

“Think! yes I do think it! You used to love him and therefore you don’t see these things. But I remember how I saw him, not long after your marriage, in the Champs-Élysées. He was on horseback. Well, he galloped at full speed for a little distance, then he stopped and went at a snail’s pace. I said to myself then, ‘There’s a man who has no sense.’”

“Ah!” cried Monsieur Guillaume, rubbing his hands,

“what a good thing it is I had your property settled on yourself.”

After Augustine had the imprudence to explain her real causes of complaint against her husband the two old people were silent with indignation. Madame Guillaume uttered the word “divorce.” It seemed to awaken the now inactive old business-man. Moved by his love for his daughter and also by the excitement such a step would give to his eventless life, Père Guillaume roused himself to action. He demanded divorce, talked of managing it, argued the pros and cons, and promised his daughter to pay all the costs, engage the lawyers, see the judges, and move heaven and earth. Madame de Sommervieux, much alarmed, refused his services declaring she would not separate from her husband were she ten times more unhappy than she was, and saying no more about her sorrows. After the old people had endeavored, but in vain, to soothe her with many little silent and consoling attentions, Augustine went home feeling the impossibility of getting narrow minds to take a just view of superior men. She learned then that a wife should hide from all the world, even from her parents, the sorrows for which it is so difficult to obtain true sympathy. The storms and the sufferings of the higher spheres of human existence are comprehended only by the noble minds which inhabit them. In all things, we can be justly judged only by our equals.

Thus poor Augustine found herself once more in the cold atmosphere of her home, cast back into the horrors of her lonely meditations. Study no longer availed her, for study had not restored her husband's heart. Initiated into the secrets of those souls of fire but deprived of their resources, she entered deeply into their trials without sharing their joys. She became disgusted with the world, which seemed to her small and petty indeed in presence of events born of passion. In short, life to her was a failure.

One evening a thought came into her mind which illuminated the dark regions of her grief with a gleam of celestial light. Such a thought could have smiled into no heart that was less pure and guileless than hers. She resolved to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano, not to ask for the heart of her husband, but to learn from that great lady the arts which had taken him from her; to interest that proud woman of the world in the mother of her friend's children; to soften her, to make her the accomplice of her future peace, just as she was now the instrument of her present sorrow.

So, one day, the timid Augustine, armed with supernatural courage, got into her carriage about two o'clock in the afternoon, intending to make her way into the boudoir of the celebrated lady, who was never visible until that time of day.

Madame de Sommervieux had never yet seen any of

the old and sumptuous mansions of the faubourg Saint-Germain. When she passed through the majestic vestibule, the noble stairways, the vast salons, filled with flowers in spite of the inclemencies of the season, and decorated with the natural taste of women born to opulence or to the elegant habits of the aristocracy, Augustine was conscious of a terrible constriction of her heart. She envied the secrets of an elegance of which till then she had had no idea ; she inhaled a breath of grandeur which explained to her the charm that house possessed over her husband.

When she reached the private apartments of the duchess she felt both jealousy and despair as she noted the voluptuous arrangement of the furniture, the draperies, the hangings upon the walls. There, disorder was a grace ; there, luxury affected disdain of mere richness. The perfume of this soft atmosphere pleased the senses without annoying them. The accessories of these rooms harmonized with the vista of gardens and a lawn planted with trees seen through the windows. All was seductive, and yet no calculated seduction was felt. The genius of the mistress of these apartments pervaded the salon in which Augustine now awaited her. Madame de Sommervieux endeavored to guess the character of her rival from the objects about the room ; but there was something impenetrable in its disorder as in its symmetry, and to the guileless Augustine it was

a sealed book. All that she could really make out was that the duchess was a superior woman *as woman*. The discovery brought her a painful thought.

“Alas! can it be true,” she said to herself, “that a simple and loving heart does not suffice an artist? and to balance the weight of their strong souls must they be joined to feminine souls whose force is equal to their own? If I had been brought up like this siren our weapons at least would have been matched for the struggle.”

“But I am not at home!” The curt, sharp words, though said in a low voice in the adjoining boudoir, were overheard by Augustine, whose heart throbbed.

“The lady is here,” said the waiting-woman.

“You are crazy! Show her in,” added the duchess, changing her voice to a cordially polite tone. Evidently she expected then to be overheard.

Augustine advanced timidly. At the farther end of the cool boudoir she saw the duchess luxuriously reclining on a brown-velvet ottoman placed in the centre of a species of half-circle formed by folds of muslin draped over a yellow ground. Ornaments of gilded bronze, arranged with exquisite taste, heightened still further the effect of the dais under which the duchess posed like an antique statue. The dark color of the velvet enabled her to lose no means of seduction. A soft *chiaro-scuro*, favorable to her beauty, seemed more a

reflection than a light. A few choice flowers lifted their fragrant heads from the Sèvres vases. As this scene caught the eye of the astonished Augustine she came forward so quickly and softly that she surprised a glance from the eyes of the enchantress. That glance seemed to say to a person whom at first the painter's wife could not see: "Wait; you shall see a pretty woman, and help me to put up with a tiresome visit."

As Augustine advanced the duchess rose, and made her sit beside her.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, madame?" she said, with a smile full of charm.

"Why so false?" thought Augustine, who merely bowed her head.

Silence was a necessity; for the young woman now saw a witness to the interview in the person of an officer of the army, — the youngest, and most elegant and dashing of the colonels. His clothes, which were those of a civilian, set off the graces of his person. His face, full of life and youth and very expressive, was still further enlivened by small moustachios, black as jet and waxed to a point, by a well-trimmed imperial, carefully combed whiskers and a forest of black hair which was somewhat in disorder. He played with a riding-whip and showed an ease and freedom of manner which agreed well with the satisfied expression of his face and the elegance of his dress; the ribbons in

his buttonhole were carelessly knotted and he seemed more vain of his appearance than of his courage. Augustine looked at the Duchesse de Carigliano, with a glance at the colonel in which many prayers were included.

“ Well, adieu, Monsieur d’Aiglemont ; we shall meet in the Bois de Boulogne,” said the siren, in a tone as if the words were the result of some agreement made before Augustine entered the room ; she accompanied them with a threatening glance, which the officer deserved, perhaps, for the undisguised admiration with which he looked at the modest flower who contrasted so admirably with the haughty duchess. The young dandy bowed in silence, turned on the heels of his boots, and gracefully left the room. At that moment Augustine, watching her rival whose eyes followed the brilliant officer, caught sight of a sentiment the fugitive expressions of which are known to every woman. She saw with bitter sorrow that her visit would be useless ; the artful duchess was too eager for homage not to have a pitiless heart.

“ Madame,” said Augustine, in a broken voice, “ the step I now take will seem very strange to you ; but despair has its madness, and that is my excuse. I can now understand only too well why Théodore prefers your house to mine, and how it is that your mind should exercise so great an empire over him. Alas !

I have but to look within myself to find reasons that are more than sufficient. But I adore my husband, madame. Two years of sorrow have not changed the love of my heart, though I have lost his. In my madness I have dared to believe that I might struggle against you; I have come to you to be told by what means I can triumph over you. Oh, madame!" cried the young woman, seizing the hand which her rival allowed her to take, "never will I pray God for my own happiness with such fervor as I will pray to him for yours, if you will help me to recover, I will not say the love, but the friendship of my husband. I have no longer any hope except in you. Ah! tell me how it is you have won him, and made him forget the early days of—"

At these words Augustine, choking with her sobs, was compelled to pause. Ashamed of her weakness, she covered her face with a handkerchief that was wet with tears.

"Ah, what a child you are, my dear little lady!" said the duchess, fascinated by the novelty of the scene and touched in spite of herself at receiving such homage from as perfect a virtue as there was in Paris, taking the young wife's handkerchief and herself drying her tears and soothing her with a few murmured monosyllables of graceful pity.

After a moment's silence the accomplished coquette,

clasping poor Augustine's pretty hands in her own, which had a rare character of noble beauty and power, said, in a gentle and even affectionate voice: "My first advice will be not to weep; tears are unbecoming. We must learn how to conquer sorrows which make us ill, for love will not stay long on a bed of pain. Sadness may at first bestow a certain charm which pleases a man, but it ends by sharpening the features and fading the color of the sweetest face. And remember, our tyrants have the self-love to require that their slaves shall be always gay."

"Ah, madame! is it within my power to cease feeling? How is it possible not to die a thousand deaths when we see a face which once shone for us with love and joy, now harsh, and cold, and indifferent? No, I cannot control my heart."

"So much the worse for you, my poor dear. But I think I already know your history. In the first place, be very sure that if your husband has been unfaithful to you, I am not his accomplice. If I made a point of attracting him to my salon, it was, I freely confess, out of vanity; he was famous, and he went nowhere. I like you too well already to tell you all the follies he has committed for me. But I shall reveal one of them because it may perhaps help us to bring him back to you, and to punish him for the audacity he has lately shown in his proceedings toward me. He will end by com-

promising me. I know the world too well, my dear, to put myself at the mercy of a superior man. Believe me, it is very well to let them court us, but to marry them is a blunder. We women should admire men of genius, enjoy them as we would a play, but live with them — never! No, no! it is like going behind the scenes and seeing the machinery, instead of sitting in our boxes and enjoying the illusions. But with you, my poor child, the harm is done, is it not? Well, then, you must try to arm yourself against tyranny.”

“ Ah, madame, as I entered this house and before I saw you I became aware of certain arts that I never suspected.”

“ Well, come and see me sometimes, and you will soon learn the science of such trifles, — really important, however, in their effects. External things are to fools more than one half of life; and for that reason more than one man of talent is a fool in spite of his superiority. I will venture to lay a wager that you have never refused anything to Théodore.”

“ How can we refuse anything to those we love? ”

“ Poor, innocent child! I adore your folly. Let me tell you that the more we love the less we should let a man, specially a husband, see the extent of our passion. Whoever loves the most is certain to be the one that is tyrannized over, and, worse than all, deserted sooner or later. Whoever desires to reign must — ”

“Oh, madame, must we all dissimulate, calculate, be false at heart, make ourselves an artificial nature, and forever? Oh, who could live thus? Could you —”

She hesitated; the duchess smiled.

“My dear,” resumed the great lady in a grave tone, “conjugal happiness has been from time immemorial a speculation, a matter which required particular study. If you persist in talking passion while I am talking marriage we shall never understand each other. Listen to me,” she continued, in a confidential tone. “I have been in the way of seeing many of the superior men of our day. Those of them who married chose, with few exceptions, women who were ciphers. Well, those women have governed them just as the Emperor governs us, and they have been, if not beloved, at least always respected by them. I am fond of secrets, especially those that concern our sex, and to amuse myself I have sought the key to that riddle. Well, my dear little angel, it is this, — those good women knew enough to analyze the characters of their husbands; without being frightened, as you have been, at their superiority, they have cleverly discovered the qualities those men lacked, and whether they themselves had them or only feigned to have them, they found means to make such a show of those very qualities before the eyes of their husbands that they ended by mastering them. Remember one thing more: those

souls which seem so great all have a little grain of folly in them, and it is our business to make the most of it. If we set our wills to rule them and let nothing deter us, but concentrate all our actions, our ideas, our fascinations upon that, we can master those eminently capricious minds,—for the very inconstancy of their thoughts gives us the means of influencing them.”

“Oh!” cried the young wife, horror-struck, “can that be life? Then it is a battle—”

“—in which whoso would win must threaten,” said the duchess laughing. “Our power is artificial. Consequently we should never let a man despise us; we can never rise after such a fall except through vile manœuvres. Come,” she added, “I will give you the means to hold your husband in chains.”

She rose, and guided her young and innocent pupil in conjugal wiles through the labyrinths of her little palace. They came presently to a private staircase which communicated with the state apartments. When the duchess touched the secret lock of the door she stopped, looked at Augustine with an inimitable air of wiliness and grace, and said, smiling: “My dear, the Duc de Carigliano adores me,—well, he would not dare to enter this door without my permission. Yet he is a man who has the habit of command over thousands of soldiers. He can face a battery, but in my presence—he is afraid.”

Augustine sighed. They reached a noble gallery, where the duchess led the painter's wife before the portrait Théodore had once made of Mademoiselle Guillaume. At sight of it Augustine uttered a cry.

“I knew it was no longer in the house,” she said, “but — here!”

“My dear child, I exacted it only to see how far the folly of a man of genius would go. I intended to return it to you sooner or later; for I did not expect the pleasure of seeing the original standing before the copy. I will have the picture taken to your carriage while we finish our conversation. If, armed with that talisman, you are not mistress of your husband during the next hundred years, you are not a woman and you deserve your fate.”

Augustine kissed the hand of the great lady, who pressed her to her heart with all the more tenderness because she was certain to have forgotten her on the morrow. This scene might have destroyed forever the purity and candor of a less virtuous woman than Augustine, to whom the secrets revealed by the duchess could have been either salutary or fatal; but the astute policy of the higher social spheres suited Augustine as little as the narrow reasoning of Joseph Lebas or the silly morality of Madame Guillaume. Strange result of the false positions into which we are thrown by the even trivial mistakes we make in life! Augustine was

like an Alpine herdsman overtaken by an avalanche ; if he hesitates, or listens to the cries of his comrades, he is lost. In these great crises the heart either breaks or hardens.

Madame de Sommervieux returned home a prey to an agitation it is difficult to describe. Her conversation with the duchess had roused a thousand contradictory ideas in her mind. Like the sheep of the fable, full of courage when the wolf was away, she preached to herself and laid down admirable lines of conduct ; she imagined stratagems of coquetry ; she talked to her husband, he being absent, with all the resources of that eloquence which never leaves a woman ; then, remembering the glance of Théodore's fixed, light eyes, she trembled with fear. When she asked if Monsieur were at home, her voice failed her. Hearing that he would not be at home to dinner, she was conscious of a feeling of inexplicable relief. Like a criminal who appeals against a death-sentence, the delay, however short, seemed to her a lifetime.

She placed the portrait in her bedroom, and awaited her husband in all the agonies of hope. Too well she knew that this attempt would decide her whole future, and she trembled at every sound, even at the ticking of her clock, which seemed to increase her fears by measuring them. She tried to cheat time ; the idea occurred to her to dress in a manner that made her still

more like the portrait. Then, knowing her husband's uneasy nature, she caused her rooms to be lighted up with unusual brilliancy, certain that curiosity would bring him to her as soon as he came in. Midnight sounded, and at the groom's cry the gates opened and the painter's carriage rolled into the silent courtyard.

“What is the meaning of all this illumination?” asked Théodore, gayly, as he entered his wife's room.

Augustine took advantage of so favorable a moment and threw herself into his arms as she pointed to the portrait. The artist stood still; immovable as a rock, gazing alternately at Augustine and at the tell-tale canvas. The timid wife, half-dead with fear, watched the changing brow, that terrible brow, and saw the cruel wrinkles gathering like clouds; then the blood seemed to curdle in her veins when, with a flaming eye and a husky voice, he began to question her.

“Where did you get that picture?”

“The Duchesse de Carigliano returned it to me.”

“Did you ask her for it?”

“I did not know she had it.”

The softness, or rather the enchanting melody of that angel voice might have turned the heart of cannibals, but not that of an artist in the tortures of wounded vanity.

“It is worthy of her!” cried the artist, in a voice of thunder. “I will be revenged!” he said, striding up

and down the room. "She shall die of shame; I will paint her, — yes, I will exhibit her in the character of Messalina leaving Claudius' palace by night."

"Théodore!" said a faint voice.

"I will kill her!"

"My husband!"

"She loves that little cavalry colonel, because he rides well!"

"Théodore!"

"Let me alone!" said the painter to his wife, in a voice that was almost a roar.

The scene is too repulsive to depict here; the rage of the artist led him, before it ended, to words and acts which a woman less young and timid than Augustine would have ascribed to insanity.

About eight o'clock on the following morning Madame Guillaume found her daughter pale, with red eyes and her hair in disorder, gazing on the fragments of a painted canvas and the pieces of a broken frame which lay scattered on the floor. Augustine, almost unconscious with grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture of despair.

"It is not such a very great loss," cried the old woman. "It was very like you, that's true; but I'm told there is a man on the boulevard who paints charming portraits for a hundred and fifty francs."

"Ah, mother!"

“ Poor dear ! well, you are right,” answered Madame Guillaume, mistaking the meaning of the look her daughter gave her ; “ there is nothing so tender as a mother’s love. My dearest, I can guess it all ; tell me your troubles and I’ll comfort you. Your maid has told me dreadful things ; I always said your husband was a madman, — why, he’s a monster ! ”

Augustine put her finger on her pallid lips as if to implore silence. During that terrible night sorrow had brought her the patient resignation which, in mothers and in loving women, surpasses in its effects all other human forces, and reveals, perhaps, the existence of certain fibres in the hearts of women which God has denied to those of men.

An inscription engraved on a broken column in the cemetery of Montmartre states that Madame de Somervieux died at twenty-seven years of age. Between the simple lines of her epitaph a friend of the timid creature reads the last scenes of a drama. Every year, on the solemn second of November, as he passes before that early grave he never fails to ask himself if stronger women than Augustine are not needed for the powerful clasp of genius.

“ The modest, humble flower, blooming in the valley dies,” he thought, “ if transplanted nearer to heaven, to the regions where the storms gather and the sun wilts.”

COLONEL CHABERT.

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE IDA DE BOCARMÉ
NÉE DU CHASTELER.

“ THERE ’s our old top-coat again ! ”

This exclamation came from the lips of a clerk of the species called in Parisian law-offices “ gutter-jumpers,” who was at the moment munching with a very good appetite a slice of bread. He took a little of the crumb and made a pellet, which he flung, with a laugh, through the blinds of the window against which he was leaning. Well-aimed, the pellet rebounded nearly to the height of the window after hitting the hat of a stranger who was crossing the courtyard of a house in the rue Vivienne, where Maître Derville, the lawyer, resided.

“ Come, come, Simonnin, don’t play tricks, or I’ll turn you off. No matter how poor a client may be, he is a man, the devil take you ! ” said the head-clerk, pausing as he added up a bill of costs.

The gutter-jumper is usually, like Simonnin, a lad of thirteen or fourteen years of age, who in all law-offices is under the particular supervision of the head-clerk, whose errands he does, and whose love-letters he carries, together with the writs of the courts and the petitions entered. He belongs to the *gamin de Paris* through his ethics, and to the pettifogging side of law through fate. The lad is usually pitiless, undisciplined, totally without reverence, a scoffer, a writer of epigrams, lazy, and also greedy. Nevertheless, all such little fellows have an old mother living on some fifth story, with whom they share the thirty or forty francs they earn monthly."

"If it is a man, why do you call him an 'old top-coat,'" said Simonnin, in the tone of a scholar who detects his master in a mistake.

Thereupon he returned to the munching of his bread with a bit of cheese, leaning his shoulder against the window-frame; for he took his rest standing, like the horses of the hackney-coaches, with one leg raised and supported against the other.

"Couldn't we play that old guy some trick?" said the third clerk, Godeschal, in a low voice, stopping in the middle of a legal document he was dictating to be engrossed by the fourth clerk and copied by two neophytes from the provinces. Having made the above suggestion, he went on with his dictation: "*But in*

his gracious and benevolent wisdom His Majesty Louis the Eighteenth, — Write all the letters, hi, there! Desroches the learned! — so soon as he recovered the reins of power, understood — What did that fat joker understand, I'd like to know? — the high mission to which Divine Providence had called him! Put an exclamation mark and six dots; they are pious enough at the Palais to let 'em pass — and his first thought was, as is proved by the date of the ordinance herein named, to repair evils caused by the frightful and lamentable disasters of the revolutionary period by restoring to his faithful and numerous adherents — 'Numerous' is a bit of flattery which ought to please the court — all their unsold property wheresoever situate, whether in the public domain or the ordinary and extraordinary crown domains, or in the endowments of public institutions; for we contend and hold ourselves able to maintain that such is the spirit and the meaning of the gracious ordinance, rendered in — ”

“Stop, stop,” said Godeschal to the three clerks; “that rascally sentence has come to the end of my paper and is n't done yet. Well,” he added, stopping to wet the back of the cahier with his tongue to turn the thick page of his stamped paper, “if you want to play the old top-coat a trick tell him that the master is so busy he can talk to clients only between two and three

o'clock in the morning ; we'll see if he comes then, the old villain !” and Godeschal returned to his dictation : “ *gracious ordinance rendered in* — Have you got that down ? ”

“ Yes,” cried the three copyists.

“ *Rendered in* — Hi, papa Boucard, what's the date of that ordinance ? Dot your i's, *unam et omnes* — it fills up.”

“ *Omnes*,” repeated one of the clerks before Boucard, the head-clerk, could answer.

“ Good heavens ! you have n't written that, have you ? ” cried Godeschal, looking at the provincial newcomer with a truculent air.

“ Yes, he has,” said Desroches, the fourth clerk, leaning over to look at his neighbor's copy, “ he has written, “ Dot your i's, and he spells it e-y-e-s.”

All the clerks burst into a roar of laughter.

“ Do you call that a law-term, Monsieur Huré ? ” cried Simonnin, “ and you say you come from Mortagne ! ”

“ Scratch it out carefully,” said the head-clerk. “ If one of the judges were to get hold of the petition and see that, the master would never hear the last of it. Come, no more such blunders, Monsieur Huré ; a Norman ought to know better than to write a petition carelessly ; it's the ‘ Shoulder-arms ! ’ of the legal guild.”

Rendered in — in —” went on Godeschal. “ Do tell me when, Boucard ? ”

“ June, 1814,” replied the head-clerk, without raising his head from his work.

A knock at the door interrupted the next sentence of the prolix petition. Five grinning clerks, with lively, satirical eyes and curly heads, turned their noses towards the door, having all shouted with one voice, “ Come in ! ” Boucard remained with his head buried in a mound of deeds, and went on making out the bill of costs on which he was employed.

The office was a large room, furnished with the classic stove that adorns all other pettifogging precincts. The pipes went diagonally across the room and entered the chimney, on the marble mantel-shelf of which were diverse bits of bread, triangles of Brie cheese, fresh pork-chops, glasses, bottles, and a cup of chocolate for the head-clerk. The smell of these comestibles amalgamated so well with the offensive odor of the over-heated stove and the peculiar exhalations of desks and papers that the stench of a fox would hardly have been perceived. The floor was covered with mud and snow brought in by the clerks. Near the window stood the rolling-top desk of the head-clerk, and next to it the little table of the second clerk. The latter was now on duty in the courts, where he usually went between eight and nine o'clock in the morning. The sole decorations of the office were the well-known large yellow posters which announce attachments on property, mortgagee-

sales, litigations between guardians and minors, and auctions, final or postponed, the glory of legal offices.

Behind the head-clerk, and covering the wall from top to bottom, was a case with an enormous number of pigeon-holes, each stuffed with bundles of papers, from which hung innumerable tags and those bits of red tape which give special character to legal documents. The lower shelves of the case were filled with paste-board boxes, yellowed by time and edged with blue paper, on which could be read the names of the more distinguished clients whose affairs were cooking at the present time. The dirty window-panes let in but a small amount of light; besides, in the month of February there are very few law-offices in Paris where the clerks can write without a lamp before ten o'clock in the day. Such offices are invariably neglected, and for the reason that while every one goes there nobody stays; no personal interest attaches to so mean a spot; neither the lawyers, nor the clients, nor the clerks, care for the appearance of the place which is to the latter a school, to the clients a means, to the master a laboratory. The greasy furniture is transmitted from lawyer to lawyer with such scrupulous exactness that certain offices still possess boxes of "residues," parchments engrossed in black-letter, and bags, which have descended from the solicitors of the "Chlet," an abbreviation of the word "Châtelet," an institution

which represented under the old order of things what a court of common pleas is in our day.

This dark office, choked with dust and dirt, was therefore, like all such offices, repulsive to clients, and one of the ugly monstrosities of Paris. Certainly, if the damp sacristies where prayers are weighed and paid for like spices, if the second-hand shops, where flutter rags which blight the illusions of life by revealing to us the end of our festive arrays, if these two sewers of poesy did not exist, a lawyer's office would be the most horrible of all social dens. But the same characteristic may be seen in gambling-houses, in court-rooms, in the lottery bureaus, and in evil resorts. Why? Perhaps because the drama played in such places within the soul renders men indifferent to externals, — a thought which likewise explains the simplicity of great thinkers and men of great ambitions.

“Where's my penknife?”

“I shall eat my breakfast.”

“Look out! there's a blot on the petition.”

“Hush, gentlemen!”

These various exclamations went off all at once just as the old client entered and closed the door, with the sort of humility which gives an unnatural air to the movements of a poverty-stricken man. The stranger tried to smile, but the muscles of his face relaxed when he had vainly looked for symptoms of civility

on the inexorably indifferent faces of the six clerks. Accustomed, no doubt, to judge men, he addressed himself politely to the gutter-jumper, hoping that the office drudge might answer him civilly:—

“Monsieur, can I see your master?”

The mischievous youngster replied by tapping his ear with the fingers of his left hand, as much as to say, “I am deaf.”

“What is it you want, monsieur?” asked Godeschal swallowing an enormous mouthful as he asked the question,—brandishing his knife and crossing his legs till the foot of the upper one came on a line with his nose.

“I have called five times, monsieur,” replied the visitor; “I wish to speak to Monsieur Derville.”

“On business?”

“Yes; but I can explain my business only to him.”

“He’s asleep; if you wish to consult him you’ll have to come at night; he never gets to work before midnight. But if you will explain the matter to us we can perhaps do as well—”

The stranger was impassive. He looked humbly about him like a dog slipping into a strange kitchen and afraid of kicks. Thanks to their general condition, law-clerks are not afraid of thieves; so they felt no suspicion of the top-coat, but allowed him to look round in search of a seat, for he was evidently fatigued.

It is a matter of calculation with lawyers to have few chairs in their offices. The common client, weary of standing, goes away grumbling.

“Monsieur,” replied the stranger, “I have already had the honor of telling you that I can explain my business to no one but Monsieur Derville. I will wait until he is up.”

Boucard had now finished his accounts. He smelt the fumes of his chocolate, left his cane chair, came up to the chimney, looked the old man over from head to foot, gazed at the top-coat and made an indescribable grimace. He probably thought that no matter how long they kept this client on the rack not a penny could be got out of him; and he now interposed, meaning with a few curt words to rid the office of an unprofitable client.

“They tell you the truth, monsieur,” he said; “Monsieur Derville works only at night. If your business is important I advise you to come back here at one or two in the morning.”

The client looked at the head-clerk with a stupid air, and remained for an instant motionless. Accustomed to see many changes of countenance, and many singular expressions produced by the hesitation and the dreaminess which characterize persons who go to law, the clerks took no notice of the old man, but continued to eat their breakfasts with as much noise of their jaws as if they were horses at a manger.

“Monsieur, I shall return to-night,” said the visitor, who, with the tenacity of an unhappy man, was determined to put his tormentors in the wrong.

The only retaliation granted to poverty is that of forcing justice and benevolence to unjust refusals. When unhappy souls have convicted society of falsehood then they fling themselves the more ardently upon the bosom of God.

“Did you ever see such a skull?” cried Simonnin, without waiting till the door had closed on the old man.

“He looks as if he had been buried and dug up again,” said one.

“He’s some colonel who wants his back-pay,” said the head-clerk.

“No, he’s an old porter.”

“Who’ll bet he’s a nobleman?” cried Boucard.

“I’ll bet he has been a porter,” said Godeschal. “None but porters are gifted by nature with top-coats as greasy and ragged round the bottom as that old fellow’s. Did n’t you notice his cracked boots which let in water, and that cravat in place of a shirt? That man slept last night under a bridge.”

“He may be a nobleman and have burnt his candle at both ends, — that’s nothing new!” cried Desroches.

“No,” replied Boucard, in the midst of much laughter, “I maintain he was a brewer in 1789 and a colonel under the Republic.”

“ Ha ! I ’ll bet tickets for a play all round that he never was a soldier,” said Godeschal.

“ Done,” said Boucard.

“ Monsieur, monsieur ! ” called the gutter-jumper, opening the window.

“ What are you doing, Simonnin ? ” asked Boucard.

“ I ’m calling him back to know if he is a colonel or a porter, — he ought to know, himself.”

“ What shall we say to him ? ” exclaimed Godeschal.

“ Leave it to me,” said Boucard.

The poor man re-entered timidly, with his eyes lowered, perhaps not to show his hunger by looking too eagerly at the food.

“ Monsieur,” said Boucard, “ will you have the kindness to give us your name, so that Monsieur Derville may — ”

“ Chabert.”

“ The colonel who was killed at Eylau ? ” asked Huré, who had not yet spoken, but was anxious to get in his joke like the rest.

“ The same, monsieur,” answered the old man, with classic simplicity. Then he left the room.

“ Thunder ! ”

“ Sold ! ”

“ Puff ! ”

“ Oh ! ”

“ Ah ! ”

“Boum!”

“The old oddity!”

“Done for!”

“Monsieur Desroches, you and I will go to the theatre for nothing!” cried Huré to the fourth clerk, with a rap on the shoulders fit to have killed a rhinoceros.

Then followed a chorus of shouts, laughs, and exclamations, to describe which we should have to use all the onomatopœias of the language.

“Which theatre shall we choose?”

“The Opera,” said the head-clerk.

“In the first place,” said Godeschal, “I never said theatre at all. I can take you, if I choose, to Madame Saqui.”

“Madame Saqui is not a play,” said Desroches.

“What’s a play?” retorted Godeschal. “Let’s first establish the fact. What did I bet, gentlemen? tickets for a play. What’s a play? a thing we go to see —”

“If that’s so, you can take us to see the water running under the Pont Neuf,” interrupted Simonnin.

“— see for money,” went on Godeschal.

“But you can see a great many things for money that are not plays. The definition is not exact,” said Desroches.

“But just listen to me —”

“You are talking nonsense, my dear fellow,” said Boucard.

“Do you call Curtius a play?” asked Godeschal.

“No,” said the head-clerk, “I call it a gallery of wax figures.”

“I’ll bet a hundred francs to a sou,” retorted Godeschal, “that Curtius’s gallery constitutes a collection of things which may legally be called a play. They combine into one thing which can be seen at different prices according to the seats you occupy—”

“You can’t get out of it!” said Simonnin.

“Take care I don’t box your ears!” said Godeschal. The clerks all shrugged their shoulders.

“Besides, we don’t know that that old baboon wasn’t making fun of us,” he continued, changing his argument amid roars of laughter. “The fact is, Colonel Chabert is as dead as a door-nail; his widow married Comte Ferraud, councillor of state. Madame Ferraud is one of our clients.”

“The cause stands over for to-morrow,” said Boucard. “Come, get to work, gentlemen. Heavens and earth! nothing ever gets done here. Finish with that petition, — it has to be sent in before the session of the fourth court which meets to-day. Come, to work!”

“If it was really Colonel Chabert, would n’t he have kicked that little Simonnin when he pretended to be deaf?” said the provincial Huré, considering that observation quite as conclusive as those of Godeschal.

“Nothing is decided,” said Boucard. “Let us agree

to accept the second tier of boxes at the Français and see Talma in Nero. Simonnin can sit in the pit."

Thereupon the head-clerk sat down at his desk, and the others followed his example.

"*Rendered June one thousand eight hundred and fourteen* — Write it in letters, mind," said Godeschal.

"Have you written it?"

"Yes," replied the copyists and the engrosser, whose pens began to squeak along the stamped paper with a noise, well known in all law-offices, like that of scores of cockchafers tied by schoolboys in a paper bag.

"*And we pray that the gentlemen of this tribunal* — Hold on! let me read that sentence over to myself; I don't know what I'm about."

"Forty-six — should think that often happened — and three, forty-nine," said Boucard.

"*We pray,*" resumed Godeschal, having re-read his clause, "*that the gentlemen of this tribunal will not show less magnanimity than the august author of the ordinance, and that they will deny the miserable pretensions of the administration of the grand chancellor of the Legion of honor by determining the jurisprudence of this matter in the broad sense in which we have established it here* —"

"Monsieur Godeschal, don't you want a glass of water?" said the gutter-jumper.

"That imp of a Simonnin!" said Boucard. "Come

here, saddle your double-soled horses, and take this package and skip over to the Invalides.”

“*Which we have established it here —*” went on Godeschal. “Did you get to that? Well, then add *in the interests of Madame (full length) la Vicomtesse de Grandlieu —*”

“What’s that?” cried the head clerk, “the idea of petitioning in that affair! Vicomtesse de Grandlieu against the Legion of honor! Ah! you must be a fool! Have the goodness to put away your copies and your minute, — they’ll answer for the Navarreins affair against the monasteries. It’s late, and I must be off with the other petitions; I’ll attend to that myself at the Palais.”

Towards one o’clock in the morning the individual calling himself Colonel Chabert knocked at the door of Maître Derville, solicitor in the court of common pleas for the department of the Seine. The porter told him that Monsieur Derville had not yet come in. The old man declared he had an appointment and passed up to the rooms of the celebrated lawyer, who, young as he was, was even then considered one of the best legal heads in France. Having rung and been admitted, the persistent client was not a little astonished to find the head-clerk laying out on a table in the dining-room a number of documents relating to affairs which were to come up on the morrow. The clerk, not less astonished

at the apparition of the old man, bowed to the colonel and asked him to sit down, which he did.

“Upon my word, monsieur, I thought you were joking when you named such a singular hour for a consultation,” said the old man, with the factitious liveliness of a ruined man who tries to smile.

“The clerks were joking and telling the truth also,” said the head-clerk, going on with his work. “Monsieur Derville selects this hour to examine his causes, give directions for the suits, and plan his defences. His extraordinary intellect works freer at this hour, the only one in which he can get the silence and tranquillity he requires to evolve his ideas. You are the third person only who has been admitted here for a consultation at this time of night. After Monsieur Derville comes in he will talk over each affair, read everything connected with it, and spend perhaps five or six hours at his work; then he rings for me, and explains his intentions. In the morning, from ten to two, he listens to his clients; the rest of the day he passes in visiting. In the evening he goes about in society to keep up his relations with the great world. He has no other time than at night to delve into his cases, rummage the arsenals of the Code, make his plans of campaign. He is determined, out of love for his profession, not to lose a single case. And for that reason he won't take all that are brought to him, as

other lawyers do. That's his life; it's extraordinarily active. He makes a lot of money."

The old man was silent as he listened to this explanation, and his singular face assumed a look so devoid of all intelligence that the clerk after glancing at him once or twice took no further notice of him. A few moments later Derville arrived, in evening dress; his head-clerk opened the door to him and then went back to the papers. The young lawyer looked amazed when he saw in the dim light the strange client who awaited him. Colonel Chabert was as motionless as the wax figures of Curtius's gallery where Godeschal proposed to take his comrades. This immovability might have been less noticeable than it was, if it had not, as it were, completed the supernatural impression conveyed by the whole appearance of the man. The old soldier was lean and shrunken. The concealment of his forehead, which was carefully hidden beneath a wig brushed smoothly over it, gave a mysterious expression to his person. The eyes seemed covered with a film; you might have thought them bits of dirty mother-of-pearl, their bluish reflections quivering in the candle-light. The pale, livid, hatchet face, if I may borrow that term, seemed dead. An old black-silk stock was fastened round the neck. The shadow of the room hid the body so effectually below the dark line of the ragged article that a man of vivid imagination might have

taken that old head for a sketch drawn at random on the wall or for a portrait by Rembrandt without its frame. The brim of the hat worn by the strange old man cast a black line across the upper part of his face. This odd effect, though perfectly natural, brought out in abrupt contrast the white wrinkles, the stiffened lines, the unnatural hue of that cadaverous countenance. The absence of all motion in the body, all warmth in the glance, combined with a certain expression of mental alienation, and with the degrading symptoms which characterize idiocy, to give that face a nameless horror which no words can describe.

But an observer, and especially a lawyer, would have seen in that blasted man the signs of some deep anguish, indications of a misery that degraded that face as the drops of rain falling from the heavens on pure marble gradually disfigure it. A doctor, an author, a magistrate would have felt intuitively a whole drama as they looked at this sublime wreck, whose least merit was a resemblance to those fantastic sketches drawn by artists on the margins of their lithographic stones as they sit conversing with their friends.

When the stranger saw the lawyer he shuddered with the convulsive movement which seizes a poet when a sudden noise recalls him from some fecund revery amid the silence of the night. The old man rose quickly and took off his hat to the young lawyer. The

leather that lined it was no doubt damp with grease, for his wig stuck to it without his knowledge and exposed his skull, horribly mutilated and disfigured by a scar running from the crown of his head to the angle of his right eye and forming a raised welt. The sudden removal of that dirty wig, worn by the poor soul to conceal his wound, caused no desire to laugh in the minds of the two young men; so awful was the sight of that skull. "The mind fled through it!" was the first thought suggested to them as they saw that wound.

"If he is not Colonel Chabert he is some bold trooper," thought Boucard.

"Monsieur," said Derville, "to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"To Colonel Chabert."

"Which one?"

"The one who was killed at Eylau," replied the old man.

Hearing those extraordinary words the clerk and the lawyer looked at each other as if to say, "He is mad."

"Monsieur," said the colonel, "I desire to confide my secrets to you in private."

The intrepidity which characterizes lawyers is worthy of remark. Whether from their habit of receiving great numbers of persons, whether from an abiding sense of the protection of the law, or from perfect

confidence in their ministry, certain it is they go everywhere and take all risks, like priests and doctors. Derville made a sign to Boucard, who left the room.

“Monsieur,” said the lawyer, “during the day I am not very chary of my time; but in the middle of the night every moment is precious to me. Therefore, be brief and concise. Tell your facts without digression; I will ask you any explanations I may find necessary. Go on.”

Bidding his strange client be seated, the young man sat down before the table, and while listening to the tale of the late colonel he turned over the pages of a brief.

“Monsieur,” said the deceased, “perhaps you know that I commanded a regiment of cavalry at Eylau. I was the chief cause of the success of Murat’s famous charge which won the day. Unhappily for me, my death is given as an historic fact in ‘Victories and Conquests’ where all the particulars are related. We cut the three Russian lines in two; then they closed behind us and we were obliged to cut our way back again. Just before we reached the Emperor, having dispersed the Russians, a troop of the enemy’s cavalry met us. I flung myself upon them. Two Russian officers, actual giants, attacked me together. One of them cut me over the head with his sabre, which went through everything, even to the silk cap which I wore, and laid my

skull open. I fell from my horse. Murat came up to support us, and he and his whole party, fifteen hundred men, rode over me. They reported my death to the Emperor, who sent (for he loved me a little, the master!) to see if there were no hope of saving a man to whom he owed the vigor of our attack. He despatched two surgeons to find me and bring me in to the ambulances, saying — perhaps too hurriedly, for he had work to attend to — ‘Go and see if my poor Chabert is still living.’ Those cursed saw-bones had just seen me trampled under the hoofs of two regiments; no doubt they never took the trouble to feel my pulse, but reported me as dead. The certificate of my death was doubtless drawn up in due form of military law.”

Gradually, as he listened to his client, who expressed himself with perfect clearness, and related facts that were quite possible, though somewhat strange, the young lawyer pushed away his papers, rested his left elbow on the table, put his head on his hand, and looked fixedly at the colonel.

“Are you aware, monsieur,” he said, “that I am the solicitor of the Countess Ferraud, widow of Colonel Chabert?”

“Of my wife? Yes, monsieur. And therefore, after many fruitless efforts to obtain a hearing from lawyers, who all thought me mad, I determined to come to you. I shall speak of my sorrows later. Allow me now to

state the facts, and explain to you how they probably happened, rather than how they actually did happen. Certain circumstances, which can never be known except to God Almighty, oblige me to relate much in the form of hypotheses. I must tell you, for instance, that the wounds I received probably produced something like lockjaw, or threw me into a state analogous to a disease called, I believe, catalepsy. Otherwise, how can I suppose that I was stripped of my clothing and flung into a common grave, according to the customs of war, by the men whose business it was to bury the dead? Here let me state a circumstance which I only knew much later than the event which I am forced to call my death. In 1814 I met in Stuttgard an old cavalry sergeant of my regiment. That dear man — the only human being willing to recognize me, of whom I will presently speak to you — explained to me the extraordinary circumstances of my preservation. He said that my horse received a bullet in the body at the same moment when I myself was wounded. Horse and rider were therefore knocked over together like a stand of muskets. In turning, either to the right or to the left, I had doubtless been protected by the body of my horse which saved me from being crushed by the riders or hit by bullets.”

The old man paused for a moment as if to collect himself and then resumed: —

“ When I came to myself, monsieur, I was in a place and in an atmosphere of which I could give you no idea, even if I talked for days. The air I breathed was mephitic. I tried to move but I found no space. My eyes were open but I saw nothing. The want of air was the worst sign, and it showed me the dangers of my position. I felt I was in some place where the atmosphere was stagnant, and that I should die of it. This thought overcame the sense of extreme pain which had brought me to my senses. My ears hummed violently. I heard, or thought I heard (for I can affirm nothing), groans from the heap of dead bodies among whom I lay. Though the recollection of those moments is dark, though my memory is confused, and in spite of still greater sufferings which I experienced later and which have bewildered my ideas, there are nights, even now, when I think I hear those smothered moans. But there was something more horrible than even those cries, — a silence that I have never known elsewhere, the silence of the grave. At last, raising my hands and feeling for the dead, I found a void between my head and the human carrion about me. I could even measure the space thus left to me by some mere chance, the cause of which I did not know. It seemed as if, thanks to the carelessness or to the haste with which we had been flung pell-mell into the trench, that two dead bodies had fallen across each other above me, so as to form an

angle like that of two cards which children lay together to make houses. Quickly feeling in all directions, — for I had no time to idle, — I happily came across an arm, the arm of a Hercules, detached from its body; and those good bones saved me! Without that unlooked-for succor I must have perished. But now, with a fury you will readily understand, I began to work my way upward through the bodies which separated me from the layer of earth hastily flung over us, — I say ‘us,’ as though there were others living. I worked with a will, monsieur, for here I am! Still, I don’t know to-day how it was that I managed to tear through the covering of flesh that lay between me and life. I had, as it were, three arms. That Herculean crow-bar, which I used carefully, brought me a little air confined among the bodies which it helped me to displace, and I economized my breathing. At last I saw daylight, but through the snow, monsieur! Just then I noticed for the first time that my head was cut open. Happily, my blood — that of my comrades, possibly, how should I know? or the bleeding flesh of my horse — had coagulated on my wound and formed a natural plaster. But in spite of that scab I fainted when my head came in contact with the snow. The little heat still left in my body melted the snow about me, and when I came to myself my head was in the middle of a little opening, through which I shouted as long as I was able. But

the sun had risen and I was little likely to be heard. People seemed already in the fields. I raised myself to my feet, making stepping-stones of the dead whose thighs were solid, — for it was n't the moment to stop and say, 'Honor to heroes!'

“In short, monsieur,” continued the old man, who had stopped speaking for a moment, “after going through the anguish — if that word describes the rage — of seeing those cursed Germans, ay, many of them, run away when they heard the voice of a man they could not see, I was at last taken from my living grave by a woman, daring enough or inquisitive enough to come close to my head, which seemed to grow from the ground like a mushroom. The woman fetched her husband, and together they took me to their poor hovel. It seems that there I had a return of catalepsy, — allow me that term with which to describe a state of which I have no idea, but which I judge, from what my hosts told me, must have been an effect of that disease. I lay for six months between life and death, not speaking, or wandering in mind when I did speak. At last my benefactors placed me in the hospital at Heilsberg. Of course you understand, monsieur, that I issued from my grave as naked as I came from my mother's womb; so that when, many months later, I remembered that I was Colonel Chabert, and endeavored to make my nurses treat me with more respect than if I were a

poor devil of a private, all the men in the ward laughed. Happily for me, the surgeon made it a point of honor or vanity to cure me; and he naturally became interested in his patient. When I spoke to him in a connected manner of my former life, that good man (his name was Sparchmann) had my statements recorded in the legal forms of his country, also a statement of the miraculous manner in which I had escaped from the trench, and the day and hour my benefactress and her husband had rescued me, together with the nature and exact position of my wounds and a careful description of my person. Well, monsieur, I do not possess a single one of those important papers, nor the declaration I made before a notary at Heilsberg to establish my identity. The events of the war drove us from the town, and from that day I have wandered like a vagabond, begging my bread, treated as a lunatic when I told my story, unable to earn a single sou that would enable me to send for those papers, which alone can prove the truth of what I say and restore me to my social status. Often my physical sufferings have kept me for weeks and months in some obscure country town, where the greatest kindness has been shown to the sick Frenchman, but where they laughed in his face when he asserted he was Colonel Chabert. For a long while such doubts and laughter made me furious, and that injured my cause, and once I was shut up as a madman

at Stuttgard. You can imagine, from what I have told you, that there were reasons to lock me up. After two years in a madhouse, where I was forced to hear my keepers say: 'This poor man fancies he was once Colonel Chabert,' to visitors, who replied compassionately, 'Ah, poor man!' I myself was convinced of the impossibility of my story being true; I grew sad, resigned, tranquil, and I ceased to call myself Colonel Chabert, so as to get my release and return to France. Oh, monsieur! to see Paris once more! it was a joy I—"

With those unfinished words Colonel Chabert sank into a revery, which the lawyer did not disturb.

"Monsieur," resumed the client presently, "one fine day, a spring day, they gave me my freedom and ten thalers, on the ground that I talked sensibly on all subjects and had given up calling myself Colonel Chabert; and, God knows, at that time my name was disagreeable to me, and has been at intervals ever since. I would like not to be myself; the sense of my rights kills me. If my illness had only taken from me forever the remembrance of my past existence, I might be happy. I might have re-entered the service under some other name; and, who knows? perhaps I should have ended as a Russian or an Austrian field-marshal."

"Monsieur," said the lawyer, "you have upset all my ideas; I fancy I dream as I listen to you. Let us pause here for a moment, I beg of you."

“You are the only person,” said the colonel sadly, “who have ever listened to me patiently. No lawyer has been willing to lend me ten napoleons, that I might send to Germany for the papers necessary for my suit.”

“What suit?” asked the lawyer, who had forgotten the unfortunate present position of his client, as he listened to the recital of his past misery.

“Why, monsieur, you are well aware that the Comtesse Ferraud is my wife. She possesses an income of thirty thousand francs which belongs to me, and she refuses to give me one penny of it. When I tell this to lawyers and to men of common-sense, when I, a beggar, propose to sue a count and countess, when I, risen from the dead, deny the proofs of my death, they put me off, — they refuse to listen to me, either with that coldly polite air with which you lawyers know so well how to rid yourselves of hapless creatures, or brutally, as men do when they think they are dealing with a swindler or a madman. I have been buried beneath the dead, but now I am buried beneath the living, — beneath facts, beneath records, beneath society itself, which seeks to thrust me back underground!”

“Monsieur, have the goodness to sue, to prosecute now,” said the lawyer.

“Have the goodness! Ah!” exclaimed the unfortunate old man, taking the hand of the young lawyer; “that is the first polite word I have heard since —”

He wept. Gratitude stifled his voice. The all-penetrative, indescribable eloquence of look, gesture, — even silence, — clinched Derville's conviction, and touched him keenly.

“Listen to me, monsieur,” he said. “I won three hundred francs at cards to-night; I can surely afford to give half that sum to procure the happiness of a man. I will make all the investigations and orders necessary to obtain the papers you mention; and, until their arrival, I will allow you five francs a day. If you are Colonel Chabert, you will know how to pardon the smallness of the loan offered by a young man who has his fortune to make. Continue.”

The self-styled colonel remained for an instant motionless, and as if stupefied; his great misfortunes had, perhaps, destroyed his powers of belief. If he were seeking to recover his illustrious military fame, his home, his fortune, — himself, in short, — it may have been only in obedience to that inexplicable feeling, that germ in the hearts of all men, to which we owe the researches of the alchemists, the passion for glory, the discoveries of astronomy and of physics, — all that urges a man to magnify himself by the magnitude of the facts or the ideas that are a part of him. The *ego* was now but a secondary consideration to his mind, just as the vanity of triumph or the satisfaction of gain are dearer to a man who bets than the object of his

wager. The words of the young lawyer came, therefore, like a miracle to this man, repudiated for the last ten years by wife, by justice, by the whole social creation. To receive from a lawyer those ten gold pieces so long denied him, by so many persons, in so many ways! The colonel was like the lady who had been ill so long, that when she was cured she thought she was suffering from a new malady. There are joys in which we no longer believe; they come, and we find them thunderbolts, — they blast us. So now the poor man's gratitude was so deep that he could not utter it. He might have seemed cold to a superficial mind, but Derville saw integrity in that very stupor. A swindler would have spoken.

“Where was I?” said the colonel, with the guilelessness of a child or a soldier; for there is much of the child in the true soldier, and nearly always something of a soldier in a child, especially in France.

“At Stuttgard; they had set you at liberty.”

“You know my wife?” asked the colonel.

“Yes,” replied Derville, with a nod of his head.

“How is she?”

“Always fascinating.”

The old man made a gesture with his hand, and seemed to conquer some secret pang with the grave and solemn resignation that characterizes men who have been tried in the fire and blood of battle-fields.

“Monsieur,” he said, with a sort of gayety; for he breathed anew, poor soul; he had issued a second time from the grave; he had broken through a crust of ice and snow harder to melt than that which once had frozen his wounded head; he inhaled the air as though he were just issuing from a dungeon. “Monsieur,” he said, “if I were a handsome fellow I should n’t be where I am now. Women believe men when they lard their sentences with words of love. Then they’ll fetch and carry, and come and go, and do anything to serve you. They’ll intrigue; they’ll swear to facts; they’ll play the devil for the man they love. But how could I make a woman listen to one like me? With a face like a death’s head, and clothed like a sans-culotte, I was more of an Esquimau than a Frenchman, — I, who in 1799 was the finest coxcomb in the service! — I, Chabert, count of the Empire! At last the day came when I knew I was an outcast on the streets, like a pariah dog. That day I met the sergeant I told you of; his name was Boutin. That poor devil and I made the finest pair of broken-down old brutes I have ever seen. I met him, and recognized him; but he couldn’t even guess who I was. We went into a tavern. When I told him my name his mouth split open with a roar of laughter like a burst mortar. Monsieur, that laugh is among the bitterest of my sorrows. It revealed, without disguise, the changes there were in me. I saw

myself unrecognizable, even to the humblest and most grateful of my friends; for I had once saved Boutin's life, though that was a return for something I owed him. I need n't tell you the whole story; the thing happened in Italy, at Ravenna. The house where Boutin saved me from being stabbed was none too decent. At that time I was not colonel, only a trooper, like Boutin. Happily, there were circumstances in the affair known only to him and me; when I reminded him of them, his incredulity lessened. Then I told him the story of my extraordinary fate. Though my eyes and my voice were, he told me, strangely altered; though I had neither hair, nor teeth, nor eyebrows, and was as white as an albino, he did finally recognize his old colonel in the beggar before him, after putting a vast number of questions to which I answered triumphantly.

“Ah!” went on the old soldier, after a moment's pause, “he told me his adventures too, and they were hardly less extraordinary than mine. He was just back from the borders of China, to which he had escaped from Siberia. He told me of the disasters of the Russian campaign and Napoleon's first abdication; that news was another of my worst pangs. We were two strange wrecks drifting over the globe, as the storms of ocean drift the pebbles from shore to shore. We had each seen Egypt, Syria, Spain, Russia, Holland, Germany, Italy, Dalmatia, England, China, Tartary, Si-

beria ; nothing was left for us to know but the Indies and America. Boutin, who was more active on his legs than I, agreed to go to Paris as quickly as he could, and tell my wife the state in which I was. I wrote a long and detailed letter to Madame Chabert ; it was the fourth I had written her. Monsieur, if I had had relatives of my own, the thing could not have happened ; but, I must tell you plainly, I was a foundling, a soldier whose patrimony was his courage, the world his family, France his country, God his sole protector, — no ! I am wrong ; I had a father, — the Emperor ! Ah ! if he, dear man, were still among us ; if he saw ‘his Chabert,’ as he called me, in such a plight, he would be furious. But what’s to be done ? our sun has set ; we are all left out in the cold ! After all, political events might be the reason of my wife’s silence ; at least I thought so. Boutin departed. He was lucky, *he* was, poor fellow ! he had two white bears who danced and kept him in food. I could not accompany him ; my pains were so great I could not go long distances. I wept when we parted, having walked as far as I had strength with the bears and him. At Carlsruhe I was taken with neuralgia in my head, and lay six weeks in the straw of an inn barn.

“ Ah ! monsieur,” continued the unhappy man, “ there is no end to what I might tell you of my miserable life. Moral anguish, before which all physical sufferings are

as nought, excites less pity because it is not seen. I remember weeping before a mansion in Strasburg where I once gave a ball, and where they now refused me a crust of bread. Having agreed with Boutin as to the road I should follow, I went to every post-office on my way expecting to find a letter and some money. I reached Paris at last without a line. Despair was in my heart! Boutin must be dead, I thought; and I was right; the poor fellow died at Waterloo, as I heard later and accidentally. His errand to my wife was no doubt fruitless. Well, I reached Paris just as the Cossacks entered it. To me, that was grief upon grief. When I saw those Russians in France I no longer remembered that I had neither shoes on my feet nor money in my pocket. Yes, monsieur, my clothes were literally in shreds. The evening of my arrival I was forced to bivouac in the woods of Claye. The chilliness of the night gave me a sort of illness, I hardly know what it was, which seized me as I was crossing the faubourg Saint-Martin. I fell, half-unconscious, close by the door of an ironmonger. When I came to my senses I was in a bed at the Hôtel-Dieu. There I stayed a month in some comfort; then I was discharged. I had no money, but I was cured and I had my feet on the blessed pavements of Paris. With what joy and speed I made my way to the rue du Mont-Blanc, where I supposed my wife was living in my

house. Bah! the rue du Mont-Blanc had become the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin. My house was no longer standing; it was pulled down. Speculators had built houses in my gardens. Not knowing that my wife had married Monsieur Ferraud, I could hear nothing of her. At last I went to an old lawyer who formerly took charge of my affairs. The good man was dead, and his office had passed into the hands of a younger man. The latter informed me, to my great astonishment, of the settlement of my estate, the marriage of my wife, and the birth of her two children. When I told him that I was Colonel Chabert, he laughed so loudly in my face that I turned and left him without a word. My detention at Stuttgart made me mindful of Charenton, and I resolved to act prudently. Then, monsieur, knowing where my wife lived, I made my way to the house — Ah!" cried the colonel, with a gesture of intense anger, "I was not received when I gave a borrowed name, but when I sent in my own I was turned out of the house! I have stood night after night leaning against the buttress of her porte-cochère to see her returning from a ball or from the theatre. I have plunged my eyes into that carriage where I could see the woman who is mine and who is not mine! Oh! from that day I have lived for vengeance," cried the old man, in a hollow voice, standing suddenly erect in front of Derville. "She knows I am living; she has received three letters which

I have written to her since my return. She loves me no longer! I—I don't know if I love her or if I hate her; I long for her and I curse her by turns! She owes her prosperity and all her happiness to me, and she denies me even the meanest succor! Sometimes I don't know where to turn!"

The old man fell back into a chair, motionless and silent. Derville too was silent, contemplating his client.

"The matter is serious," he said at last in a mechanical way. "Even admitting the authenticity of the papers which ought to be found at Heilsberg, it is not clear that we can establish our case,—certainly not at once. The suit will have to go before three courts. I must reflect at my leisure over such a case. It is exceptional."

"Oh!" replied the colonel, coldly, lifting his head with a proud gesture, "if I am compelled to succumb, I can die,—but not alone."

With the words the old man seemed to vanish; the eyes of the man of energy shone with the fires of desire and vengeance.

"Perhaps we shall have to compromise," said the lawyer.

"Compromise!" repeated Colonel Chabert. "Am I dead, or am I living?"

"Monsieur," said the lawyer, "you will, I hope,

follow my advice. Your cause shall be my cause. You will soon, I trust, see the true interest I take in your situation, which is almost without precedent in legal annals. Meantime let me give you an order on my notary, who will remit you fifty francs every ten days on your receipt. It is not desirable that you should come here for this money. If you are Colonel Chabert you ought not to be beholden to any one. I shall make these advances in the form of a loan. You have property to recover ; you are a rich man."

This last delicate consideration for his feelings brought tears from the old man's eyes. Derville rose abruptly, for assuredly it is not the thing for a lawyer to show feeling ; he went into his private study and returned presently with an unsealed letter, which he gave to Colonel Chabert. When the old man took it he felt two gold pieces within the paper.

"Tell me precisely what the papers are ; give me the exact name of the town and kingdom," said the lawyer.

The colonel dictated the necessary information and corrected the spelling of the names. Then he took his hat in one hand, looked at Derville, offered him the other hand, a horny hand, and said in a simple way, —

"After the Emperor you are the man to whom I owe most. You are a noble man."

The lawyer clasped the colonel's hand, and went with him to the stairway to light him down.

“Boucard,” said the lawyer to his head-clerk, whom he summoned, “I have just heard a tale which may cost me some money. If I am deceived I shall never regret what I pay, for I shall have seen the greatest comedian of our time.”

“When the colonel reached the street, he stopped under a lamp, drew the two pieces of twenty francs each from the letter which the lawyer had given him, and looked at them for a moment in the dim light. He saw gold for the first time in nine years.

“I can smoke cigars,” he said to himself.

About three months after the nocturnal consultation of Colonel Chabert with Derville, the notary whom the latter had directed to pay the stipend he allowed to his singular client went to the lawyer's office one day to confer on some important matter, and opened the conversation by asking for the six hundred francs he had already paid to the old soldier.

“Do you find it amusing to support the old army?” said the notary, laughing. His name was Crottat, — a young man who had just bought a practice in which he was head-clerk, the master of which, a certain Roguin, had lately absconded after a frightful failure.

“Thank you, my dear fellow, for reminding me of

that affair," replied Derville. "My philanthropy does not go beyond twenty-five louis; I fear I have been the dupe of my patriotism."

As Derville uttered the words his eyes lighted on a packet of papers the head-clerk had laid upon his desk. His attention was drawn to one of the letters by the postmarks, oblong, square, and triangular, and red and blue stamped upon it in the Prussian, Austrian, Bavarian, and French post-offices.

"Ah!" said he, laughing, "here's the conclusion of the comedy; now we shall see if I have been taken in."

He took up the letter and opened it, but was unable to read a word, for it was in German.

"Boucard!" he called, opening the door and holding out the letter to his head-clerk, "go yourself and get that letter translated, and come back with it as fast as you can."

The Berlin notary to whom Derville had written now replied by informing the latter that the papers he had asked for would reach him a few days after this letter of advice. They were all, he said, perfectly regular, and were fully certified with the necessary legal forms. He added, moreover, that nearly all the witnesses to the facts were still living, and that the woman to whom Monsieur le Comte Chabert owed his life could be found in a certain suburb of Heilsberg.

"It is getting serious," said Derville, when Boucard

had told him the substance of the letter. "But see here, my dear fellow, I want some information which I am sure you must have in your office. When that old swindler of a Roguin —"

"We say 'the unfortunate Roguin,'" said Crottat, laughing, as he interrupted Derville.

"Well — when that unfortunate Roguin ran off with eight hundred thousand francs of his clients' money and reduced many families to pauperism, what was done about the Chabert property? It seems to me I have seen something about it among our Ferraud papers."

"Yes," replied Crottat, "I was third clerk at the time, and I remember copying and studying the documents. Rose Chapotel, wife and widow of Hyacinthe, called Chabert, count of the Empire, grand officer of the Legion of honor. They had married without a contract and therefore they held their property in common. As far as I can recollect, the assets amounted to about six hundred thousand francs. Before his marriage Comte Chabert had made a will leaving one fourth of the property of which he might die possessed to the Parisian hospitals; the State inherited another fourth. There was an auction sale and a distribution of the property, for the lawyers made good speed with the affair. Upon the settlement of the estate the monster who then ruled France made a decree restoring the

amount which had gone to the Treasury to the colonel's widow."

"So that Comte Chabert's individual property," said Derville, "does not amount to more than three hundred thousand francs?"

"Just that, old man," said Crottat; "you solicitors do occasionally get things right, — though some people accuse you of arguing just as well against as for the truth."

Comte Chabert, whose address was written at the foot of the first receipt he had given to the notary, lived in the faubourg Saint-Marceau, rue du Petit-Banquier, with an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard named Vergniaud, now a cow-keeper. When Derville reached the place he was obliged to go on foot to find his client, for his groom positively refused to drive through an unpaved street the ruts of which were deep enough to break the wheels of a cabriolet. Looking about him on all sides, the lawyer at length discovered at the end of the street nearest to the boulevard and between two walls built of bones and mud, two shabby rough stone pillars, much defaced by wheels in spite of wooden posts placed in front of them. These pillars supported a beam covered with a tiled hood, on which, painted red, were the words, "VERGNIAUD, COW-KEEPER." To the right of the name was a cow, and to the left eggs, all painted white. The gate was open.

At the farther end of a good-sized yard and opposite to the gate stood the house, if indeed that name rightfully belongs to one of those hovels built in the suburbs of Paris, the squalor of which cannot be matched elsewhere, not even in the most wretched of country huts; for they have all the poverty of the latter without their poetry. In fact, a cabin in the open country has the charm that pure air, verdure, the meadow vistas, a hill, a winding road, creepers, evergreen hedges, a mossy roof and rural implements can give to it; but in Paris poverty is heightened only by horrors. Though recently built, the house seemed tumbling to ruins. None of its materials were originally destined for it; they came from the "demolitions" which are daily events in Paris. On a shutter made of an old sign Derville read the words "Fancy-articles." No two of the windows were alike, and all were placed hap-hazard. The ground-floor, which seemed to be the habitable part of the hovel, was raised from the earth on one side, while on the other the rooms were sunk below a bank. Between the gate and the house was a slough of manure, into which flowed the rain-water and the drainage from the house. The wall upon which this rickety building rested was surrounded by hutches in which rabbits brought forth their numerous young. To the right of the gate was the cow-shed, which communicated with the house through a dairy, and over it the hay-loft.

To the left was a poultry-yard, a stable, and a pigsty, all of which were finished off, like the house, with shabby planks of white-wood nailed one above the other and filled in with rushes. Like most of the purlieus whence the elements of the grand dinners daily eaten in Paris are derived, the yard in which Derville now stood showed signs of the haste required for the prompt filling of orders. The great tin cans in which the milk was carried, the smaller cans with their linen stoppers which contained the cream, were tossed higgledy-piggledy in front of the dairy. The rags used to wipe them out were hanging in the sun to dry, on lines fastened to hooks. The steady horse, of a race extinct except among milk-dealers, had walked a few steps away from the cart and stood in front of the stable, the door of which was locked. A goat browsed upon the spindling, powdery vine-shoots which crept along the cracked and yellow walls of the house. A cat was creeping among the cream-cans and licking the outside of them. The hens, scared at Derville's advent, scuttled away cackling, and the watch-dog barked.

“The man who decided the victory of Eylau lives here!” thought Derville, taking in at a glance the whole of this squalid scene.

The house seemed to be under the guardianship of three little ragamuffins. One, who had clambered to the top of a cart laden with green fodder, was throwing

stones down the chimney of the next house, probably hoping that they would fall into the saucepans below; another was trying to lead a pig up the floor of a tip-cart, one end of which touched the ground, while the third, hanging on to the other end, was waiting till the pig was fairly in to tip the cart up again. When Derville asked if that was where Monsieur Chabert lived none of them answered; and all three gazed at him with lively stupidity, — if it is allowable to unite those words. Derville repeated his question without result. Provoked at the saucy air of the little scamps, he spoke sharply, in a tone which young men think they can use to children, and the boys broke silence with a roar of laughter. Derville was angry. The colonel, who heard the noise, came out of a little room near the dairy and stood on the sill of his door with the imperturbable phlegm of a military training. In his mouth was a pipe in process of being “colored,” — one of those humble pipes of white clay with short stems called “muzzle-scorchers.” He raised the peak of a cap which was horribly greasy, saw Derville, and came across the manure heap in haste to meet his benefactor, calling out in a friendly tone to the boys, “Silence, in the ranks!” The children became instantly and respectfully silent, showing the power the old soldier had over them.

“Why haven’t you written to me?” he said to Der-

ville. "Go along by the cow-house; see, the yard is paved on that side," he cried, noticing the hesitation of the young lawyer, who did not care to set his feet in the wet manure.

Jumping from stone to stone, Derville at last reached the door through which the colonel had issued. Chabert seemed annoyed at the necessity of receiving him in the room he was occupying. In fact, there was only one chair. The colonel's bed was merely a few bundles of straw on which his landlady had spread some ragged bits of old carpet, such as milk-women lay upon the seats of their wagons, and pick up, heaven knows where. The floor was neither more nor less than the earth beaten hard. Such dampness exuded from the nitrified walls, greenish in color and full of cracks, that the side where the colonel slept had been covered with a mat made of reeds. The top-coat was hanging to a nail. Two pairs of broken boots lay in a corner. Not a vestige of under-clothing was seen. The "Bulletins of the Grand Army," reprinted by Plancher, was lying open on a mouldy table, as if constantly read by the colonel, whose face was calm and serene in the midst of this direful poverty. His visit to Derville seemed to have changed the very character of his features, on which the lawyer now saw traces of happy thought, the special gleam which hope had cast.

"Does the smoke of a pipe annoy you?" he asked,

offering the one chair, and that half-denuded of straw.

“But colonel, you are shockingly ill-lodged here!”

The words were wrung from Derville by the natural distrust of lawyers, caused by the deplorable experience that comes to them so soon from the dreadful, mysterious dramas in which they are called professionally to take part.

“That man,” thought Derville to himself, “has no doubt spent my money in gratifying the three cardinal virtues of a trooper, — wine, women, and cards.

“True enough, monsieur; we don’t abound in luxury. It is a bivouac, tempered, as you may say, by friendship; but” (here the soldier cast a searching look at the lawyer) “I have done wrong to no man, I have repulsed no man, and I sleep in peace.”

Derville felt there would be a want of delicacy in asking his client to account for his use of the money he had lent him, so he merely said: “Why don’t you come into Paris, where you could live just as cheaply as you do here, and be much better off?”

“Because,” replied the colonel, “the good, kind people I am with took me in and fed me gratis for a year, and how could I desert them the moment I got a little money? Besides, the father of these young scamps is an Egyptian.”

“An Egyptian?”

“That’s what we call the troopers who returned from the expedition to Egypt, in which I took part. Not only are we all brothers in heart, but Vergniaud was in my regiment; he and I shared the water of the desert. Besides, I want to finish teaching those little monkeys to read.”

“He might give you a better room for your money,” said the lawyer.

“Bah!” said the colonel, “the children sleep as I do on straw. He and his wife have no better bed themselves. They are very poor, you see; they have more of an establishment here than they can manage. But if I get back my fortune — Well, enough!”

“Colonel, I expect to receive your papers from Heilsberg to-morrow; your benefactress is still living.”

“Oh! cursed money! to think I have n’t any!” cried the colonel, flinging down his pipe.

A “colored” pipe is a precious pipe to a smoker; but the action was so natural and so generous that all smokers would have forgiven him that act of leze-tobacco; the angels might have picked up the pieces.

“Colonel, your affair is very complicated,” said Derville, leaving the room to walk up and down in the sun before the house.

“It seems to me,” said the soldier, “perfectly simple. They thought me dead, and here I am! Give me back my wife and my property; give me the rank

of general, — to which I have a right, for I had passed colonel in the Imperial Guard the night before the battle of Eylau.”

“Matters are not managed that way in law,” said Derville. “Listen to me. You are Comte Chabert, — I’ll admit that; but the thing is to prove it legally against those persons whose interest it is to deny your existence. All your papers and documents will be disputed; and the very first discussions will open a dozen or more preliminary questions. Every step will be fought over up to the supreme court. All that will involve expensive suits, which will drag along, no matter how much energy I put into them. Your adversaries will demand an inquiry, which we cannot refuse, and which will perhaps necessitate sending a commission to Prussia. But suppose all went well, and you were promptly and legally recognized as Colonel Chabert, what then? Do we know how the question of Madame Ferraud’s innocent bigamy would be decided? Here’s a case where the question of rights is outside of the Code, and can be decided by the judges only under the laws of conscience, as a jury does in many delicate cases which social perversities bring up in criminal courts. Now, here’s a point: you had no children by your marriage, and Monsieur Ferraud has two; the judges may annul the marriage where the ties are weakest, in favor of a marriage which involves the

well-being of children, admitting that the parents married in good faith. Would it be a fine or moral position for you, at your age, and under these circumstances, to insist on having — will ye, nill ye — a wife who no longer loves you? You would have against you a husband and wife who are powerful and able to bring influence upon the judges. The case has many elements of duration in it. You may spend years and grow an old man still struggling with the sharpest grief and anxiety.”

“ But my property? ”

“ You think you have a large fortune? ”

“ I had an income of thirty thousand francs.”

“ My dear colonel, in 1799, before your marriage, you made a will leaving a quarter of your whole property to the hospitals.”

“ That is true.”

“ Well, you were supposed to be dead; then of course an inventory of your property was made and the whole wound up in order to give that fourth part to the said hospitals. Your wife had no scruples about cheating the poor. The inventory, in which she took care not to mention the cash on hand or her jewelry, or the full amount of the silver, and in which the furniture was appraised at two-thirds below its real value (either to please her or to lessen the treasury tax, for appraisers are liable for the amount of their valuations), —

this inventory, I say, gave your property as amounting to six hundred thousand francs. Your widow had a legal right to half. Everything was sold and bought in by her; she gained on the whole transaction, and the hospitals got their seventy-five thousand francs. Then, as the Treasury inherited the rest of your property (for you had not mentioned your wife in your will), the Emperor made a decree returning the portion which reverted to the Treasury to your widow. Now, then, the question is, to what have you any legal right? — to three hundred thousand francs only, less costs.”

“ You call that justice? ” said the colonel, thunder-struck.

“ Of course.”

“ Fine justice ! ”

“ It is always so, my poor colonel. You see now that what you thought so easy is not easy at all. Madame Ferraud may also try to keep the portion the Emperor returned to her.”

“ But she was not a widow, and therefore the decree was null.”

“ I admit that. But everything can be argued. Listen to me. Under these circumstances, I think a compromise is the best thing both for you and for her. You could get a larger sum that way than by asserting your rights.”

“ It would be selling my wife ! ”

“With an income of twenty-four thousand francs you would be in a position to find another who would suit you better and make you happier. I intend to go and see the Comtesse Ferraud to-day, and find out how the land lies; but I did not wish to take that step without letting you know.”

“We will go together.”

“Dressed as you are?” said the lawyer. “No, no, colonel, no! You might lose your case.”

“Can I win it?”

“Yes, under all aspects,” answered Derville. “But my dear Colonel Chabert, there is one thing you pay no heed to. I am not rich, and my practice is not yet wholly paid for. If the courts should be willing to grant you a provisional maintenance they will only do so after recognizing your claims as Colonel Chabert, grand officer of the Legion of honor.”

“So I am!” said the old man, naïvely, “grand officer of the Legion of honor, — I had forgotten that.”

“Well, as I was saying,” resumed Derville, “till then you will have to bring suits, pay lawyers, serve writs, employ sheriffs, and live. The cost of those preliminary steps will amount to more than twelve or even fifteen thousand francs. I can't lend you the money for I am crushed by the enormous interest I am forced to pay to those who lent me money to buy my practice. Where, then, can you get it?”

Big tears fell from the faded eyes of the old soldier and rolled down his cheeks. The sight of these difficulties discouraged him. The social and judicial world lay upon his breast like a nightmare.

“ I will go to the column of the place Vêndome,” he said, “ and cry aloud, ‘ I am Colonel Chabert, who broke the Russian square at Eylau ! ’ The man of iron up there — ah ! he ’ll recognize me ! ”

“ They would put you in Charenton.”

At that dreaded name the soldier’s courage fell.

“ Perhaps I should have a better chance at the ministry of war,” he said.

“ In a government office? Well, try it,” said Derville. “ But you must take with you a legal judgment declaring your death disproved. The government would prefer to get rid of the Empire people.”

The colonel remained for a moment speechless, motionless, gazing before him and seeing nothing, plunged in a bottomless despair. Military justice is prompt and straight-forward; it decides peremptorily, and is generally fair; this was the only justice Chabert knew. Seeing the labyrinth of difficulty which lay before him, and knowing that he had no money with which to enter it, the poor soldier was mortally wounded in that particular power of human nature which we call *will*. He felt it was impossible for him to live in a legal struggle; far easier to his nature was it to stay poor and a beg-

gar, or to enlist in some cavalry regiment if they would still take him. Physical and mental suffering had vitiated his body in some of its important organs. He was approaching one of those diseases for which the science of medicine has no name, the seat of which is, in a way, movable (like the nervous system which is the part of our machinery most frequently attacked), an affection which we must fain call "the spleen of sorrow." However serious this invisible but most real disease might be, it was still curable by a happy termination of his griefs. To completely unhinge and destroy that vigorous organization some final blow was needed, some unexpected shock which might break the weakened springs and produce those strange hesitations, those vague, incomplete, and inconsequent actions which physiologists notice in all persons wrecked by grief.

Observing symptoms of deep depression in his client, Derville hastened to say: "Take courage; the issue of the affair must be favorable to you in some way or other. Only, examine your own mind and see if you can place implicit trust in me, and accept blindly the course that I shall think best for you."

"Do what you will," said Chabert.

"Yes, but will you surrender yourself to me completely, like a man marching to his death?"

"Am I to live without a status and without a name? Is that bearable?"

“I don’t mean that,” said the lawyer. “We will bring an amicable suit to annul the record of your decease, and also your marriage; then you will resume your rights. You could even be, through Comte Ferraud’s influence, restored to the army with the rank of general, and you would certainly obtain a pension.”

“Well, go on, then,” replied Chabert; “I trust implicitly to you.”

“I will send you a power-of-attorney to sign,” said Derville. “Adieu, keep up your courage; if you want money let me know.”

Chabert wrung the lawyer’s hand, and stood with his back against the wall, unable to follow him except with his eyes. During this conference the face of a man had every now and then looked round one of the gate pillars, behind which its owner was posted waiting for Derville’s departure. The man now accosted the young lawyer. He was old, and he wore a blue jacket, a pleated white smock like those worn by brewers, and on his head a cap of otter fur. His face was brown, hollow, and wrinkled, but red at the cheek-bones from hard work and exposure to the weather.

“Excuse me, monsieur, if I take the liberty of speaking to you,” he said, touching Derville on the arm. “But I supposed when I saw you that you were the general’s friend.”

“Well,” said Derville, “what interest have you in him? Who are you?” added the distrustful lawyer.

“I am Louis Vergniaud,” answered the man, “and I want to have a word with you.”

“Then it is you who lodge the Comte Chabert in this way, is it?”

“Pardon it, monsieur. He has the best room in the house. I would have given him mine if I had had one, and slept myself in the stable. A man who has suffered as he has and who is teaching my kids to read, a general, an Egyptian, the first lieutenant under whom I served, — why, all I have is his! I’ve shared all with him. Unluckily it is so little, — bread and milk and eggs! However, when you’re on a campaign you must live with the mess; and little as it is, it is given with a full heart, monsieur. But he has vexed us.”

“He!”

“Yes, monsieur, vexed us; there’s no going behind that. I took this establishment, which is more than I can manage, and he saw that. It troubled him, and he would do my work and take care of the horse! I kept saying to him, ‘No, no, my general!’ But there! he only answered, ‘Am I a lazybones? don’t I know how to put my shoulder to the wheel?’ So I gave notes for the value of my cow-house to a man named Grados. Do you know him, monsieur?”

“But, my good friend, I have n’t the time to listen to all this. Tell me only how Colonel Chabert vexed you.”

“He did vex us, monsieur, just as true as my name is Louis Vergniaud, and my wife cried about it. He heard from the neighbors that I couldn’t meet that note; and the old fellow, without a word to us, took all you gave him, and, little by little, paid the note! Wasn’t it a trick! My wife and I knew he went without tobacco all that time, poor old man! But now, yes, he has the cigars, — I’d sell my own self sooner! But it does vex us. Now, I propose to you to lend me on this establishment three hundred francs, so that we may get him some clothes and furnish his room. He thinks he has paid us, does n’t he? Well, the truth is, he has made us his debtors. Yes, he has vexed us; he shouldn’t have played us such a trick, — wasn’t it almost an insult? Such friends as we are! As true as my name is Louis Vergniaud, I will mortgage myself rather than not return you that money.”

Derville looked at the cow-keeper, then he made a step backward and looked at the house, the yard, the the manure, the stable, the rabbits, and the children.

“Faith!” thought he to himself, “I do believe one of the characteristics of virtue is to own nothing. Yes,” he said aloud, “you shall have your three hundred francs, and more too. But it is not I who give them

to you, it is the colonel ; he will be rich enough to help you, and I shall not deprive him of that pleasure."

" Will it be soon ? "

" Yes, soon. "

" Good God ! how happy my wife will be. " The tanned face of the cow-keeper brightened into joy.

" Now, " thought Derville as he jumped into his cabriolet, " to face the enemy. She must not see our game, but we must know hers, and win it at one trick. She is a woman. What are women most afraid of ? Why, of — "

He began to study the countess's position, and fell into one of those deep reveries to which great politicians are prone when they prepare their plans and try to guess the secrets of foreign powers. Lawyers are, in a way, statesmen, to whom the management of individual interests is intrusted. A glance at the situation of Monsieur le Comte Ferraud and his wife is necessary for a full comprehension of the lawyer's genius.

Monsieur le Comte Ferraud was the son of a former councillor of the parliament of Paris, who had emigrated during the Terror, and who, though he saved his head, lost his property. He returned to France under the Consulate, and remained faithful to the interests of Louis XVIII., in whose suite his father had been before the Revolution. His son, therefore, belonged to that

section of the faubourg Saint-Germain which nobly resisted the Napoleonic seductions. The young count's reputation for good sense and sagacity when he was called simply "Monsieur Ferraud" made him the object of a few imperial blandishments; for the Emperor took as much satisfaction in his conquests over the aristocracy as he did in winning a battle. The count was promised the restitution of his title, also that of all his property which was not sold, and hopes were held out of a ministry in the future, and a senatorship. The Emperor failed. At the time of Comte Chabert's death Monsieur Ferraud was a young man twenty-six years of age, without fortune, agreeable in appearance and manner, and a social success, whom the faubourg Saint-Germain adopted as one of its distinguished figures.

Madame la Comtesse Chabert had managed the property derived from her late husband so well that after a widowhood of eighteen months she possessed an income of nearly forty thousand francs a year. Her marriage with the young count was not regarded as news by the coteries of the faubourg. Napoleon, who was pleased with an alliance which met his ideas of fusion, returned to Madame Chabert the money derived by the Treasury from her late husband's estate; but here again Napoleon's hopes were foiled. Madame Ferraud not only adored a lover in the young man, but she was attracted by the idea of entering that haughty

society which, in spite of its political abasement, was still far above that of the imperial court. Her various vanities as well as her passions were gratified by this marriage. She felt she was about to become “an elegant woman.”

When the faubourg Saint-Germain ascertained that the young count's marriage was not a defection from their ranks, all salons were opened to his wife. The Restoration took place. The political fortunes of the Comte Ferraud made no rapid strides. He understood very well the exigencies of Louis XVIII.'s position; he was one of the initiated who waited until “the revolutionary gulf was closed,” — a royal phrase which the liberals laughed at, but which, nevertheless, hid a deep political meaning. However, the ordinance with its long-winded clerical phrases quoted by Godeschal in the first pages of this story restored to the Comte Ferraud two forests and an estate which had risen in value during its sequestration. At the period of which we write Comte Ferraud was councillor of State, also a director-general, and he considered his position as no more than the opening of his political career. Absorbed in the pursuit of an eager ambition, he depended much on his secretary, a ruined lawyer named Delbecq, — a man who was more than able, one who knew every possible resource of pettifogging sophistry, to whom the count left the management of all his private affairs.

This clever practitioner understood his position in the count's household far too well not to be honest out of policy. He hoped for some place under government through the influence of his patron, whose property he took care of to the best of his ability. His conduct so completely refuted the dark story of his earlier life that he was now thought to be a calumniated man.

The countess, however, with the shrewd tact of a woman, fathomed the secretary, watched him carefully, and knew so well how to manage him, that she had already largely increased her fortune by his help. She contrived to convince Delbecq that she ruled Monsieur Ferraud, and promised that she would get him made judge of a municipal court in one of the most important cities in France if he devoted himself wholly to her interests. The promise of an irremovable office, which would enable him to marry advantageously and improve his political career until he became in the end a deputy, made Delbecq Madame Ferraud's abject tool. His watchfulness enabled her to profit by all those lucky chances which the fluctuations of the Bourse and the rise of property in Paris during the first three years of the Restoration offered to clever manipulators of money. Delbecq had tripled her capital with all the more ease because his plans commended themselves to the countess as a rapid method of making her fortune enormous. She spent the emoluments of

the count's various offices on the household expenses, so as to invest every penny of her own income, and Delbecq aided and abetted this avarice without inquiring into its motives. Men of his kind care nothing for the discovery of any secrets that do not affect their own interests. Besides, he accounted for it naturally by that thirst for gold which possesses nearly all Parisian women; and as he knew how large a fortune Comte Ferraud's ambitions needed to support them, he sometimes fancied that he saw in the countess's greed a sign of her devotion to a man with whom she was still in love.

Madame Ferraud buried the motives of her conduct in the depths of her own heart. There lay the secrets of life and death to her; there is the kernel of our present history.

At the beginning of the year 1818 the Restoration was established on an apparently firm and immovable basis; its governmental doctrines, as understood by superior minds, seemed likely to lead France into an era of renewed prosperity. Then it was that society changed front. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud found that she had made a marriage of love and wealth and ambition. Still young and beautiful, she played the part of a woman of fashion and lived in the court atmosphere. Rich herself, and rich through her husband, who had the credit of being one of the ablest men of the royalist party, a friend of the king and likely to

become a minister, she belonged to the aristocracy and shared its glamour.

In the midst of this triumphant prosperity a moral cancer fastened upon her. Men have feelings which women guess in spite of every effort made by such men to bury them. At the time of the king's first return Comte Ferraud was conscious of some regrets for his marriage. The widow of Colonel Chabert had brought him no useful connections; he was alone and without influence, to make his way in a career full of obstacles and full of enemies. Then, perhaps, after he had coolly judged his wife, he saw certain defects of education which made her unsuitable, and unable, to further his projects. A word he once said about Talleyrand's marriage enlightened the countess and showed her that if the past had to be done over again he would never make her his wife. What woman would forgive that regret, containing as it did, the germs of all insults, nay, of all crimes and all repudiations!

Let us conceive the wound that this discovery made in the heart of a woman who feared the return of her first husband. She knew that he lived; she had repulsed him. Then, for a short time, she heard no more of him, and took comfort in the hope that he was killed at Waterloo together with the imperial eagles and Boutin. She then conceived the idea of binding her second husband to her by the strongest of ties, by a chain of

gold; and she determined to be so rich that her great fortune should make that second marriage indissoluble if by chance Comte Chabert reappeared. He had reappeared; and she was unable to understand why the struggle she so much dreaded was not begun. Perhaps the man's sufferings, perhaps an illness had delivered her from him. Perhaps he was half-crazy and Charenton might restore his reason. She was not willing to set Delbecq or the police on his traces, for fear of putting herself in their power, or bringing on a catastrophe. There are many women in Paris who, like the Comtesse Ferraud, are living secretly with moral monsters, or skirting the edges of some abyss; they make for themselves a callus over the region of their wound and still continue to laugh and be amused.

“There is something very singular in Comte Ferraud's situation,” said Derville to himself, after long meditation, as the cabriolet stopped before the gate of the hôtel Ferraud in the rue de Varennes. “How is it that he, so wealthy and a favorite of the king, is not already a peer of France? Perhaps Madame de Grandlieu is right in saying that the king's policy is to give higher importance to the peerage by not lavishing it. Besides, the son of a councillor of the old parliament is neither a Crillon nor a Rohan. Comte Ferraud can enter the upper Chamber only, as it were, on sufferance. But if his marriage were ruptured would n't it be a satisfac-

tion to the king if the peerage of some of those old senators who have daughters only could descend to him? Certainly that's a pretty good fear to dangle before the countess," thought Derville, as he went up the steps of the hôtel Ferraud.

Without knowing it the lawyer had laid his finger on the secret wound, he had plunged his hand into the cancer that was destroying Madame Ferraud's life. She received him in a pretty winter dining-room, where she was breakfasting and playing with a monkey, which was fastened by a chain to a sort of little post with iron bars. The countess was wrapped in an elegant morning-gown; the curls of her pretty hair, carelessly caught up, escaped from a little cap which gave her a piquant air. She was fresh and smiling. The table glittered with the silver-gilt service, the plate, the mother-of-pearl articles; rare plants were about her, growing in splendid porcelain vases.

As the lawyer looked at Comte Chabert's wife, rich with his property, surrounded by luxury, and she herself at the apex of society, while the unhappy husband lived with the beasts in a cow-house, he said to himself: "The moral of this is that a pretty woman will never acknowledge a husband, nor even a lover, in a man with an old topcoat, a shabby wig, and broken boots." A bitter and satirical smile expressed the half-philosophic, half-sarcastic ideas that necessarily

come to a man who is so placed that he sees to the bottom of things in spite of the lies under which so many Parisian families hide their existence.

“ Good morning, Monsieur Derville,” said the countess, continuing to make the monkey drink coffee.

“ Madame,” he said, abruptly, for he was offended at the careless tone in which the countess greeted him. “ I have come to talk to you on a serious matter.”

“ Oh! I am so very sorry, but the count is absent — ”

“ I am glad, madame ; for he would be out of place at this conference. Besides, I know from Delbecq that you prefer to do business yourself, without troubling Monsieur le comte.”

“ Very good ; then I will send for Delbecq,” she said.

“ He could do you no good, clever as he is,” returned Derville. “ Listen to me, madame ; one word will suffice to make you serious. Comte Chabert is living.”

“ Do you expect me to be serious when you talk such nonsense as that?” she said, bursting into a fit of laughter.

But the countess was suddenly subdued by the strange lucidity of the fixed look with which Derville questioned her, seeming to read into the depths of her soul.

“Madame,” he replied, with cold and incisive gravity, “you are not aware of the dangers of your position. I do not speak of the undeniable authenticity of the papers in the case, nor of the positive proof that can be brought of Comte Chabert’s existence. I am not a man, as you know, to take charge of a hopeless case. If you oppose our steps to prove the falsity of the death-record, you will certainly lose that first suit, and that question once settled in our favor determines all the others.”

“Then, what do you wish to speak of?”

“Not of the colonel, nor of you; neither shall I remind you of the costs a clever lawyer in possession of all the facts of the case might charge upon you, nor of the game such a man could play with those letters which you received from your first husband before you married your second —”

“It is false!” she cried, with the violence of a spoilt beauty. “I have never received a letter from Comte Chabert. If any one calls himself the colonel he is a swindler, a galley-slave perhaps, like Cogniard; it makes me shudder to think of it. How can the colonel come to life again? Bonaparte himself sent me condolences on his death by an aid-de-camp; and I now draw a pension of three thousand francs granted to his widow by the Chambers. I have every right to reject all Chaberts past, present, and to come.”

“Happily we are alone, madame, and we can lie at our ease;” he said, coldly, inwardly amused by inciting the anger which shook the countess, for the purpose of forcing her into some betrayal, — a trick familiar to all lawyers, who remain calm and impassible themselves when their clients or their adversaries get angry.

“Now then, to measure swords!” he said to himself, thinking of a trap he could lay to force her to show her weakness. “The proof that Colonel Chabert’s first letter reached you exists, madame,” he said aloud. “It contained a draft.”

“No, it did not; there was no draft,” she said.

“Then the letter did reach you,” continued Derville, smiling. “You are caught in the first trap a lawyer lays for you, and yet you think you can fight the law!”

The countess blushed, turned pale, and hid her face in her hands. Then she shook off her shame, and said, with the coolness which belongs to women of her class, “As you are the lawyer of the impostor Chabert, have the goodness to —”

“Madame,” said Derville, interrupting her, “I am at this moment your lawyer as well as the colonel’s. Do you think I wish to lose a client as valuable to me as you are? But you are not listening to me.”

“Go on, monsieur,” she said, graciously.

“Your fortune came from Monsieur le Comte Cha-

bert, and you have repudiated him. Your property is colossal, and you let him starve. Madame, lawyers can be very eloquent when their cases are eloquent; here are circumstances which can raise the hue-and-cry of public opinion against you."

"But, Monsieur," said the countess, irritated by the manner in which Derville turned and returned her on his gridiron, "admitting that your Monsieur Chabert exists, the courts will sustain my second marriage on account of my children, and I shall get off by repaying two hundred and fifty thousand francs to Monsieur Chabert."

"Madame, there is no telling how a court of law may view a matter of feeling. If, on the one hand, we have a mother and two children, on the other there is a man overwhelmed by undeserved misfortune, aged by you, left to starve by your rejection. Besides, the judges cannot go against the law. Your marriage with the colonel puts the law on his side; he has the prior right. But, if you appear in such an odious light you may find an adversary you little expect. That, madame, is the danger I came to warn you of."

"Another adversary!" she said, "who?"

"Monsieur le Comte Ferraud, madame."

"Monsieur Ferraud is too deeply attached to me, and respects the mother of his children too —"

"Ah, madame," said Derville, interrupting her, "why

talk such nonsense to a lawyer who can read hearts. At the present moment Monsieur Ferraud has not the slightest desire to annul his marriage, and I have no doubt he adores you. But if some one went to him and told him that his marriage could be annulled, that his wife would be arraigned before the bar of public opinion — ”

“ He would defend me, monsieur.”

“ No, madame.”

“ What reason would he have for deserting me? ”

“ That of marrying the only daughter of some peer of France, whose title would descend to him by the king’s decree.”

The countess turned pale.

“ I have her! ” thought Derville. “ Good, the poor colonel’s cause is won. Moreover, madame,” he said aloud, “ Monsieur Ferraud will feel the less regret because a man covered with glory, a general, a count, a grand officer of the Legion of honor, is certainly not a derogation to you, — if such a man asks for his wife — ”

“ Enough, enough, monsieur,” she cried ; “ I can have no lawyer but you. What must I do? ”

“ Compromise.”

“ Does he still love me? ”

“ How could it be otherwise? ”

At these words the countess threw up her head. A

gleam of hope shone in her eyes ; perhaps she thought of speculating on her husband's tenderness and winning her way by some female wile.

“ I shall await your orders, madame ; you will let me know whether we are to serve notices of Comte Chabert's suit upon you, or whether you will come to my office and arrange the basis of a compromise,” said Derville, bowing as he left the room.

Eight days after these visits paid by Derville, on a fine June morning, the husband and wife, parted by an almost supernatural circumstance, were making their way from the opposite extremes of Paris, to meet again in the office of their mutual lawyer. Certain liberal advances made by Derville to the colonel enabled the latter to clothe himself in accordance with his rank. He came in a clean cab. His head was covered with a suitable wig ; he was dressed in dark-blue cloth and spotlessly white linen, and he wore beneath his waistcoat the broad red ribbon of the grand officers of the Legion of honor. In resuming the dress and the habits of affluence he had also recovered his former martial elegance. He walked erect. His face, grave and mysterious, and bearing the signs of happiness and renewed hope, seemed younger and fuller ; he was no more like the old Chabert in the top-coat than a two-sous piece is like a forty-franc coin just issued. All

who passed him knew him at once for a noble relic of our old army, one of those heroic men on whom the light of our national glory shines, who reflect it, as shattered glass illuminated by the sun returns a thousand rays. Such old soldiers are books and pictures too.

The count sprang from the carriage to enter Derville's office with the agility of a young man. The cab had hardly turned away before a pretty coupé with armorial bearings drove up. Madame la Comtesse Ferraud got out of it in a simple dress, but one well suited to display her youthful figure. She wore a pretty drawn bonnet lined with pink, which framed her face delightfully, concealed its exact outline, and restored its freshness.

Though the clients were thus rejuvenated, the office remained its old self, such as we saw it when this history began. Simonnin was eating his breakfast, one shoulder leaning against the window, which was now open; he was gazing at the blue sky above the courtyard formed by four blocks of black buildings.

“Ha!” cried the gutter-jumper, “who wants to bet a play now that Colonel Chabert is a general and a red-ribbon?”

“Derville is a downright magician,” said Godeschal.

“There's no trick to play him this time,” said Desroches.

“His wife will do that, the Comtesse Ferraud,” said Boucard.

“Then she ’ll have to belong to two —”

“Here she is!” cried Simonnin.

Just then the colonel came in and asked for Derville.

“He is in, Monsieur le Comte,” said Simonnin.

“So you are not deaf, you young scamp,” said Chabert, catching the gutter-jumper by the ear and twisting it, to the great satisfaction of the other clerks, who laughed and looked at the colonel with the inquisitive interest due to so singular a personage.

Colonel Chabert was in Derville’s room when his wife entered the office.

“Say, Boucard, what a queer scene there ’s going to be in the master’s room! She can live the even days with Comte Ferraud, and the uneven days with Comte Chabert —”

“Leap-year the colonel will gain,” said Godeschal.

“Hold your tongues, gentlemen,” said Boucard, severely. “You ’ll be overheard. I never knew an office in which the clerks made such fun of the clients as you do here.”

Derville had put the colonel into an adjoining room by the time the countess was ushered in.

“Madame,” he said to her, “not knowing if it would be agreeable to you to meet Monsieur le Comte Chabert, I have separated you. If, however, you wish —”

“ I thank you for that consideration, monsieur.”

“ I have prepared the draught of an agreement, the conditions of which can be discussed here and now, between you and Monsieur Chabert. I will go from one to the other and convey the remarks of each.”

“ Begin, monsieur,” said the countess, showing signs of impatience.

Derville read: “ Between the undersigned, — Monsieur Hyacinthe, called Chabert, count, brigadier-general, and grand officer of the Legion of honor, living in Paris, in the rue du Petit-Banquier, of the first part, and Madame Rose Chapotel, wife of the above-named Monsieur le Comte Chabert, born — ”

“ That will do,” she said; “ skip the preamble and come to the conditions.”

“ Madame,” said the lawyer, “ the preamble explains succinctly the position which you hold to each other. Then, in article one, you recognize in presence of three witnesses, namely, two notaries, and the cow-keeper with whom your husband lives, to all of whom I have confided your secret and who will keep it faithfully, — you recognize, I say, that the individual mentioned in the accompanying deeds and whose identity is elsewhere established by affidavits prepared by Alexander Crottat, your notary, is the Comte Chabert, your first husband. In article two Comte Chabert, for the sake of your welfare, agrees to make no use of his rights

except under circumstances provided for in the agreement,— and those circumstances,” remarked Derville in a parenthesis, “are the non-fulfilment of the clauses of this private agreement. Monsieur Chabert, on his part,” he continued, “consents to sue with you for a judgment which shall set aside the record of his death, and also dissolve his marriage.”

“But that will not suit me at all,” said the countess, astonished; “I don’t wish a lawsuit, you know why.”

“In article three,” continued the lawyer, with imperturbable coolness, “you agree to secure to the said Hyacinthe, Comte Chabert, an annuity of twenty-four thousand francs now invested in the public Funds, the capital of which will devolve on you at his death.”

“But that is far too dear!” cried the countess.

“Can you compromise for less?”

“Perhaps so.”

“What is it you want, madame?”

“I want — I don’t want a suit. I want —”

“To keep him dead,” said Derville, quickly.

“Monsieur,” said the countess, “if he asks twenty-four thousand francs a year, I’ll demand justice.”

“Yes, justice!” cried a hollow voice, as the colonel opened the door and appeared suddenly before his wife, with one hand in his waistcoat and the other pointing to the floor, a gesture to which the memory of his great disaster gave a horrible meaning.

“It is he!” said the countess in her own mind.

“Too dear?” continued the old soldier, “I gave you a million and now you trade on my poverty. Well, then, I will have you and my property both; our marriage is not void.”

“But monsieur is not Colonel Chabert!” cried the countess, feigning surprise.

“Ah!” said the old man, in a tone of irony, “do you want proofs? Well, did I not take you from the pavements of the Palais-Royal?”

The countess turned pale. Seeing her color fade beneath her rouge, the old soldier, sorry for the suffering he was inflicting on a woman he had once loved ardently, stopped short; but she gave him such a venomous look that he suddenly added, “You were with —”

“For heaven’s sake, monsieur,” said the countess, appealing to the lawyer, “allow me to leave this place. I did not come here to listen to such insults.”

She left the room. Derville sprang into the office after her; but she seemed to have taken wings and was already gone. When he returned to his own room he found the colonel walking up and down in a paroxysm of rage.

“In those days men took their wives where they liked,” he said. “But I chose ill; I ought never to have trusted her; she has no heart!”

“Colonel, you will admit I was right in begging you

not to come here! I am now certain of your identity. When you came in the countess made a little movement the meaning of which was not to be doubted. But you have lost your cause. Your wife now knows that you are unrecognizable."

"I will kill her."

"Nonsense! then you would be arrested and guillotined as a criminal. Besides, you might miss your stroke; it is unpardonable not to kill a wife when you attempt it. Leave me to undo your folly, you big child! Go away; but take care of yourself, for she is capable of laying some trap and getting you locked up at Charenton. I will see about serving the notices of the suit on her at once; that will be some protection to you."

The poor colonel obeyed his young benefactor, and went away, stammering a few excuses. He was going slowly down the dark staircase lost in gloomy thought, overcome perhaps by the blow he had just received, to him the worst, the one that went deepest to his heart, when, as he reached the lower landing, he heard the rustle of a gown, and his wife appeared.

"Come, monsieur," she said, taking his arm with a movement like others he once knew so well.

The action, the tones of her voice, now soft and gentle, calmed the colonel's anger, and he allowed her to lead him to her carriage.

“Get in,” she said, when the footman had let down the steps.

And he suddenly found himself, as if by magic, seated beside his wife in the coupé.

“Where to, madame?” asked the footman.

“To Groslay,” she replied.

The horses started, and the carriage crossed the whole city.

“Monsieur!” said the countess, in a tone of voice that seemed to betray one of those rare emotions, few in life, which shake our whole being.

At such moments heart, fibres, nerves, soul, body, countenance, all, even the pores of the skin, quiver. Life seems no longer in us; it gushes out, it conveys itself like a contagion, it transmits itself in a look, in a tone of the voice, in a gesture, in the imposition of our will on others. The old soldier trembled, hearing that word, that first, that expressive “Monsieur!” It was at once a reproach, a prayer, a pardon, a hope, a despair, a question, an answer. That one word included all. A woman must needs be a great comedian to throw such eloquence and so many feelings into one word. Truth is never so complete in its expression; it cannot utter itself wholly, — it leaves something to be seen within. The colonel was filled with remorse for his suspicions, his exactions, his anger, and he lowered his eyes to conceal his feelings.

“Monsieur,” continued the countess, after an almost imperceptible pause, “I knew you at once.”

“Rosine,” said the old soldier, “that word contains the only balm that can make me forget my troubles.”

Two great tears fell hotly on his wife’s hands, which he pressed as if to show her a paternal affection.

“Monsieur,” she continued, “how is it you did not see what it cost me to appear before a stranger in a position so false as mine. If I am forced to blush for what I am, at least let it be in my own home. Ought not such a secret to remain buried in our own hearts? You will, I hope, forgive my apparent indifference to the misfortunes of a Chabert in whom I had no reason to believe. I did receive your letters,” she said, hastily, seeing a sudden objection on her husband’s face; “but they reached me thirteen months after the battle of Eylau; they were open, torn, dirty; the writing was unknown to me; and I, who had just obtained Napoleon’s signature to my new marriage contract, supposed that some clever swindler was trying to impose upon me. Not wishing to trouble Monsieur Ferraud’s peace of mind, or to bring future trouble into the family, I was right, was I not, to take every precaution against a false Chabert?”

“Yes, you were right; and I have been a fool, a dolt, a beast, not to have foreseen the consequences of such a situation. But where are we going?” asked the

colonel, suddenly noticing that they had reached the *Barrière de la Chapelle*.

“To my country-place near Groslay, in the valley of Montmorency,” she replied. “There, monsieur, we can think over, together, the course we ought to take. I know my duty. Though I am yours legally, I am no longer yours in fact. Surely, you cannot wish that we should be the common talk of Paris. Let us hide from the public a situation which, for me, has a mortifying side, and strive to maintain our dignity. You love me still,” she continued, casting a sad and gentle look upon the colonel, “but I, was I not authorized to form other ties? In this strange position a secret voice tells me to hope in your goodness, which I know so well. Am I wrong in taking you, you only, for the sole arbiter of my fate? Be judge and pleader both; I confide in your noble nature. You will forgive the consequences of my innocent fault. I dare avow to you, therefore, that I love Monsieur Ferraud; I thought I had the right to love him. I do not blush for this confession; it may offend you, but it dishonors neither of us. I cannot hide the truth from you. When accident made me a widow, I was not a mother —”

The colonel made a sign with his hand as if to ask silence of his wife; and they remained silent, not saying a word for over a mile. Chabert fancied he saw her little children before him.

“Rosine!”

“Monsieur?”

“The dead do wrong to reappear.”

“Oh, monsieur, no, no! Do not think me ungrateful. But you find a mother, a woman who loves another man, where you left a wife. If it is no longer in my power to love you, I know what I owe to you, and I offer you still the devotion of a daughter.”

“Rosine,” said the old man, gently, “I feel no resentment towards you. We will forget all that once was,” he said, with one of those smiles whose charm is the reflection of a noble soul. “I am not so lost to delicacy as to ask a show of love from a woman who no longer loves me.”

The countess gave him such a grateful glance that poor Chabert wished in his heart he could return to that grave at Eylau. Certain men have souls capable of vast sacrifices, whose recompense to them is the certainty of the happiness of one they love.

“My friend, we will talk of all this later, with a quiet mind,” said the countess.

The conversation took another turn, for it was impossible to continue it long in this strain. Though husband and wife constantly touched upon their strange position, either by vague allusions, or grave remarks, they nevertheless made a charming journey, recalling many of the events of their union, and of the Empire.

The countess knew how to impart a tender charm to these memories, and to cast a tinge of melancholy upon the conversation, enough at least to keep it serious. She revived love without exciting desire, and showed her first husband the mental graces and knowledge she had acquired, — trying to let him taste the happiness of a father beside a cherished daughter. The colonel had known the countess of the Empire, he now saw a countess of the Restoration.

They at last arrived, through a cross-road, at a fine park in the little valley which separates the heights of Margency from the pretty village of Groslay. The house was a delightful one, and the colonel saw on arriving that all was prepared for their stay. Misfortune is a sort of talisman, the power of which lies in strengthening and fulfilling our natural man; it increases the distrust and evil tendencies of certain natures just as it increases the goodness of those whose heart is sound. Misfortune had made the colonel more helpful and better than he had ever been; he was therefore able to enter into those secrets of woman's suffering which are usually unknown to men. And yet, in spite of his great lack of distrust, he could not help saying to his wife: —

“You seem to have been sure of bringing me here?”

“Yes,” she answered, “if I found Colonel Chabert in the petitioner.”

The tone of truth which she gave to that answer dispersed the few doubts which the colonel already felt ashamed of admitting.

For three days the countess was truly admirable in her conduct to her first husband. By tender care and constant gentleness she seemed to try to efface even the memory of the sufferings he had endured, and to win pardon for the misfortunes she had, as she admitted, innocently caused. She took pleasure in displaying for his benefit, though always with a sort of melancholy, the particular charms under the influence of which she knew him to be feeble, — for men are more particularly susceptible to certain ways, to certain graces of heart and mind; and those they are unable to resist. She wanted to interest him in her situation, to move his feelings enough to control his mind and so bend him absolutely to her will. Resolved to take any means to reach her ends, she was still uncertain what to do with the man, though she meant, undoubtedly, to destroy him socially.

On the evening of the third day she began to feel that in spite of all her efforts she could no longer conceal the anxiety she felt as to the result of her manoeuvres. To obtain a moment's relief she went up to her own room, sat down at her writing-table, and took off the mask of tranquillity she had worn before the colonel, like an actress returning weary to her room after a

trying fifth act and falling half-dead upon a couch, while the audience retains an image of her to which she bears not the slightest resemblance. She began to finish a letter already begun to Delbecq, telling him to go to Derville and ask in her name for a sight of the papers which concerned Colonel Chabert, to copy them, and come immediately to Groslay. She had hardly finished before she heard the colonel's step in the corridor; for he was coming, full of anxiety, to find her.

“Oh!” she said aloud, “I wish I were dead! my position is intolerable —”

“What is it? is anything the matter?” said the worthy man.

“Nothing, nothing,” she said.

She rose, left the colonel where he was, and went to speak to her maid without witnesses, telling her to go at once to Paris and deliver the letter, which she gave her, into Delbecq's own hands, and to bring it back to her as soon as he read it. Then she went out and seated herself on a bench in the garden, where she was in full view of the colonel if he wished to find her. He was already searching for her and he soon came.

“Rosine,” he said, “tell me what is the matter.”

She did not answer. It was one of those glorious calm evenings of the month of June, when all secret harmonies diffuse such peace, such sweetness in the sunsets. The air was pure, the silence deep, and a

distant murmur of children's voices added a sort of melody to the consecrated scene.

“You do not answer me,” said the colonel.

“My husband —” began the countess, then she stopped, made a movement, and said, appealingly, with a blush, “What ought I to say in speaking of Monsieur le Comte Ferraud?”

“Call him your husband, my poor child,” answered the colonel, in a kind tone; “he is the father of your children.”

“Well, then,” she continued, “if he asks me what I am doing here, if he learns that I have shut myself up with an unknown man, what am I to say? Hear me, monsieur,” she went on, taking an attitude that was full of dignity, “decide my fate; I feel I am resigned to everything —”

“Dear,” said the colonel, grasping his wife's hands, “I have resolved to sacrifice myself wholly to your happiness —”

“That is impossible,” she cried, with a convulsive movement. “Remember that in that case you must renounce your own identity — and do so legally.”

“What!” exclaimed the colonel, “does not my word satisfy you?”

The term “legally” fell like lead upon the old man's heart and roused an involuntary distrust. He cast a look upon his wife which made her blush; she lowered

her eyes, and for a moment he feared he should be forced to despise her. The countess was alarmed lest she had startled the honest shame, the stern uprightness of a man whose generous nature and whose primitive virtues were well-known to her. Though these ideas brought a cloud to each brow they were suddenly dispelled, harmony was restored, — and thus: A child's cry resounded in the distance.

“ Jules, let your sister alone ! ” cried the countess.

“ What ! are your children here ? ” exclaimed the colonel.

“ Yes, but I forbade them to come in your way.”

The old soldier understood the delicacy and the womanly tact shown in that graceful consideration, and he took her hand to kiss it.

“ Let them come ! ” he said.

The little girl ran up to complain of her brother.

“ Mamma ! he plagued me — ”

“ Mamma ! ”

“ It was his fault — ”

“ It was hers — ”

The hands were stretched out to the mother, and the two voices mingled. It was a sudden, delightful picture.

“ My poor children ! ” exclaimed the countess, not restraining her tears, “ must I lose them ? To whom will the court give them ? A mother's heart cannot be shared. I will have them ! yes, I — ”

“ You are making mamma cry,” said Jules, the elder, with an angry look at the colonel.

“ Hush, Jules ! ” cried his mother, peremptorily.

The two children examined their mother and the stranger with an indescribable curiosity.

“ Yes,” continued the countess, “ if I am parted from Monsieur Ferraud, they must leave me my children ; if I have them, I can bear all.”

Those words brought the success she expected.

“ Yes,” cried the colonel, as if completing a sentence he had begun mentally. “ I must return to the grave ; I have thought so already.”

“ How can I accept such a sacrifice ? ” replied the countess. “ If men have died to save the honor of their mistresses, they gave their lives but once. But this would be giving your daily life, your lifetime ! No, no, it is impossible ; if it were only your existence perhaps it might be nothing, but to sign a record that you are not Colonel Chabert, to admit yourself an impostor, to sacrifice your honor, to live a lie for all the days of your life, — no ; human devotion cannot go to such a length ! No, no ! if it were not for my poor children I would fly with you to the ends of the earth.”

“ But,” said Chabert, “ why can I not live here, in that little cottage, as a friend and relative. I am as useless as an old cannon ; all I need is a little tobacco and the ‘ Constitutionnel.’ ”

The countess burst into tears. Then followed a struggle of generosity between them, from which Colonel Chabert came forth a conqueror. One evening, watching the mother in the midst of her children, deeply moved by that picture of a home, influenced, too, by the silence and the quiet of the country, he came to the resolution of remaining dead; no longer resisting the thought of a legal instrument, he asked his wife what steps he should take to secure, irrevocably, the happiness of that home.

“Do what you will,” replied the countess; “I declare positively that I will have nothing to do with it, — I ought not.”

Delbecq had then been in the house a few days, and, in accordance with the countess’s verbal instructions, he had wormed himself into the confidence of the old soldier. The morning after this little scene Colonel Chabert accompanied the former lawyer to Saint-Leu-Taverny, where Delbecq had already had an agreement drawn up by a notary, in terms so crude and brutal that on hearing them the colonel abruptly left the office.

“Good God! would you make me infamous! why, I should be called a forger!”

“Monsieur,” said Delbecq, “I advise you not to sign too quickly. You could get at least thirty thousand francs a year out of this affair; Madame would give them.”

Blasting that scoundrel emeritus with the luminous glance of an indignant honest man, the colonel rushed from the place driven by a thousand conflicting feelings. He was again distrustful, indignant, and merciful by turns. After a time he re-entered the park of Groslay by a breach in the wall, and went, with slow steps, to rest and think at his ease, in a little study built beneath a raised kiosk which commanded a view of the road from Saint-Leu.

The path was made of that yellow earth which now takes the place of river-gravel, and the countess, who was sitting in the kiosk above, did not hear the slight noise of the colonel's footstep, being preoccupied with anxious thoughts as to the success of her plot. Neither did the old soldier become aware of the presence of his wife in the kiosk above him.

“Well, Monsieur Delbecq, did he sign?” asked the countess, when she saw the secretary, over the sunken-fence, alone upon the road.

“No, Madame; and I don't even know what has become of him. The old horse reared.”

“We shall have to put him in Charenton,” she said; “we can do it.”

The colonel, recovering the elasticity of his youth, jumped the ha-ha, and in the twinkling of an eye applied the hardest pair of slaps that ever two cheeks received. “Old horses kick!” he said.

His anger once over, the colonel had no strength left to jump the ditch again. The truth lay before him in its nakedness. His wife's words and Delbecq's answer had shown him the plot to which he had so nearly been a victim. The tender attentions he had received were the bait of the trap. That thought was like a sudden poison, and it brought back to the old hero his past sufferings, physical and mental. He returned to the kiosk through a gate of the park, walking slowly like a broken man. So, then, there was no peace, no truce for him! Must he enter upon that odious struggle with a woman which Derville had explained to him? must he live a life of legal suits? must he feed on gall, and drink each morning the cup of bitterness. Then, dreadful thought! where was the money for such suits to come from. So deep a disgust of life came over him, that had a pistol been at hand he would have blown out his brains. Then he fell back into the confusion of ideas which, ever since his interview with Derville in the cow-yard, had changed his moral being. At last, reaching the kiosk, he went up the stairs to the upper chamber, whose criel windows looked out on all the enchanting perspectives of that well-known valley, and where he found his wife sitting on a chair. The countess was looking at the landscape, with a calm and quiet demeanor, and that impenetrable countenance which certain determined women know so well how to assume. She dried her

eyes, as though she had shed tears, and played, as if abstractedly, with the ribbons of her sash. Nevertheless, in spite of this apparent composure, she could not prevent herself from trembling when she saw her noble benefactor before her, — standing, his arms crossed, his face pale, his brow stern.

“Madame,” he said, looking at her so fixedly for a moment that he forced her to blush; “Madame, I do not curse you, but I despise you. I now thank the fate which has parted us. I have no desire for vengeance; I have ceased to love you. I want nothing from you. Live in peace upon the faith of my word; it is worth more than the legal papers of all the notaries in Paris. I shall never take the name I made, perhaps, illustrious. Henceforth, I am but a poor devil named Hyacinthe, who asks no more than a place in God’s sunlight. Farewell — ”

The countess flung herself at his feet and tried to hold him by catching his hands, but he repulsed her with disgust, saying, “Do not touch me!”

The countess made a gesture which no description can portray when she heard the sound of her husband’s departing steps. Then, with that profound sagacity which comes of great wickedness, or of the savage, material selfishness of this world, she felt she might live in peace, relying on the promise and the contempt of that loyal soldier.

Chabert disappeared. The cow-keeper failed and became a cab-driver. Perhaps the colonel at first found some such occupation. Perhaps, like a stone flung into the rapids, he went from fall to fall until he sank engulfed in that great pool of filth and penury which welters in the streets of Paris.

Six months after these events Derville, who had heard nothing of Colonel Chabert or of the Comtesse Ferraud, thought that they had probably settled on a compromise, and that the countess, out of spite, had employed some other lawyer to draw the papers. Accordingly, one morning he summed up the amounts advanced to the said Chabert, added the costs, and requested the Comtesse Ferraud to obtain from Monsieur le Comte Chabert the full amount, presuming that she knew the whereabouts of her first husband.

The next day Comte Ferraud's secretary sent the following answer:—

MONSIEUR, — I am directed by Madame la Comtesse Ferraud to inform you that your client totally deceived you, and that the individual calling himself the Comte Chabert admitted having falsely taken that name.

Receive the assurance, etc., etc.

DELBECQ.

“ Well, some people are, upon my honor, as devoid of sense as the beasts of the field, — they've stolen

their baptism!" cried Derville. "Be human, be generous, be philanthropic, and you'll find yourself in the lurch! Here's a business that has cost me over two thousand francs."

Not long after the reception of this letter Derville was at the Palais, looking for a lawyer with whom he wished to speak, and who was in the habit of practising in the criminal courts. It so chanced that Derville entered the sixth court-room as the judge was sentencing a vagrant named Hyacinthe to two months' imprisonment, the said vagrant to be conveyed at the expiration of the sentence to the mendicity office of the Saint-Denis quarter, — a sentence which was equivalent to perpetual imprisonment. The name, Hyacinthe, caught Derville's ear, and he looked at the delinquent sitting between two gendarmes on the prisoner's bench, and recognized at once his false Colonel Chabert. The old soldier was calm, motionless, almost absent-minded. In spite of his rags, in spite of the poverty marked on every feature of the face, his countenance was instinct with noble pride. His glance had an expression of stoicism which a magistrate ought not to have overlooked; but when a man falls into the hands of justice, he is no longer anything but an entity, a question of law and facts; in the eyes of statisticians, he is a numeral.

When the soldier was taken from the court-room to wait until the whole batch of vagabonds who were then

being sentenced were ready for removal, Derville used his privilege as a lawyer to follow him into the room adjoining the sheriff's office, where he watched him for a few moments, together with the curious collection of beggars who surrounded him. The ante-chamber of a sheriff's office presents at such times a sight which, unfortunately, neither legislators, nor philanthropists, nor painters, nor writers, ever study. Like all the laboratories of the law this antechamber is dark and ill-smelling; the walls are protected by a bench, blackened by the incessant presence of the poor wretches who come to this central rendezvous from all quarters of social wretchedness, — not one of which is unrepresented there. A poet would say that the daylight was ashamed to lighten that terrible sink-hole of all miseries. There is not one spot within it where crime, planned or committed, has not stood; not a spot where some man, rendered desperate by the stigma which justice lays upon him for his first fault, has not begun a career leading to the scaffold or to suicide. All those who fall in Paris rebound against these yellow walls, on which a philanthropist could decipher the meaning of many a suicide about which hypocritical writers, incapable of taking one step to prevent them, rail; written on those walls he will find a preface to the dramas of the Morgue and those of the place de Grève. Colonel Chabert was now sitting in the midst of this crowd of men with

nervous faces, clothed in the horrible liveries of poverty, silent at times or talking in a low voice, for three gendarmes paced the room as sentries, their sabres clanging against the floor.

“Do you recognize me?” said Derville to the old soldier.

“Yes, Monsieur,” said Chabert, rising.

“If you are an honest man,” continued Derville, in a low voice, “how is it that you have remained my debtor?”

The old soldier colored like a young girl accused by her mother of a clandestine love.

“Is it possible,” he cried in a loud voice, “that Madame Ferraud has not paid you?”

“Paid me!” said Derville, “she wrote me you were an impostor.”

The colonel raised his eyes with a majestic look of horror and invocation as if to appeal to heaven against this new treachery. “Monsieur,” he said, in a voice that was calm though it faltered, “ask the gendarmes to be so kind as to let me go into the sheriff’s office; I will there write you an order which will certainly be paid.”

Derville spoke to the corporal, and was allowed to take his client into the office, where the colonel wrote a few lines and addressed them to the Comtesse Ferraud.

“Send that to her,” he said, “and you will be paid for your loans and all costs. Believe me, Monsieur, if

I have not shown the gratitude I owe you for your kind acts it is none the less *there*," he said, laying his hand upon his heart; "yes it is there, full, complete. But the unfortunate ones can do nothing, — they love, that is all."

"Can it be," said Derville, "that you did not stipulate for an income?"

"Don't speak of that," said the old man. "You can never know how utterly I despise this external life to which the majority of men cling so tenaciously. I was taken suddenly with an illness, — a disgust for humanity. When I think that Napoleon is at Saint-Helena all things here below are nothing to me. I can no longer be a soldier, that is my only sorrow. Ah, well," he added, with a gesture that was full of childlike playfulness, "it is better to have luxury in our feelings than in our clothes. I fear no man's contempt."

He went back to the bench and sat down. Derville went away. When he reached his office, he sent Godeschal, then advanced to be second clerk, to the Comtesse Ferraud, who had no sooner read the missive he carried than she paid the money owing to Comte Chabert's lawyer.

In 1840, towards the close of the month of June, Godeschal, then a lawyer on his own account, was on his way to Ris, in company with Derville. When they

reached the avenue which leads into the mail road to Bicêtre, they saw beneath an elm by the roadside one of those hoary, broken-down old paupers who rule the beggars about them, and live at Bicêtre just as pauper women live at La Salpêtrière. This man, one of the two thousand inmates of the "Almshouse for Old Age," was sitting on a stone and seemed to be giving all his mind to an operation well-known to the dwellers in charitable institutions; that of drying the tobacco in their handkerchiefs in the sun, — possibly to escape washing them. The old man had an interesting face. He was dressed in that gown of dark, reddish cloth which the Almshouse provides for its inmates, a dreadful sort of livery.

"Derville," said Godeschal to his companion, "do look at that old fellow. Isn't he like those grotesque figures that are made in Germany. But I suppose he lives, and perhaps he is happy!"

Derville raised his glass, looked at the pauper, and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise; then he said: "That old man, my dear fellow, is a poem, or, as the romanticists say, a drama. Did you ever meet the Comtesse Ferraud?"

"Yes, a clever woman and very agreeable, but too pious."

"That old man is her legitimate husband, Comte Chabert, formerly colonel. No doubt she has had him

placed here. If he lives in an almshouse instead of a mansion, it is because he reminded the pretty countess that he took her, like a cab, from the streets. I can still see the tigerish look she gave him when he said it."

These words so excited Godeschal's curiosity that Derville told him the whole story. Two days later, on the following Monday morning, as they were returning to Paris, the two friends glanced at Bicêtre, and Derville proposed that they should go and see Colonel Chabert. Half-way up the avenue they found the old man sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, and amusing himself by drawing lines on the gravel with a stick which he held in his hand. When they looked at him attentively they saw that he had been breakfasting elsewhere than at the almshouse.

"Good-morning, Colonel Chabert," said Derville.

"Not Chabert! not Chabert! my name is Hyacinthe," answered the old man. "I'm no longer a man; I'm number 164, seventh room," he added, looking at Derville with timid anxiety, — the fear of old age or of childhood. "You can see the condemned prisoner," he said, after a moment's silence; "he's not married, no! he's happy —"

"Poor man!" said Godeschal; "don't you want some money for tobacco?"

The colonel extended his hand with all the naïveté

of a street boy to the two strangers, who each gave him a twenty-franc gold piece. He thanked them both, with a stupid look, and said, "Brave troopers!" Then he pretended to shoulder arms and take aim at them, calling out with a laugh, "Fire the two pieces, and long live Napoleon!" after which he described an imaginary arabesque in the air, with a flourish of his cane.

"The nature of his wound must have made him childish," said Derville.

"He childish!" cried another old pauper who was watching them. "Ha! there are days when it won't do to step on his toes. He's a knowing one, full of philosophy and imagination. But to-day, don't you see, he's been keeping Monday. Why, Monsieur, he was here in 1820. Just about that time a Prussian officer, whose carriage was going over the Villejuif hill, walked by on foot. Hyacinthe and I were sitting by the roadside. The officer was talking with another, I think it was a Russian or some animal of that kind, and when they saw the old fellow, the Prussian, just to tease him, says he: 'Here's an old voltigeur who must have been at Rosbach —' 'I was too young to be at Rosbach,' says Hyacinthe, but I'm old enough to have been at Jena!' Ha, ha! that Prussian cleared off — and no more questions —"

"What a fate!" cried Derville; "born in the Found-

ling, he returns to die in the asylum of old age, having in the interval helped Napoleon to conquer Egypt and Europe! — Do you know, my dear fellow,” continued Derville, after a long pause, “that there are three men in our social system who cannot respect or value the world, — the priest, the physician, and the lawyer. They wear black gowns, perhaps because they mourn for all virtues, all illusions. The most unhappy among them is the lawyer. When a man seeks a priest he is forced to it by repentance, by remorse, by beliefs which make him interesting, which ennoble him and comfort the soul of his mediator, whose duty is not without a certain sort of joy; the priest purifies, heals, reconciles. But we lawyers! we see forever the same evil feelings, never corrected; our offices are sink-holes which nothing can cleanse.

“How many things have I not seen and known and learned in my practice! I have seen a father die in a garret, penniless, abandoned by daughters, to each of whom he had given an income of forty thousand francs. I have seen wills burned. I have seen mothers robbing their children, husbands stealing from their wives, wives killing their husbands by the very love they inspired, so as to live in peace with their lovers. I have seen women giving to the children of a first marriage tastes which led them to their death, so that the child of love might be enriched. I could not tell

you what I have seen, for I have seen crimes against which justice is powerless. All the horrors that romance-writers think they invent are forever below the truth. You are about to make acquaintance with such things ; as for me, I shall live in the country with my wife ; I have a horror of Paris."

1832.

THE ATHEIST'S MASS.

THIS IS DEDICATED TO AUGUSTE BORGET, BY HIS FRIEND,
DE BALZAC.

A PHYSICIAN to whom science owes a masterly physiological theory, and who, though still young, has taken his place among the celebrities of the School of Paris, that centre of medical intelligence to which the physicians of Europe pay just homage, Doctor Horace Bianchon practised surgery for some time before he devoted himself to medicine. His studies were directed by one of the greatest of French surgeons, the illustrious Desplein, who passed like a meteor through the skies of science. Even his enemies admit that he carried with him to the grave an incommunicable method. Like all men of genius, he had no heirs of his faculty; he held all within him, and he carried all away with him.

The fame of surgeons is something like that of actors; it lives during their lifetime only, and is not fully appreciable after they are gone. Actors and

surgeons, also great singers, and all virtuosi who by execution increase the power of music tenfold, are the heroes of a moment. Desplein is a proof of the universal fate of these transitory geniuses. His name, so celebrated yesterday, to-day almost forgotten, remains within the limits of his specialty, and will never reach beyond them.

But, let us ask, must there not exist some extraordinary circumstances to bring the name of a great worker from the domain of science into the general history of humanity? Had Desplein that universality of knowledge which makes a man the Word and the Form of an era? Desplein possessed an almost divine insight; he penetrated both patient and disease with an intuition, natural or acquired, which enabled him to seize the idiosyncrasies of the individual, and so determine the exact moment, to the hour and the minute, when it was right to operate, — taking note of atmospheric conditions, and peculiarities of temperament. Was he guided in this by that power of deduction and analogy to which is due the genius of Cuvier? However that may have been, this man certainly made himself the confidant of flesh; he knew its secrets of the past, and of the future, as he dealt with its present. But did he sum up the whole of science in his own person, like Galen, Hippocrates, Aristotle? Has he led a school to new and unknown worlds? No.

Though it is impossible to deny to this perpetual observer of human chemistry some faculty of the ancient science of magic, — that is to say, a perception of principles in fusion, the causes of life, the life before the life, and what the life becomes through its preparations before being, — we must admit, speaking justly, that unfortunately all with Desplein was Self; he was isolated in life through egoism, and egoism has killed his fame. No speaking statue surmounts his tomb, and tells the future of the mysteries that genius wrested from her. But perhaps Desplein's talent was one with his beliefs, and therefore mortal. To him, the terrestrial atmosphere was a generating pouch; he saw the earth like an egg in its shell; unable to discover whether the egg or the hen were the beginning, he denied both the cock and the egg. He believed neither in the anterior animal nor in the posterior spirit of man.

Desplein was not a doubter; he affirmed his beliefs. His clear-cut atheism was like that of a great many men of science, who are the best people in the world, but invincible atheists, atheists like those religious folk who will not admit that there can be atheists. It could not be otherwise with a man accustomed from his earliest youth to dissect the human being before, during, and after life; to pry into all its apparatus and never find that soul-germ so essential to religious theories. Finding in the human body a brain centre,

a nervous centre, a centre of the blood circulation (the first two of which so complement each other that during the last two days of Desplein's life he came to a conviction that the sense of hearing was not absolutely necessary in order to hear, nor the sense of sight absolutely necessary in order to see, and that, beyond all doubt, the solar plexus did replace them), — Desplein, we say, finding thus two souls in man, corroborated his atheism by this very fact, though he asserted nothing in relation to God. The man died, the world said, in the impenitence in which so many men of noblest genius unhappily leave this life, — men whom it may, perhaps, please God to pardon.

The life of this man presented, to use the expression of his enemies, who were jealous of his fame and sought to belittle it, many pettinesses which it is more just to call apparent contradictions. Fools and detractors, having no knowledge of the influences that act upon superior minds, make the most of superficial inconsistencies, to bring accusations on which they sit in judgment. If, later, success attends the labors of a man thus attacked, showing the correlation of preparations and results, a few of the past calumnies are sure to remain fixed upon him. In our day Napoleon was condemned by contemporaries when his eagles threatened England; it needed 1822 to explain 1804 and the flat-boats of Boulogne.

Desplein's fame and science were invulnerable; his enemies therefore found fault with his odd temper, his peculiar character, — the fact being that he merely possessed that quality which the English call “eccentricity.” At times gorgeously dressed, like the tragic Crébillon, he would change suddenly to a singular indifference in the matter of clothes; sometimes he drove in his carriage, sometimes he went about on foot. By turns rough and kind, apparently crabbed and stingy, he was capable of offering his whole fortune to his exiled masters, who did him the honor to accept it for a few days; no man was therefore more liable to contradictory judgments. Though capable, in order to win that black ribbon which physicians ought never to have solicited, of dropping a prayer-book from his pocket in some room at the palace, it was more because in his heart he sneered at all things. He had the deepest contempt for men, having examined them from head to foot, having detected their veritable being through all the acts of existence, the most solemn and the most insignificant. In great men great qualities often support and require each other. Though some among these Colossi may have more faculty than mind, their minds are nevertheless more enlightened than that of others of whom the world says simply, “They are men of mind.” All genius presupposes a moral insight; that insight may be applied to some specialty, but whoso

can see a flower can see the sun. The story is told of Desplein that when he heard a diplomate, whose life he had saved, asking "How is the Emperor?" he replied, "The courtier returns, the man will follow," — proving that he was not only a great surgeon and a great physician, but wonderfully wise and witty. So the patient and assiduous student of humanity will admit the exorbitant claims of Desplein, and will think him, as he thought himself, fit to be as great a statesman as he was a surgeon.

Among the enigmas offered to the eyes of contemporaries by Desplein's life we have chosen one of the most interesting, because of its final word, which may, perhaps, vindicate his memory from certain accusations.

Of all the pupils whom the great surgeon had taught in his hospital, Horace Bianchon was the one to whom he was most attached. Before becoming a house pupil at the Hôtel-Dieu, Horace Bianchon was a medical student living in a miserable *pension* in the Latin quarter, known under the name of the Maison Vauquer. There the poor young fellow felt the assaults of bitter poverty, that species of crucible from which great talents issue pure and incorruptible as diamonds which can bear all blows and never break. From the strong fires of their vehement passions such natures acquire an uncompromising rectitude; they gain the habit of those struggles which are the lot of genius through constant toil, in

the dull round of which they are forced to keep their balked appetites.

Horace was an honorable young man, incapable of paltering with his sense of duty; given to deeds, not words; ready to pawn his cloak for a friend, or to give him his time and his nights in watching. Horace was, indeed, one of those friends who care nothing for what they receive in exchange for what they give, sure of finding a return in their hearts far greater than the value of their gift. Most of his friends felt that inward respect for him which virtue without assumption inspires, and many among them feared his censure. Horace displayed his fine qualities without conceit. Neither a puritan nor a sermonizer, he gave advice with an oath, and was ready enough for a "tronçon de chière lie" when occasion offered. A jolly comrade, no more prudish than a cuirassier, frank and open, — not as a sailor, for sailors now-a-days are wily diplomats, — but like a brave young fellow with nothing to conceal in his life, he walked the earth with his head up and his thoughts happy. To express him in one sentence, Horace was the Pylades of more than one Orestes, creditors being in these days the nearest approach to the ancient Furies. He carried his poverty with an easy gayety which is perhaps one of the greatest elements of courage, and like all those who have nothing he contracted few debts. Sober as

a camel, agile as a deer, he was firm in his ideas, and in his conduct. Bianchon's successful life may be said to have begun on the day when the illustrious surgeon became fully aware of the virtues and the defects which made Doctor Horace Bianchon so doubly dear to his friends.

When a clinical chief takes a young man into his rounds that young man has, as they say, his foot in the stirrup. Desplein always took Bianchon with him for the sake of his assistance when he went among his opulent patients, where many a fee dropped into the pupil's pouch, and where, little by little, the mysteries of Parisian life revealed themselves to his provincial eyes. Desplein kept him in his study during consultations and employed him there; sometimes he sent him travelling with a rich patient to baths; in short, he provided him with a practice. The result was that, after a time, the autocrat of surgery had an *alter ego*. These two men — one at the summit of science and of all honors, enjoying a large fortune and a great fame; the other, the modest omega, without either fame or fortune — became intimates. The great Desplein told his pupil everything; the pupil knew what woman had been seated in a chair beside the master, or on the famous sofa which was in the study and on which Desplein slept; Bianchon knew the mysteries of that temperament, half-lion, half-bull, which finally expanded and amplified

beyond all reason the great man's chest, and caused his death by enlargement of the heart. He studied the eccentricities of that busy life, the schemes of that sordid avarice, the hopes of the politic man hidden in the scientific man; he was therefore fitted to detect the deceptions, had any existed, in the sole sentiment buried in a heart that was less hard than hardened.

One day Bianchon told Desplein that a poor water-carrier in the quartier Saint-Jacques had a horrible disease caused by over-work and poverty; this poor Auvergnat had eaten nothing but potatoes during the severe winter of 1821. Desplein left all his patients and rushed off, followed by Bianchon, and took the poor man himself to a private hospital established by the famous Dubois, in the faubourg Saint-Denis. He attended the man personally, and when he recovered gave him enough money to buy a horse and a water-cart. This Auvergnat was remarkable for an original act. One of his friends fell ill, and he took him at once to Desplein, saying to his benefactor, "I would n't hear of his going to any one else." Gruff as he was, Desplein pressed the water-carrier's hand. "Bring them all to me," he said; and he put the friend in the Hôtel-Dieu, where he took extreme care of him. Bianchon had already noticed several times the evident predilection his chief felt for an Auvergnat, and es-

pecially for a water-carrier, but as Desplein's pride was in the management of his hospital cases the pupil saw nothing really strange in the incident.

One day, crossing the place Saint-Sulpice, Bianchon caught sight of his master entering the church about nine o'clock in the morning. Desplein, who at that time of his life went everywhere in his cabriolet, was on foot, and was slipping along by the rue du Petit-Lion as if in quest of some questionable resort. Naturally seized with curiosity, the pupil, who knew the opinions of his master, slipped into Saint-Sulpice himself, and was not a little amazed to see the great Desplein, that atheist without pity even for the angels who so little require a scalpel and cannot have stomach-aches or fistulas, in short, that bold scoffer, humbly kneeling — where? in the chapel of the Virgin, before whom he was hearing a mass, paying for the service, giving money for the poor, and as serious in demeanor as if preparing for an operation.

“Heavens!” thought Bianchon, whose amazement was beyond all bounds. “If I had seen him holding one of the ropes of the canopy at the Fête-Dieu I should have known it was all a joke; but here, at this hour, alone, without witnesses! Certainly it is something to think about.”

Not wishing to seem to spy upon the great surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu, Bianchon went away. It so chanced

that Desplein asked him to dine with him that day, away from home, at a restaurant. By the time the dessert appeared Bianchon had reached by clever stages the topic of religious services, and called the mass a farce and a mummerly.

“A farce,” said Desplein, “which has cost Christianity more blood than all the battles of Napoleon and all the leeches of Broussais. The mass is a papal invention based on the *Hoc est corpus*, and dates back to the sixth century only. What torrents of blood had to flow to establish the Fête-Dieu, by the institution of which the court of Rome sought to confirm its victory in the matter of the Real Presence, — a schism which kept the church in hot water for three centuries! The wars of the Comte de Toulouse and the Albigenses were the sequel of it. The Vaudois and the Albigenses both refused to accept that innovation — ”

And Desplein launched with all an atheist's ardor into a flux of Voltairean sarcasm, or, to be more exact, into a wretched imitation of the “Citateur.”

“Whew!” thought Bianchon; “where's the man who was on his knees this morning?”

He was silent, for he began to doubt whether he had really seen his chief at Saint-Sulpice after all. Desplein would surely never have troubled himself to deceive him. They knew each other too well, had exchanged thoughts or questions fully as serious, and discussed

systems *de natura rerum*, probing them or dissecting them with the knife and scalpel of unbelief.

Six months went by. Bianchon took no outward notice of this circumstance, though it remained stamped in his memory. One day a doctor belonging to the Hôtel-Dieu took Desplein by the arm in Bianchon's presence as if to question him, and said, —

“Why did you go to Saint-Sulpice to-day, my dear master?”

“To see a priest with caries of the knee whom Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême did me the honor to recommend to me,” replied Desplein.

The doctor was satisfied, but not so Bianchon.

“Ha! he went to see a stiff knee in a church, did he?” thought the pupil. “He went to hear his mass.”

Bianchon resolved to watch Desplein. He recollected the day and hour at which he had seen him entering Saint-Sulpice, and he determined to return the next year at the same time and see if he should surprise him in the same place. If so, then the periodicity of his devotion would warrant scientific investigation; for it was impossible to expect in such a man a positive contradiction between thought and action.

The following year, at the time named, Bianchon, who was now no longer Desplein's pupil, saw the surgeon's cabriolet stop at the corner of the rue de

Tournon and the rue du Petit-Lion, from which point his friend slipped jesuitically along the wall of the church, where he again entered and heard mass before the altar of the Virgin. Yes, it assuredly was Desplein, the surgeon-in-chief, the atheist *in petto*, the pietist by chance. The plot thickened. The persistency of the illustrious surgeon added a complication.

When Desplein had left the church, Bianchon went up to the verger, who was rearranging the altar, and asked him if that gentleman were in the habit of coming there.

“It is twenty years since I came here,” said the verger, “and ever since then Monsieur Desplein comes four times a year to hear this mass. He founded it.”

“A mass founded by him!” thought Bianchon as he walked away. “It is a greater mystery than the Immaculate Conception,—a thing, in itself, which would make any doctor an unbeliever.”

Some time went by before Doctor Bianchon, though Desplein's friend, was in a position to speak to him of this singularity of his life. When they met in consultation or in society it was difficult to find that moment of confidence and solitude in which they could sit with their feet on the andirons, and their heads on the back of their chairs, and tell their secrets as two men do at such times. At last, however, after the revolution of 1830, when the populace attacked the Archbishop's

palace, when republican instigations drove the crowd to destroy the gilded crosses which gleamed like flashes of lightning among the many roofs of that ocean of houses, when unbelief, keeping pace with the riot, strutted openly in the streets, Bianchon again saw Desplein entering Saint-Sulpice. He followed him and knelt beside him, but his friend made no sign and showed not the least surprise. Together they heard the mass.

“Will you tell me, my dear friend,” said Bianchon, when they had left the church, “the reason for this pious performance? This is the third time I have caught you going to mass, you! You must tell me what this mystery means, and explain the discrepancy between your opinions and your conduct. You don’t believe, but you go to mass! My dear master, I hold you bound to answer me.”

“I am like a great many pious people, — men who are deeply religious to all appearance, but who are really as much atheists at heart as you or I — ”

And he went on with a torrent of sarcasms on certain political personages, the best known of whom presents to this century a new and living edition of the *Tartufe* of Molière.

“I am not talking to you about that,” said Bianchon; “I want to know the reason for what you have just done; and why you founded that mass?”

“Ah, well! my dear friend,” replied Desplein, “I am on the verge of my grave, and I can afford to tell you the events of my early life.”

Just then Bianchon and the great surgeon were passing through the rue des Quatre-Vents, one of the most horrible streets in Paris. Desplein pointed to the sixth story of a house that looked like an obelisk, the gate of which opened upon a passage-way at the end of which was a winding stair lighted by holes in the planked side of it. It was a greenish-looking house, occupied on the ground-floor by a furniture-dealer, and seeming to harbor on each story some different form of poverty. Desplein threw up his arm with an energetic action and said to Bianchon, “I once lived up there for two years.”

“I know the house; d’Arthez lived in it. I went there nearly every day in my early youth; we used to call it the ‘harbor of great men.’ Well, what next?”

“The mass I have just heard is connected with events which happened when I lived in the garret where you say d’Arthez lived, — that one, where you see the clothes-line and the linen above the flower-pots. My beginnings were so hard, my dear Bianchon, that I can bear away the palm of Parisian sufferings from every one, no matter who. I have endured all, — hunger, thirst, the want of a penny, of linen, boots, all, even the worst that poverty can bring. I have blown

upon my frozen fingers in that harbor of great men, which I should like now to see again with you. I have worked there a whole winter and seen the vapor issuing from my head just as you see horses smoking in frosty weather.

“I don't know where a man can take his stand and find support against a life like that. I was alone, without help, without a sou to buy books, or to pay the costs of my medical education; having no friend to understand me, my irascible temper, uneasy and touchy as it is, did me harm. No one saw in my irritable ways the evidence of the anxiety and toil of a man who from the lowest social state is struggling to reach the surface. But I had, — and this I can say to you before whom there is no need that I should drape myself, — I had that understratum of right feelings and keen sensibility which will always be the attribute of men who are strong enough to mount a height, no matter what it is, after paddling long in the swamps of misery. I could ask nothing of my family, nor of my native town, beyond the insufficient allowance that they made me.

“Well, at this time of my life, I made my breakfast of a roll sold to me by the baker of the rue du Petit-Lion at half-price, because it was a day or two days old, and I crumbled it into some milk. So my morning repast cost me exactly two sous. I dined, every other

day only, in a pension where the dinner cost sixteen sous. Thus I spent no more than ten sous a day. You know as well as I do what care I had to take of my clothes and my boots! I really can't tell whether we suffer more in after years from the treachery of a tried friend than you and I have suffered from the smiling grin of a crack in our boots, or the threadbare look of a coat-sleeve. I drank nothing but water, and I held the cafés in reverence. Zoppi seemed to me the promised land, where the Luculluses of the Latin quarter alone had the right of entrance. 'Shall I ever,' I used to say to myself, 'drink a cup of coffee there, with cream, and play a game of dominoes?'

"So I let loose upon my work the rage my misery caused me. I tried to possess myself of positive knowledge, so as to have a vast personal value, and thus deserve distinction when the day came that I should issue from my nothingness. I consumed more oil than bread; the lamp which lighted me during those toilsome nights cost me more than all my food. The struggle was long, obstinate, and without alleviation. I awakened no sympathy in any one about me. To have friends we must be friendly with young men, we must have a few sous to tipple with, we must frequent the places where other students go; but I had nothing! Who is there in Paris who realizes that nothing is *nothing*? When I was forced at times to reveal my poverty my throat

contracted just as it does with our patients, who then imagine that a ball is rolling up from the œsophagus to the larynx. In later years I have met these people, born rich, who, never having wanted for anything, knew nothing of the problem of this rule of three : A young man *is* to crime what a five-franc piece *is* to *x*. These gilded imbeciles would say to me : ‘ But why do you run in debt? why do you saddle yourself with obligations?’ They remind me of the princess who, when she heard the people were dying for want of bread, remarked : ‘ Why don’t they buy cake?’

“ Well, well, I should like to see one of those rich fellows who complain that I charge them too dear for my operations, — yes, I should like to see one of them alone in Paris, without a penny to bless himself with, without a friend, without credit, and forced to work with his five fingers to get food. What would he do? where would he go to appease his hunger? — Bianchon, if you have sometimes seen me hard and bitter, it was when I was setting my early sufferings against the unfeeling selfishness of which I have had ten thousand proofs in the upper ranks of life ; or else I was thinking of the obstacles which hatred, envy, jealousy, and calumny had raised between success and me. In Paris, when certain persons see you about to put your foot in the stirrup some of them will catch you by the tails of your coat, others will loosen the buckles of the belly-

band to give you a fall which will crack your skull ; that one will pull the nails out of the horses' shoes, that other will steal your whip ; the least treacherous is he whom you see approaching with a pistol to blow out your brains.

“ Ah ! my dear lad, you have talent enough to be soon plunged into the horrible strife, the incessant warfare which mediocrity wages against superior men. If you lose twenty-five louis some evening the next day you are accused of being a gambler, and your best friends will spread the news that you have lost twenty-five thousand francs. Have a headache, and they'll say you are insane. Get angry, and they'll call you a Timon. If, for the purpose of resisting this battalion of pygmies, you call up within you all the powers you possess, your best friends will cry out that you want to destroy everything, that you want to rule, to tyrannize. In short, your fine qualities are called defects, your defects vices, and your vices crimes. Though you may save a patient you will have the credit of killing him ; if he recovers, you have sacrificed his future life to the present ; if he does n't die, he soon will. Slip, and you are down ! Make an invention, claim your right to it, and you are a quarrelsome knave, a stingy man, who won't let the young ones have a chance.

“ And so, my dear fellow, if I don't believe in God, still less do I believe in man. Don't you know that

there is in me a Desplein who is totally different from the Desplein whom the world traduces? But don't let us drag that muddy pond.

“ Well, to go back, I lived in that house, and I was working to pass my first examination and I had n't a brass farthing. You know! — I had reached that last extremity where a man says, ‘I'll pawn!’ I had one hope. I expected a trunk of underclothing from my home, a present from some old aunts, who, knowing nothing of Paris, think about your shirts, and imagine that with an allowance of thirty francs a month their nephew must be living on ortolans. The trunk arrived one day when I was at the hospital; the carriage cost forty francs! The porter, a German shoemaker who lived in the loft, paid the money and kept the trunk. I walked about the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-des-Prés and the rue de L'École-de-Médecine without being able to invent any stratagem by which I could get possession of that trunk without paying the forty francs, which I could, of course, pay at once as soon as I had sold the underclothes. My stupidity was enough to prove that I had no other vocation than that of surgery. My dear Bianchon, sensitive souls whose forces work in the higher spheres of thought, lack the spirit of intrigue which is so fertile in resources and schemes; their good genius is chance, — they don't seek, they find.



Laurent Desrousseaux

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Procédé Goupi

“That night I entered the house just as my neighbor, a water-carrier named Bourgeat, from Saint-Flour, came home. We knew each other as two tenants must when their rooms are on the same land'g, and they hear one another snore, and cough, and dress, and at length become accustomed to one another. My neighbor told me that the proprietor of the house, to whom I c three months rent, had turned me out; I was warned to quit the next day. He himself was also told to leave on account of his occupation. I passed the most dreadful night of my life. How could I hire a porter to carry away my few poor things, my books? how could I pay him? where could I go? These insoluble questions I said over and over to myself in tears, just as madmen repeat their sing-song. I fell asleep. Ah! poverty alone has the divine slumber full of glorious dreams!

“The next morning, as I was eating my bowlful of bread and milk, Bourgeat came in, and said in his patois, ‘Monsieur, I'm a poor man, a foundling from the hospital at Saint-Flour, without father or mother, and I'm not rich enough to marry. You are no better off for friends, and relations, and money, as I judge. Now listen; there is a hand-cart out there which I have hired for two sous an hour; it will hold all our things; if you like, we can go and find some cheap lodging which will hold us both, as we are both

turned out of here. After all, you know, it isn't a terrestrial paradise.' 'I know that,' I said, 'my good Bourgeat, but I am in a great quandary; I have a trunk downstairs which contains at least three hundred francs' worth of linen, with which I could pay the proprietor if I could only get it from the porter, to whom I owe forty francs for the carriage.' 'Bah!' he cried, cheerily, 'I've got a few pennies tucked away;' and he pulled out a dirty old leather purse. 'Keep your linen; you'll want it.'

"Bourgeat paid my three months' rent, and his own, and the porter. He put all our things and the trunk into his hand-cart, and dragged it through the streets, stopping before each house where a sign was up. Then I went in to see if the place would suit us. At mid-day we were still wandering round the Latin quarter without having found what we wanted. The price was the great obstacle. Bourgeat invited me to breakfast in a wine-shop, leaving the hand-cart before the door. Towards evening, I found in the Cour de Rohan, passage du Commerce, on the top-floor of a house, under the roof, two rooms, separated by the staircase. For a yearly rent of sixty francs each, we were able to take them. So there we were, housed, my humble friend and I. We dined together. Bourgeat, who earned about fifty sous a day, possessed something like three hundred francs. He was close upon realizing his great

ambition, which was to buy a horse and a water-cart. Learning my situation, for he wormed my secrets out of me, with a depth of cunning and an air of good-fellowship the remembrance of which to this day stirs every fibre of my heart, he renounced, for a time, the ambition of his life. Bourgeat never attained it; he sacrificed his three hundred francs to my future."

Desplein clasped the arm he held, violently.

"He gave me the money I needed for my examinations. That man — my friend — felt that I had a mission; that the needs of my intellect were greater than his own. He busied himself with me; he called me his son; he lent me the money I needed to buy books; he came in sometimes, very softly, to watch me at work; he substituted, with the forethought of a mother, a nourishing and sufficient diet for the poor fare to which I had been so long condemned. Bourgeat, a man then about forty years of age, had a middle-aged burgher face, a prominent forehead, and a head which a painter might have chosen for a model for Lyncurgus. The poor soul had a heart full of unplaced affection. He had never been loved except by a dog which had recently died, and of which he often spoke to me, asking whether I thought the Church would be willing to say masses for the repose of its soul. That dog, he said, was a true Christian, who for twelve years had gone with him to church and never barked, listening to the organ

without opening his jaws, and crouching by him when he knelt as if he prayed also.

“That man, that Auvergne water-carrier, spent all his affection upon me. He accepted me as a lonely, suffering human being; he became my mother, my delicate benefactor; in short, the ideal of that virtue which delights in its own work. When I met him about his business in the street he flung me a glance of inconceivable generosity; he pretended to walk as if he carried nothing; he showed his happiness in seeing me in good health and well-clothed. His devotion to me was that of the people, — the love of a grisette for one above her. Bourgeat did my errands, woke me at night when I had to be called, cleaned my lamp, polished my floor; as good a servant as a kind father, and as clean as an English girl. He kept house. Like Philopœmen, he sawed our wood, and gave to all his actions the simple dignity of toil; for he seemed to comprehend that the object ennobled all.

“When I left that noble man to enter the Hôtel-Dieu as an indoor pupil, he suffered dark distress from the thought that he could no longer live with me; but he consoled himself with the idea of laying by the money required for the expenses of my thesis, and he made me promise to come and see him on all my days out. If you will look up my thesis you will find that it is dedicated to him.

“ During the last year I was in hospital I earned money enough to return all I owed to that noble Auvergnat, with which I bought him his horse and water-cart. He was very angry when he found out I had deprived myself of my earnings, and yet delighted to see his desires realized ; he laughed and scolded, looked at his cart and at his horse, and wiped his eyes, saying to me : ‘ It is all wrong. Oh, what a fine cart ! You had no right to do it ; that horse is as strong as an Auvergnat.’ Never did I see anything as touching as that scene. Bourgeat positively insisted on buying me that case of instruments mounted in silver which you have seen in my study, and which is to me the most precious of my possessions. Though absolutely intoxicated by my success, he never by word or gesture let the thought escape him, ‘ It is to me that he owes it.’ And yet, without him, misery would have killed me.

“ The poor man had wrecked himself for me ; all he ate was a little bread rubbed with garlic, that I might have coffee for my studious nights. He fell ill. You can well believe that I spent nights at his bedside. I pulled him through the first time, but he had a relapse two years later, and, in spite of all my care, he died. No king was ever cared for as he was. Yes, Bianchon, to save that life I tried amazing things. I longed to make him live as the witness of his own work ; to realize his hopes, to satisfy the sole gratitude that ever

entered my heart, to extinguish a fire which burns there still.

“ Bourgeat,” resumed Desplein, with visible emotion, “ my second father, died in my arms, leaving all he possessed to me, in a will drawn up by a street writer and dated the year we went to live in the Cour de Rohan. That man had the faith of his kind; he loved the Blessed Virgin as he would have loved his wife. An ardent Catholic, he never said one word to me about my irreligion. When he was in danger of death he asked me to spare nothing that he might have the succor of the Church. Every day masses were said for him. Often during the night he would tell me of his fears for the future; he thought he had not lived devoutly enough. Poor man! he had toiled from morning till night. To whom else does heaven belong, — if indeed there is a heaven? He received the last offices of religion, like the saint that he was, and his death was worthy of his life. I, alone, followed him to the grave. When the earth covered my sole benefactor I sought a way to pay my debt to him. He had neither family, nor friends, nor wife, nor children, but, he believed! he had a deep religious belief; what right had I to dispute it? He had timidly spoken to me of masses for the repose of the dead, but he never imposed that duty upon me, thinking, no doubt, it would seem like payment for his services. The moment I was able to

found a mass I gave Saint-Sulpice the necessary sum for four yearly services. As the sole thing I can offer to Bourgeat is the satisfaction of his pious wishes, I go in his name and recite for him the appointed prayers at the beginning of each season. I say with the sincerity of a doubter: 'My God, if there be a sphere where thou dost place after death the souls of the perfect, think of the good Bourgeat; and if there is anything to be suffered for him, grant me those sufferings that he may the sooner enter what, they say, is heaven.'

"That, my dear friend, is all a man of my opinions can do. God must be a good sort of devil, and he'll not blame me. I swear to you I would give all I am worth if Bourgeat's belief could enter my brain."

Bianchon, who took care of Desplein in his last illness, dares not affirm that the great surgeon died an atheist. Believers will like to think that the humble water-carrier opened to him the gates of heaven, as he had once opened to him the portals of that terrestrial temple on the pediment of which are inscribed the words: —

"TO HER GREAT MEN, A GRATEFUL COUNTRY!"

LA GRANDE BRETÈCHE.

“Ан! Madame,” replied Doctor Horace Bianchon to the lady at whose house he was supping, “it is true that I have many terrible histories in my repertory; but every tale has its due hour in a conversation, according to the clever saying reported by Chamfort and said to the Duc de Fronsac: “There are ten bottles of champagne between your joke and the present moment.”

“But it is past midnight; what better hour could you have?” said the mistress of the house.

“Yes, tell us, Monsieur Bianchon,” urged the assembled company.

At a gesture from the complying doctor, silence reigned.

“About a hundred yards from Vendôme,” he said, “on the banks of the Loir, is an old brown house, covered with very steep roofs, and so completely isolated that there is not so much as an evil-smelling tannery, nor a shabby inn such as you see at the entrance of all little towns, in its neighborhood. In

front of this dwelling is a garden overlooking the river, where the box edgings, once carefully clipped, which bordered the paths, now cross them and straggle as they fancy. A few willows with their roots in the Loir have made a rapid growth, like the enclosing hedge, and together they half hide the house. Plants which we call weeds drape the bank towards the river with their beautiful vegetation. Fruit-trees, neglected for half a score of years, no longer yield a product, and their shoots and suckers have formed an undergrowth. The espaliers are like a hornbeam hedge. The paths, formerly gravelled, are full of purslain; so that, strictly speaking, there are no paths at all.

“From the crest of the mountain, on which hang the ruins of the old castle of Vendôme (the only spot whence the eye can look down into this enclosure) we say to ourselves that at an earlier period, now difficult to determine, this corner of the earth was the delight of some gentleman devoted to roses and tulips, in a word, to horticulture, but above all possessing a keen taste for good fruits. An arbor is still standing, or rather the remains of one, and beneath it is a table which time has not yet completely demolished.

“From the aspect of this garden, now no more, the negative joys of the peaceful life of the provinces can be inferred, just as we infer the life of some worthy from the epitaph on his tomb. To complete the sad

and tender ideas which take possession of the soul, a sundial on the wall bears this inscription, Christian yet bourgeois, 'ULTIMAM COGITA.' The roofs are dilapidated, the blinds always closed, the balconies are filled with swallows' nests, the gates are locked. Tall herbs and grasses trace in green lines the chinks and crevices of the stone portico; the locks are rusty. Sun and moon, summer and winter and snow have rotted the wood, warped the planks, and worn away the paint. The gloomy silence is unbroken save by the birds, the cats, the martens, the rats, the mice, all free to scamper or fly, and to fight, and to eat themselves up.

“ An invisible hand has written the word 'MYSTERY' everywhere. If, impelled by curiosity, you wish to look at this house, on the side towards the road you will see a large gate with an arched top, in which the children of the neighborhood have made large holes. This gate, as I heard later, had been disused for ten years. Through these irregular holes you can observe the perfect harmony which exists between the garden side, and the courtyard side of the premises. The same neglect everywhere. Lines of grass surround the paving-stones. Enormous cracks furrow the walls, the blackened eaves of which are festooned with peltitory. The steps of the portico are disjointed, the rope of the bell is rotten, the gutters are dropping apart. What fire from heaven has fallen here? What tribunal

has ordained that salt be cast upon this dwelling? Has God been mocked here; or France betrayed? These are the questions we ask as we stand there; the reptiles crawl about but they give no answer.

“This empty and deserted house is a profound enigma, whose solution is known to none. It was formerly a small fief, and is called *La Grande Bretèche*. During my stay at Vendôme, where Desplein had sent me in charge of a rich patient, the sight of this strange dwelling was one of my keenest pleasures. It was better than a ruin. A ruin possesses memories of positive authenticity; but this habitation, still standing, though slowly demolished by an avenging hand, contained some secret, some mysterious thought, — it betrayed at least a strange caprice.

“More than once of an evening I jumped the hedge, now a tangle, which guarded the enclosure. I braved the scratches; I walked that garden without a master, that property which was neither public nor private; for hours I stayed there contemplating its decay. Not even to obtain the history which underlay (and to which no doubt was due) this strange spectacle would I have asked a single question of any gossiping countryman. Standing there I invented enchanting tales; I gave myself up to debauches of melancholy which fascinated me. Had I known the reason, perhaps a common one, for this strange desertion, I should have

lost the unwritten poems with which I intoxicated myself. To me this sanctuary evoked the most varied images of human life darkened by sorrows ; sometimes it was a cloister without the nuns ; sometimes a graveyard and its peace, without the dead who talk to you in epitaphs ; to-day the house of the leper, to-morrow that of the Atrides ; but above all was it the provinces with their composed ideas, their hour-glass life.

“ Often I wept there, but I never smiled. More than once an involuntary terror seized me, as I heard above my head the muffled whirr of a ringdove’s wings hurrying past. The soil is damp ; care must be taken against the lizards, the vipers, the frogs, which wander about with the wild liberty of nature ; above all, it is well not to fear cold, for there are moments when you feel an icy mantle laid upon your shoulders like the hand of the Commander on the shoulder of Don Juan. One evening I shuddered ; the wind had caught and turned a rusty vane. Its creak was like a moan issuing from the house ; at a moment, too, when I was ending a gloomy drama in which I explained to myself the monumental dolor of that scene.

“ That night I returned to my inn, a prey to gloomy thoughts. After I had supped the landlady entered my room with a mysterious air, and said to me, ‘ Monsieur, Monsieur Regnault is here.’

“ ‘ Who is Monsieur Regnault ? ’

“ ‘Is it possible that Monsieur does n’t know Monsieur Regnault? Ah, how funny!’ she said, leaving the room.

“Suddenly I beheld a long, slim man, clothed in black, holding his hat in his hand, who presented himself, much like a ram about to leap on a rival, and showed me a retreating forehead, a small, pointed head and a livid face, in color somewhat like a glass of dirty water. You would have taken him for the usher of a minister. This unknown personage wore an old coat much worn in the folds, but he had a diamond in the frill of his shirt, and gold earrings in his ears.

“ ‘Monsieur, to whom have I the honor of speaking?’ I said.

“He took a chair, sat down before my fire, laid his hat on my table and replied, rubbing his hands: ‘Ah! it is very cold. Monsieur, I am Monsieur Regnault.’

“I bowed, saying to myself: ‘*Il bondo cani!* seek!’

“ ‘I am,’ he said, ‘the notary of Vendôme.’

“ ‘Delighted, monsieur,’ I replied, ‘but I am not in the way of making my will, — for reasons, alas, too well-known to me.’

“ ‘One moment!’ he resumed, raising his hand as if to impose silence; ‘Permit me, monsieur, permit me! I have learned that you sometimes enter the garden of La Grande Bretèche and walk there —’

“ ‘Yes, monsieur.’

“ ‘One moment!’ he said, repeating his gesture. ‘That action constitutes a misdemeanor. Monsieur, I come in the name and as testamentary executor of the late Comtesse de Merret to beg you to discontinue your visits. One moment! I am not a Turk; I do not wish to impute a crime to you. Besides, it is quite excusable that you, a stranger, should be ignorant of the circumstances which compel me to let the handsomest house in Vendôme go to ruin. Nevertheless, monsieur, as you seem to be a person of education, you no doubt know that the law forbids trespassers on enclosed property. A hedge is the same as a wall. But the state in which that house is left may well excuse your curiosity. I should be only too glad to leave you free to go and come as you liked there, but charged as I am to execute the wishes of the testatrix, I have the honor, monsieur, to request that you do not again enter that garden. I myself, monsieur, have not, since the reading of the will, set foot in that house, which, as I have already had the honor to tell you, I hold under the will of Madame de Merret. We have only taken account of the number of the doors and windows so as to assess the taxes which I pay annually from the funds left by the late countess for that purpose. Ah, monsieur, that will made a great deal of noise in Vendôme!’

“There the worthy man paused to blow his nose.

I respected his loquacity, understanding perfectly that the testamentary bequest of Madame de Merret had been the most important event of his life, the head and front of his reputation, his glory, his Restoration. So then, I must bid adieu to my beautiful reveries, my romances! I was not so rebellious as to deprive myself of getting the truth, as it were officially, out of the man of law, so I said, —

“ ‘Monsieur, if it is not indiscreet, may I ask the reason of this singularity?’ ”

“ At these words a look which expressed the pleasure of a man who rides a hobby passed over Monsieur Regnault’s face. He pulled up his shirt-collar with a certain conceit, took out his snuff-box, opened it, offered it to me, and on my refusal, took a strong pinch himself. He was happy. A man who has n’t a hobby does n’t know how much can be got out of life. A hobby is the exact medium between a passion and a monomania. At that moment I understood Sterne’s fine expression to its fullest extent, and I formed a complete idea of the joy with which my Uncle Toby — Trim assisting — bestrode his war-horse.

“ ‘Monsieur,’ said Monsieur Regnault, ‘I was formerly head-clerk to Maître Roguin in Paris. An excellent lawyer’s office of which you have doubtless heard? No! And yet a most unfortunate failure made it, I may say, celebrated. Not having the means to

buy a practice in Paris at the price to which they rose in 1816, I came here to Vendôme, where I have relations, — among them a rich aunt, who gave me her daughter in marriage.’

“ Here he made a slight pause, and then resumed : —

“ ‘ Three months after my appointment was ratified by Monseigneur the Keeper of the Seals, I was sent for one evening just as I was going to bed (I was not then married) by Madame la Comtesse de Merret, then living in her château at Merret. Her lady’s-maid, an excellent girl who is now serving in this inn, was at the door with the countess’s carriage. Ah! one moment! I ought to tell you, monsieur, that Monsieur le Comte de Merret had gone to die in Paris about two months before I came here. He died a miserable death from excesses of all kinds, to which he gave himself up. You understand? Well, the day of his departure Madame la Comtesse left La Grande Bretèche, and dismantled it. They do say that she even burned the furniture, and the carpets, and all appurtenances whatsoever and wheresoever contained on the premises leased to the said — Ah! beg pardon; what am I saying? I thought I was dictating a lease. Well, monsieur, she burned everything, they say, in the meadow at Merret. Were you ever at Merret, monsieur?’

“ Not waiting for me to speak, he answered for me : ‘ No. Ah! it is a fine spot? For three months, or

thereabouts,' he continued, nodding his head, 'Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse had been living at La Grande Bretèche in a very singular way. They admitted no one to the house; madame lived on the ground-floor, and monsieur on the first floor. After Madame la Comtesse was left alone she never went to church. Later, in her own château she refused to see the friends who came to visit her. She changed greatly after she left La Grande Bretèche and came to Merret. That dear woman (I say dear, though I never saw her but once, because she gave me this diamond), — that good lady was very ill; no doubt she had given up all hope of recovery, for she died without calling in a doctor; in fact, some of our ladies thought she was not quite right in her mind. Consequently, monsieur, my curiosity was greatly excited when I learned that Madame de Merret needed my services; and I was not the only one deeply interested; that very night, though it was late, the whole town knew I had gone to Merret.'

“The good man paused a moment to arrange his facts, and then continued: ‘The lady’s maid answered rather vaguely the questions which I put to her as we drove along; she did, however, tell me that her mistress had received the last sacraments that day from the curate of Merret, and that she was not likely to live through the night. I reached the château about

eleven o'clock. I went up the grand staircase. After passing through a number of dark and lofty rooms, horribly cold and damp, I entered the state bedroom where Madame la Comtesse was lying. In consequence of the many stories that were told about this lady (really, monsieur, I should never end if I related all of them) I expected to find her a fascinating coquette. Would you believe it, I could scarcely see her at all in the huge bed in which she lay. It is true that the only light in that vast room, with friezes of the old style powdered with dust enough to make you sneeze on merely looking at them, was one Argand lamp. Ah! but you say you have never been at Merret. Well, monsieur, the bed was one of those old-time beds with a high tester covered with flowered chintz. A little night-table stood by the bed, and on it I noticed a copy of the "Imitation of Christ."

" 'Allow me a parenthesis,' he said, interrupting himself. 'I bought that book subsequently, also the lamp, and presented them to my wife. In the room was a large sofa for the woman who was taking care of Madame de Merret, and two chairs. That was all. No fire. The whole would not have made ten lines of an inventory. Ah! my dear monsieur, could you have seen her as I saw her then, in that vast room hung with brown tapestry, you would have imagined you were in the pages of a novel. It was glacial, — better than that,

funereal,' added the worthy man, raising his arm theatrically and making a pause. Presently he resumed :

“ ‘ By dint of peering round and coming close to the bed I at length saw Madame de Merret, thanks to the lamp which happened to shine on the pillows. Her face was as yellow as wax, and looked like two hands joined together. Madame la Comtesse wore a lace cap, which, however, allowed me to see her fine hair, white as snow. She was sitting up in the bed, but apparently did so with difficulty. Her large black eyes, sunken no doubt with fever, and almost lifeless, hardly moved beneath the bones where the eyebrows usually grow. Her forehead was damp. Her fleshless hands were like bones covered with thin skin ; the veins and muscles could all be seen. She must once have been very handsome, but now I was seized with—I could n't tell you what feeling, as I looked at her. Those who buried her said afterwards that no living creature had ever been as wasted as she without dying. Well, it was awful to see. Some mortal disease had eaten up that woman till there was nothing left of her but a phantom. Her lips, of a pale violet, seemed not to move when she spoke. Though my profession had familiarized me with such scenes, in bringing me often to the bedside of the dying, to receive their last wishes, I must say that the tears and the anguish of families and friends which I have witnessed were as nothing compared to this solitary

woman in that vast building. I did not hear the slightest noise, I did not see the movement which the breathing of the dying woman would naturally give to the sheet that covered her; I myself remained motionless, looking at her in a sort of stupor. Indeed, I fancy I am there still. At last her large eyes moved; she tried to lift her right hand, which fell back upon the bed; then these words issued from her lips like a breath, for her voice was no longer a voice, —

“ “ “ I have awaited you with impatience.”

“ “ Her cheeks colored. The effort to speak was great. The old woman who was watching her here rose and whispered in my ear: “ Don’t speak; Madame la Comtesse is past hearing the slightest sound; you would only agitate her.” I sat down. A few moments later Madame de Merret collected all her remaining strength to move her right arm and put it, not without great difficulty, under her bolster. She paused an instant; then she made a last effort and withdrew her hand which now held a sealed paper. Great drops of sweat rolled from her forehead.

“ “ “ I give you my will,” she said. “ Oh, my God! Oh!”

“ “ That was all. She seized a crucifix which lay on her bed, pressed it to her lips and died. The expression of her fixed eyes still makes me shudder when I think of it. I brought away the will. When it was opened

I found that Madame de Merret had appointed me her executor. She bequeathed her whole property to the hospital of Vendôme, save and excepting certain bequests. The following disposition was made of La Grande Bretèche. I was directed to leave it in the state in which it was at the time of her death for a period of fifty years from the date of her decease; I was to forbid all access to it, by any and every one, no matter who; to make no repairs, and to put by from her estate a yearly sum to pay watchers, if they were necessary, to insure the faithful execution of these intentions. At the expiration of that time the estate was, if the testatrix's will had been carried out in all particulars, to belong to my heirs (because, as monsieur is doubtless well aware, notaries are forbidden by law to receive legacies); if otherwise, then La Grande Bretèche was to go to whoever might establish a right to it, but on condition of fulfilling certain orders contained in a codicil annexed to the will and not to be opened until the expiration of the fifty years. The will has never been attacked, consequently —'

“Here the oblong notary, without finishing his sentence, looked at me triumphantly. I made him perfectly happy with a few compliments.

“‘Monsieur,’ I said, in conclusion, ‘you have so deeply impressed that scene upon me that I seem to see the dying woman, whiter than the sheets; those

glittering eyes horrify me; I shall dream of her all night. But you must have formed some conjectures as to the motive of that extraordinary will.'

“ ‘Monsieur,’ he replied, with comical reserve, ‘I never permit myself to judge of the motives of those who honor me with the gift of a diamond.’

“ However, I managed to unloose the tongue of the scrupulous notary so far that he told me, not without long digressions, certain opinions on the matter emanating from the wise-heads of both sexes whose judgments made the social law of Vendôme. But these opinions and observations were so contradictory, so diffuse, that I well-nigh went to sleep in spite of the interest I felt in this authentic story. The heavy manner and monotonous accent of the notary, who was no doubt in the habit of listening to himself and making his clients and compatriots listen to him, triumphed over my curiosity. Happily, he did at last go away.

“ ‘Ha, ha! monsieur,’ he said to me at the head of the stairs, ‘many persons would like to live their forty-five years longer, but, one moment!’—here he laid the forefinger of his right hand on his nose as if he meant to say, Now pay attention to this!—‘in order to do that, to do *that*, they ought to skip the sixties.’

“ I shut my door, the notary’s jest, which he thought very witty, having drawn me from my apathy; then I sat down in my armchair and put both feet on the

andirons. I was plunged in a romance à la Radcliffe, based on the notarial disclosures of Monsieur Regnault, when my door, softly opened by the hand of a woman, turned noiselessly on its hinges.

“I saw my landlady, a jovial, stout woman, with a fine, good-humored face, who had missed her true surroundings; she was from Flanders, and might have stepped out of a picture by Teniers.

“‘Well, monsieur,’ she said, ‘Monsieur Regnault has no doubt recited to you his famous tale of La Grande Bretèche?’

“‘Yes, Madame Lepas.’

“‘What did he tell you?’

“I repeated in a few words the dark and chilling story of Madame de Merret as imparted to me by the notary. At each sentence my landlady ran out her chin and looked at me with the perspicacity of an inn-keeper, which combines the instinct of a policeman, the astuteness of a spy, and the cunning of a shopkeeper.

“‘My dear Madame Lepas,’ I added, in conclusion, ‘you evidently know more than that. If not, why did you come up here to me?’

“‘On the word, now, of an honest woman, just as true as my name is Lepas—’

“‘Don’t swear, for your eyes are full of the secret. You knew Monsieur de Merret. What sort of man was he?’

“ ‘ Goodness ! Monsieur de Merret ? well, you see, he was a handsome man, so tall you never could see the top of him, — a very worthy gentleman from Picardy, who had, as you may say, a temper of his own ; and he knew it. He paid every one in cash so as to have no quarrels. But, I tell you, he could be quick. Our ladies thought him very pleasant.’

“ ‘ Because of his temper ? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Perhaps,’ she replied. ‘ You know, monsieur, a man must have something to the fore, as they say, to marry a lady like Madame de Merret, who, without disparaging others, was the handsomest and the richest woman in Vendôme. She had an income of nearly twenty thousand francs. All the town was at the wedding. The bride was so dainty and captivating, a real little jewel of a woman. Ah ! they were a fine couple in those days ! ’

“ ‘ Was their home a happy one ? ’

“ ‘ Hum, hum ! yes and no, so far as any one can say ; for you know well enough that the like of us don’t live hand and glove with the like of them. Madame de Merret was a good woman and very charming, who no doubt had to bear a good deal from her husband’s temper ; we all liked her though she was rather haughty. Bah ! that was her bringing up, and she was born so. When people are noble — don’t you see ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, but there must have been some terrible

catastrophe, for Monsieur and Madame de Merret to separate violently.'

“ ‘I never said there was a catastrophe, monsieur; I know nothing about it.’

“ ‘Very good; now I am certain that you know all.’

“ ‘Well, monsieur, I’ll tell you all I do know. When I saw Monsieur Regnault coming after you I knew he would tell you about Madame de Merret and La Grande Bretèche; and that gave me the idea of consulting monsieur, who seems to be a gentleman of good sense, incapable of betraying a poor woman like me, who has never done harm to any one, but who is, somehow, troubled in her conscience. I have never dared to say a word to the people about here, for they are all gossips, with tongues like steel blades. And there’s never been a traveller who has stayed as long as you have, monsieur, to whom I could tell all about the fifteen thousand francs —’

“ ‘My dear Madame Lepas,’ I replied, trying to stop the flow of words, ‘if your confidence is of a nature to compromise me, I would n’t hear it for worlds.’

“ ‘Oh, don’t be afraid,’ she said, interrupting me. ‘You’ll see —’

“ This haste to tell made me quite certain I was not the first to whom my good landlady had communicated the secret of which I was to be the sole repository, so I listened.

“ ‘ Monsieur,’ she said, ‘ when the Emperor sent the Spanish and other prisoners of war to Vendôme I lodged one of them (at the cost of the government), — a young Spaniard on parole. But in spite of his parole he had to report every day to the sub-prefect. He was a grandee of Spain, with a name that ended in *os* and in *dia*, like all Spaniards — Bagos de Férédia. I wrote his name on the register, and you can see it if you like. Oh, he was a handsome young fellow for a Spaniard, who, they tell me, are all ugly. He was n’t more than five feet two or three inches, but he was well made. He had pretty little hands which he took care of — ah, you should just have seen him! He had as many brushes for those hands as a woman has for her head. He had fine black hair, a fiery eye, a rather copper-colored skin, but it was pleasant to look at all the same. He wore the finest linen I ever saw on any one, and I have lodged princesses, and, among others, General Bertrand, the Duc and Duchesse d’Abrantès, Monsieur Decazes and the King of Spain. He did n’t eat much; but he had such polite manners and was always so amiable that I could n’t find fault with him. Oh! I did really love him, though he never said four words a day to me; if any one spoke to him, he never answered, — that’s an oddity those grandees have, a sort of mania, so I’m told. He read his breviary like a priest, and he went to mass and to all the services regularly. Where

do you think he sat? close to the chapel of Madame de Merret. But as he took that place the first time he went to church nobody attached any importance to the fact, though it was remembered later. Besides, he never took his eyes off his prayer-book, poor young man!

“My jovial landlady paused a moment, overcome with her recollections; then she continued her tale:

“‘From that time on, monsieur, he used to walk up the mountain every evening to the ruins of the castle. It was his only amusement, poor man! and I dare say it recalled his own country; they say Spain is all mountains. From the first he was always late at night in coming in. I used to be uneasy at never seeing him before the stroke of midnight; but we got accustomed to his ways and gave him a key to the door, so that we didn’t have to sit up. It so happened that one of our grooms told us that one evening when he went to bathe his horses he thought he saw the grandee in the distance, swimming in the river like a fish. When he came in I told him he had better take care not to get entangled in the sedges; he seemed annoyed that any one had seen him in the water. Well, monsieur, one day, or rather, one morning, we did not find him in his room; he had not come in. He never returned. I looked about and into everything, and at last I found a writing in a table drawer where he had put away fifty of those Spanish gold coins called “portugaise,” which

bring a hundred francs apiece; there were also diamonds worth ten thousand francs sealed up in a little box. The paper said that in case he should not return some day, he bequeathed to us the money and the diamonds, with a request to found masses of thanksgiving to God for his escape and safety. In those days my husband was living, and he did everything he could to find the young man. But, it was the queerest thing! he found only the Spaniard's clothes under a big stone in a sort of shed on the banks of the river, on the castle side, just opposite to La Grande Bretèche. My husband went so early in the morning that no one saw him. He burned the clothes after we had read the letter, and gave out, as Comte Férédia requested, that he had fled. The sub-prefect sent the whole gendarmerie on his traces, but bless your heart! they never caught him. Lepas thought the Spaniard had drowned himself. But, monsieur, I never thought so. I think he was somehow mixed up in Madame de Merret's trouble; and I'll tell you why. Rosalie has told me that her mistress had a crucifix she valued so much that she was buried with it, and it was made of ebony and silver; now when Monsieur de Férédia first came to lodge with us he had just such a crucifix, but I soon missed it. Now, monsieur, what do you say? is n't it true that I need have no remorse about those fifteen thousand francs? are not they rightfully mine?'

“ ‘Of course they are. But how is it you have never questioned Rosalie?’ I said.

“ ‘Oh, I have, monsieur; but I can get nothing out of her. That girl is a stone wall. She knows something, but there is no making her talk.’

“ After a few more remarks, my landlady left me, a prey to a romantic curiosity, to vague and darkling thoughts, to a religious terror that was something like the awe which comes upon us when we enter by night a gloomy church and see in the distance beneath the arches a feeble light; a formless figure glides before us, the sweep of a robe — of priest or woman — is heard; we shudder. *La Grande Bretèche*, with its tall grasses, its shuttered windows, its rusty railings, its barred gates, its deserted rooms, rose fantastically and suddenly before me. I tried to penetrate that mysterious dwelling and seek the knot of this most solemn history, this drama which had killed three persons.

“ Rosalie became to my eyes the most interesting person in Vendôme. Examining her, I discovered the traces of an ever-present inward thought. In spite of the health which bloomed upon her dimpled face, there was in her some element of remorse, or of hope; her attitude bespoke a secret, like that of devotees who pray with ardor, or that of a girl who has killed her child and forever after hears its cry. And yet her pos-

tures were naïve, and even vulgar; her silly smile was surely not criminal; you would have judged her innocent if only by the large neckerchief of blue and red squares which covered her vigorous bust, clothed, confined, and set off by a gown of purple and white stripes. ‘No,’ thought I; ‘I will not leave Vendôme without knowing the history of La Grande Bretèche. I’ll even make love to Rosalie, if it is absolutely necessary.’

“ ‘Rosalie!’ I said to her one day.

“ ‘What is it, monsieur?’

“ ‘You are not married, are you?’

She trembled slightly.

“ ‘Oh! when the fancy takes me to be unhappy there’ll be no lack of men,’ she said, laughing.

“ ‘She recovered instantly from her emotion, whatever it was; for all women, from the great lady to the chambermaid of an inn, have a self-possession of their own.

“ ‘You are fresh enough and taking enough to please a lover,’ I said, watching her. ‘But tell me, Rosalie, why did you take a place at an inn after you left Madame de Merret? Did n’t she leave you an annuity?’

“ ‘Oh, yes, she did. But, monsieur, my place is the best in all Vendôme.’

“ ‘This answer was evidently what judges and lawyers call ‘dilatatory.’ Rosalie’s position in this romantic history was like that of a square on a checkerboard; she

was at the very centre, as it were, of its truth and its interest; she seemed to me to be tied into the knot of it. The last chapter of the tale was in her, and, from the moment that I realized this, Rosalie became to me an object of attraction. By dint of studying the girl I came to find in her, as we do in every woman whom we make a principal object of our attention, that she had a host of good qualities. She was clean, and careful of herself, and therefore handsome. Some two or three weeks after the notary's visit I said to her, suddenly: 'Tell me all you know about Madame de Merret.'

“‘Oh, no!’ she replied, in a tone of terror, ‘don't ask me that, monsieur.’

“I persisted in urging her. Her pretty face darkened, her bright color faded, her eyes lost their innocent, liquid light.

“‘Well!’ she said, after a pause, ‘if you will have it so, I will tell you; but keep the secret.’

“‘I'll keep it with the faithfulness of a thief, which is the most loyal to be found anywhere.’

“‘If it is the same to you, monsieur, I'd rather you kept it with your own.’

“Thereupon, she adjusted her neckerchief and posed herself to tell the tale; for it is very certain that an attitude of confidence and security is desirable in order to make a narration. The best tales are told at special

hours, — like that in which we are now at table. No one ever told a story well, standing or fasting.

“ If I were to reproduce faithfully poor Rosalie’s diffuse eloquence, a whole volume would scarce suffice. But as the event of which she now gave me a hazy knowledge falls into place between the facts revealed by the garrulity of the notary, and that of Madame Lepas, as precisely as the mean terms of an arithmetical proposition lie between its two extremes, all I have to do is to tell it to you in few words. I therefore give a summary of what I heard from Rosalie.

“ The chamber which Madame de Merret occupied at La Grande Bretèche was on the ground-floor. A small closet about four feet in depth was made in the wall, and served as a wardrobe. Three months before the evening when the facts I am about to relate to you happened, Madame de Merret had been so seriously unwell that her husband left her alone in her room and slept himself in a chamber on the first floor. By one of those mere chances which it is impossible to foresee, he returned, on the evening in question, two hours later than usual from the club where he went habitually to read the papers and talk politics with the inhabitants of the town. His wife thought him at home and in bed and asleep. But the invasion of France had been the subject of a lively discussion ; the game of billiards was a heated one ; he had lost forty francs, an enormous sum

for Vendôme, where everybody hoards his money, and where manners and customs are restrained within modest limits worthy of all praise, — which may, perhaps, be the source of a certain true happiness which no Parisian cares anything at all about.

“ For some time past Monsieur de Merret had been in the habit of asking Rosalie, when he came in, if his wife were in bed. Being told, invariably, that she was, he at once went to his own room with the contentment that comes of confidence and custom. This evening, on returning home, he took it into his head to go to Madame de Merret’s room and tell her his ill-luck, perhaps to be consoled for it. During dinner he had noticed that his wife was coquettishly dressed; and as he came from the club the thought crossed his mind that she was no longer ill, that her convalescence had made her lovelier than ever, — a fact he perceived, as husbands are wont to perceive things, too late.

“ Instead of calling Rosalie, who at that moment was in the kitchen watching a complicated game of ‘brisque,’ at which the cook and the coachman were playing, Monsieur de Merret went straight to his wife’s room by the light of his lantern, which he had placed on the first step of the stairway. His step, which was easily recognized, resounded under the arches of the corridor. Just as he turned the handle of his wife’s door he fancied he heard the door of the closet, which I mentioned

to you, shut; but when he entered, Madame de Merret was alone, standing before the fireplace. The husband thought to himself that Rosalie must be in the closet; and yet a suspicion, which sounded in his ears like the ringing of bells, made him distrustful. He looked at his wife, and fancied he saw something wild and troubled in her eyes.

“ ‘You are late in coming home,’ she said. That voice, usually so pure and gracious, seemed to him slightly changed.

“ Monsieur de Merret made no answer, for at that moment Rosalie entered the room. Her appearance was a thunderbolt to him. He walked up and down the room with his arms crossed, going from one window to another with a uniform movement.

“ ‘Have you heard anything to trouble you?’ asked his wife, timidly, while Rosalie was undressing her. He made no answer.

“ ‘You can leave the room,’ said Madame de Merret to the maid. ‘I will arrange my hair myself.’

“ She guessed some misfortune at the mere sight of her husband’s face, and wished to be alone with him.

“ When Rosalie was gone, or supposed to be gone, for she went no further than the corridor, Monsieur de Merret came to his wife and stood before her. Then he said, coldly :

“ ‘Madame, there is some one in your closet.’

“ She looked at her husband with a calm air, and answered, ‘No, monsieur.’

“ That ‘no’ agonized Monsieur de Merret, for he did not believe it. And yet his wife had never seemed purer nor more saintly than she did at that moment. He rose and went towards the closet to open the door; Madame de Merret took him by the hand and stopped him; she looked at him with a sad air and said, in a voice that was strangely shaken: ‘If you find no one, remember that all is over between us.’

“ The infinite dignity of his wife’s demeanor restored her husband’s respect for her, and suddenly inspired him with one of those resolutions which need some wider field to become immortal.

“ ‘No, Josephine,’ he said, ‘I will not look there. In either case we should be separated forever. Listen to me: I know the purity of your soul, I know that you lead a saintly life; you would not commit a mortal sin to save yourself from death.’

“ At these words, Madame de Merret looked at her husband with a haggard eye.

“ ‘Here is your crucifix,’ he went on. ‘Swear to me before God that there is no one in that closet and I will believe you; I will not open that door.’

“ Madame de Merret took the crucifix and said ‘I swear it.’

“ ‘Louder!’ said her husband; ‘repeat after me, — I swear before God that there is no person in that closet.’

“ ‘She repeated the words composedly.

“ ‘That is well,’ said Monsieur de Merret, coldly. After a moment’s silence he added, examining the ebony crucifix inlaid with silver, ‘That is a beautiful thing; I did not know you possessed it; it is very artistically wrought.’

“ ‘I found it at Duvivier’s,’ she replied; ‘he bought it of a Spanish monk when those prisoners-of-war passed through Vendôme last year.’

“ ‘Ah!’ said Monsieur de Merret, replacing the crucifix on the wall. He rang the bell. Rosalie was not long in answering it. Monsieur de Merret went quickly up to her, took her into the recess of a window on the garden side, and said to her in a low voice: —

“ ‘I am told that Gorenflot wants to marry you, and that poverty alone prevents it, for you have told him you will not be his wife until he is a master-mason. Is that so?’

“ ‘Yes, monsieur.’

“ ‘Well, go and find him; tell him to come here at once and bring his trowel and other tools. Take care not to wake any one at his house but himself; he will soon have enough money to satisfy you. No talking to any one when you leave this room, mind, or —’

“He frowned. Rosalie left the room. He called her back; ‘Here, take my pass-key,’ he said.

“Monsieur de Merret, who had kept his wife in view while giving these orders, now sat down beside her before the fire and began to tell her of his game of billiards, and the political discussions at the club. When Rosalie returned she found Monsieur and Madame de Merret talking amicably.

“The master had lately had the ceilings of all the reception rooms on the lower floor restored. Plaster is very scarce at Vendôme, and the carriage of it makes it expensive. Monsieur de Merret had therefore ordered an ample quantity for his own wants, knowing that he could readily find buyers for what was left. This circumstance inspired the idea that now possessed him.

“‘Monsieur, Gorenflot has come,’ said Rosalie.

“‘Bring him in,’ said her master.

“Madame de Merret turned slightly pale when she saw the mason.

“‘Gorenflot,’ said her husband, ‘fetch some bricks from the coach-house, — enough to wall up that door; use the plaster that was left over, to cover the wall.’

“Then he called Rosalie and the mason to the end of the room, and, speaking in a low voice, added, ‘Listen to me, Gorenflot; after you have done this work you will sleep in the house; and to-morrow morning

I will give you a passport into a foreign country, and six thousand francs for the journey. Go through Paris where I will meet you. There, I will secure to you legally another six thousand francs, to be paid to you at the end of ten years if you still remain out of France. For this sum, I demand absolute silence on what you see and do this night. As for you, Rosalie, I give you a dowry of ten thousand francs, on condition that you marry Gorenflot, and keep silence, if not—'

“ ‘Rosalie,’ said Madame de Merret, ‘come and brush my hair.’

“ The husband walked up and down the room, watching the door, the mason, and his wife, but without allowing the least distrust or misgiving to appear in his manner. Gorenflot’s work made some noise; under cover of it Madame de Merret said hastily to Rosalie, while her husband was at the farther end of the room. ‘A thousand francs annuity if you tell Gorenflot to leave a crevice at the bottom;’ then aloud she added, composedly, ‘Go and help the mason.’

“ Monsieur and Madame de Merret remained silent during the whole time it took Gorenflot to wall up the door. The silence was intentional on the part of the husband to deprive his wife of all chance of saying words with a double meaning which might be heard within the closet; with Madame de Merret it was either prudence or pride.

“When the wall was more than half up, the mason’s tool broke one of the panes of glass in the closet door; Monsieur de Merret’s back was at that moment turned away. The action proved to Madame de Merret that Rosalie had spoken to the mason. In that one instant she saw the dark face of a man with black hair and fiery eyes. Before her husband turned the poor creature had time to make a sign with her head which meant ‘Hope.’

“By four o’clock, just at dawn, for it was in the month of September, the work was done. Monsieur de Merret remained that night in his wife’s room. The next morning, on rising, he said, carelessly: ‘Ah! I forgot, I must go to the mayor’s office about that passport.’

“He put on his hat, made three steps to the door, then checked himself, turned back, and took the crucifix.

“His wife trembled with joy; ‘He will go to Duvi-
vier’s,’ she thought.

“The moment her husband had left the house she rang for Rosalie. ‘The pick-axe!’ she cried, ‘the pick-axe! I watched how Gorenflot did it; we shall have time to make a hole and close it again.’

“In an instant Rosalie had brought a sort of cleaver, and her mistress, with a fury no words can describe, began to demolish the wall. She had knocked away

a few bricks, and was drawing back to strike a still more vigorous blow with all her strength, when she saw her husband behind her. She fainted.

“ ‘Put madame on her bed,’ said her husband, coldly.

“Foreseeing what would happen, he had laid this trap for his wife; he had written to the mayor, and sent for Duvivier. The jeweller arrived just as the room had been again put in order.

“ ‘Duvivier,’ said Monsieur de Merret, ‘I think you bought some crucifixes of those Spaniards who were here last year?’

“ ‘No, monsieur, I did not.’

“ ‘Very good; thank you,’ he said, with a tigerish glance at his wife. ‘Jean,’ he added to the footman, ‘serve my meals in Madame de Merret’s bedroom; she is very ill, and I shall not leave her till she recovers.’

“For twenty days that man remained beside his wife. During the first hours, when sounds were heard behind the walled door, and Josephine tried to implore mercy for the dying stranger, he answered, without allowing her to utter a word:—

“ ‘You swore upon the cross that no one was there.’ ”

As the tale ended the women rose from table, and the spell under which Bianchon had held them was broken. Nevertheless, several of them were conscious of a cold chill as they recalled the last words.

THE PURSE.

TO SOFKA :

HAVE you ever remarked, Mademoiselle, that when the painters and sculptors of the middle ages placed two figures in adoration beside some glorious saint they have always given them a filial resemblance ?

When you see your name among those dear to me, under whose protection I place my books, remember this likeness and you will find here not so much a homage as an expression of the fraternal affection felt for you by

Your servant,

DE BALZAC.

FOR souls easily moved to joyous feelings there comes a delightful moment when night is not yet and day is no more ; the twilight casts its soft tones or its fantastic reflections over everything, and invites to a revery which blends vaguely with the play of light and shadow. The silence that nearly always reigns at such a moment renders it particularly dear to artists, who then gather up their thoughts, stand back a little from their creations, at which they can see to work no longer, and

judge them in the intoxication of a subject the esoteric meaning of which then blazes forth to the inner eyes of genius. He who has never stood pensive beside a friend at that dreamy, poetic moment will have difficulty in comprehending its unspeakable benefits. Thanks to the half-light, the *chiaro-scuro*, all the material deceptions employed by art to simulate truth disappear. If a picture is the thing concerned, the persons it represents seem to speak and move; the shadow is really shadow, the light is day, the flesh is living, the eyes turn, the blood flows in the veins, and the silks shimmer. At that hour illusion reigns unchallenged; perhaps it only rises at night-fall! Indeed, illusion is to thought a sort of night which we decorate with dreams. Then it is that she spreads her wings and bears the soul to the world of fantasy, — a world teeming with voluptuous caprices, where the artist forgets the actual world, forgets yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, all, even his distresses, the happy as well as the bitter ones.

At that magic hour a young painter, a man of talent, who saw nought in art but art itself, was perched on a double ladder which he used for the purpose of painting a very large picture, now nearly finished. There, criticising himself and admiring himself in perfect good faith, he was lost in one of those meditations which ravish the soul, enlarge it, caress it, and console it. His reverie no doubt lasted long. Night came. Whether he

tried to come down his ladder, or whether, thinking he was on the ground, he made some imprudent movement, he was unable to remember, but at any rate he fell, his head struck a stool, he lost consciousness and lay for a time, but how long he did not know, without moving.

A soft voice drew him from the sort of stupor in which he was plunged. When he opened his eyes a bright light made him close them again; but through the veil that wrapped his senses he heard the murmur of women's voices, and felt two young and timid hands about his head. He soon recovered consciousness and perceived, by the light of one of those old-fashioned lamps called "double air-currents," the head of the loveliest young girl he had ever seen, — one of those heads which are often thought artistic fancies, but which for him suddenly realized the noble ideal which each artist creates for himself, and from which his genius proceeds. The face of the unknown maiden belonged, if we may say so, to the school of Prudhon, and it also possessed the poetic charm which Girodet has given to his imaginary visions. The delightful coolness of the temples, the evenness of the eyebrows, the purity of the outlines, the virginity strongly imprinted on that countenance, made the young girl a perfected being.

Her clothes, though simple and neat, bespoke neither wealth nor poverty. When the painter regained possession of himself, he expressed his admiration in a

look of surprise as he stammered his thanks. He felt his forehead pressed by a handkerchief, and he recognized, in spite of the peculiar odor of an atelier, the strong fumes of hartshorn, used, no doubt, to bring him to himself. Next he noticed an old lady, like a countess of the old régime, who held the lamp and was advising her companion.

“Monsieur,” replied the young girl to one of the painter’s questions asked during the moment when he was still half-unconscious, “my mother and I heard the noise of your fall on the floor and we thought we also heard a groan. The silence which succeeded your fall alarmed us and we hastened to come up to you. Finding the key in the door we fortunately ventured to come in. We found you lying on the floor unconscious. My mother obtained what was necessary to bring you to and to stanch the blood. You are hurt in the forehead; there, do you feel it?”

“Yes, now I do,” he said.

“It is a mere nothing,” said the old mother, “fortunately your fall was broken by that lay-figure.”

“I feel much better,” said the painter; “all I want is a carriage to take me home. The porter can fetch it.”

He tried to reiterate his thanks to the two ladies, but at every sentence the mother interrupted him, saying: “To-morrow, monsieur, put on blisters or apply

leeches; drink a few cups of some restorative; take care of yourself, — falls are dangerous.”

The young girl glanced shyly at the painter, and around the studio. Her look and demeanor were those of perfect propriety, and her eyes seemed to express, with a spontaneity that was full of grace, the interest that women take in whatever troubles men. These unknown ladies appeared to ignore the works of the painter in presence of the suffering man. When he had reassured them as to his condition they left the room, after examining him with a solicitude that was devoid of either exaggeration or familiarity, and without asking any indiscreet questions, or seeking to inspire him with a wish to know them. Their conduct was marked with every sign of delicacy and good taste. At first their noble and simple manners produced but little effect upon the painter, but later, when he recalled the circumstances, he was greatly struck by them.

Reaching the floor below that on which the studio was situated, the old lady exclaimed, gently, “Adélaïde, you left the door open!”

“It was to succor me,” replied the painter, with a smile of gratitude.

“Mamma, you came down just now,” said the young girl, blushing.

“Shall we light you down?” said the mother to the painter; “the stairway is dark.”

“ Oh, thank you, madame, but I feel much better.”

“ Hold by the baluster.”

The two women stood on the landing to light the young man, listening to the sound of his steps.

To explain all that made this scene piquant and unexpected to the painter, we must add that he had only lately removed his studio to the attic of this house, which stood at the darkest and muddiest part of the rue de Suresnes, nearly opposite to the church of the Madeleine, a few steps from his apartments, which were in the rue des Champs Élysées. The celebrity his talent had won for him made him dear to France, and he was just beginning to no longer feel the troubles of want, and to enjoy, as he said, his last miseries. Instead of going to his work in a studio beyond the barrier, the modest price of which had hitherto been in keeping with the modesty of his earnings, he now satisfied a desire, of daily growth, to avoid the long walk and the loss of time which had now become a thing of the utmost value.

No one in the world could have inspired deeper interest than Hippolyte Schinner, if he had only consented to be known; but he was not one of those who readily confide the secrets of their heart. He was the idol of a poor mother who had brought him up at a cost of stern privations. Mademoiselle Schinner, the daughter of an Alsatian farmer, was not married.

Her tender soul had once been cruelly wounded by a wealthy man who boasted of little delicacy in love. The fatal day when, in the glow of youth and beauty, in the glory of her life, she endured at the cost of all her beautiful illusions, and of her heart itself, the disenchantment which comes to us so slowly and yet so fast, — for we will not believe in evil until too late, and then it seems to come too rapidly, — that day was to her a whole century of reflection, and it was also a day of religious thoughts and resignation. She refused the alms of the man who had betrayed her; she renounced the world, and made an honor of her fault. She gave herself up to maternal love, enjoying in exchange for the social enjoyments to which she had bid farewell, its fullest delights. She lived by her labor, and found her wealth in her son; and the day came, the hour came which repaid her for the long, slow sacrifices of her indigence. At the last Exhibition her son had received the cross of the Legion of honor. The newspapers, unanimous in favor of a hitherto ignored talent, rang with praises that were now sincere. Artists themselves recognized Schinner as a master, and the dealers were ready to cover his canvases with gold.

At twenty-five years of age Hippolyte Schinner, to whom his mother had transmitted her woman's soul, fully recognized his position in the world. Wishing to give his mother the pleasures that society had so long

withdrawn from her, he lived for her only, — hoping to see her some day, through the power of his fame and fortune, happy, rich, respected, and surrounded by celebrated men.

Schinner had therefore chosen his friends among the most honorable and distinguished men of his own age. Hard to satisfy in his choice, he wished to gain a position even higher than that his talents gave him. By forcing him to live in solitude (that mother of great thoughts) the toil to which he had vowed himself from his youth up had kept him true to the noble beliefs which adorn the earlier years of life. His adolescent soul had lost none of the many forms of chastity which make a young man a being apart, a being whose heart abounds in felicity, in poesy, in virgin hopes, — feeble to the eyes of worn-out men, but deep because they are simple. He was endowed by nature with the gentle, courteous manners, which are those of the heart, and which charm even those who are not able to comprehend them. He was well made. His voice, which echoed his soul, roused noble sentiments in the souls of others, and bore testimony by a certain candor in its tones to his innate modesty. Those who saw him felt drawn to him by one of those moral attractions which, happily, scientific men cannot analyze; if they could they would find some phenomena of galvanism, or the flow of heaven knows what fluid, and

formulate our feelings in proportions of oxygen and electricity.

These details may perhaps enlighten persons who are bold by nature, and also men with good cravats, as to why Hippolyte Schinner, in the absence of the porter, whom he had sent to the rue de la Madeleine for a hackney-coach, did not ask the porter's wife any question as to the two ladies whose kindness of heart accident had revealed to him. But though he answered merely yes or no to the questions, natural enough under the circumstances, which the woman put to him on his accident, and on the assistance rendered to him by the occupants of the fourth floor, he could not prevent her from obeying the instincts of her race. She spoke of the two ladies in the interests of her own policy and according to the subterranean judgment of a porter's lodge.

“ Ah ! ” she said, “ that must have been Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother ; they have lived here the last four years. We can't make out what those ladies do. In the morning (but only till twelve o'clock) an old charwoman, nearly deaf, and who does n't talk any more than a stone wall, comes to help them ; in the evening two or three old gentlemen, decorated, like you, monsieur, — one of them keeps a carriage and servants, and people do say he has sixty thousand francs a year, — well, they spend the evening here and often

stay very late. The ladies are very quiet tenants, like you, monsieur ; and economical ! — they live on nothing ; as soon as they get a letter they pay their rent. It is queer, monsieur, but the mother has n't the same name as the daughter. Ah ! but when they go to walk in the Tuileries mademoiselle is dazzling, and often young gentlemen follow her home, but she has the door shut in their faces, — and she is right ; for the proprietor would never allow — ”

The coach having arrived, Hippolyte heard no more and went home. His mother, to whom he related his adventure, dressed his wound and would not let him go back to the studio the next day. Consultation was had, divers prescriptions were ordered, and Hippolyte was kept at home three days. During this seclusion, his unoccupied imagination recalled to him in vivid fragments the details of the scene that followed his swoon. The profile of the young girl was deeply cut upon the shadowy background of his inner sight ; again he saw the faded face of the mother and felt Adélaïde's soft hands ; he remembered a gesture he had scarcely noticed at the time, but now its exquisite grace was thrown into relief by memory ; then an attitude or the tones of a melodious voice, made more melodious by recollection, suddenly reappeared, like things that are thrown to the bottom of a river and return to the surface.

So the first day on which he was able to go to work he went early to his studio ; but the visit which he had, incontestably, the right to make to his neighbors was the real reason of his haste ; his pictures were forgotten. The moment a passion bursts its swaddling-clothes it finds inexplicable pleasures known only to those who love. Thus there are persons who will know why the painter slowly mounted the stairs of the fourth story ; they will be in the secret of those rapid pulsations of his heart as he came in sight of the brown door of the humble apartments occupied by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This young girl, who did not bear the same name as her mother, had awakened a thousand sympathies in the young painter ; he longed to find in her certain similarities of position to his own, and he invested her with the misfortunes of his own origin. While he worked, Hippolyte gave himself, complacently, to thoughts of love, and he made as much noise as he could, to induce the ladies to think of him as much as he thought of them. He stayed very late at the studio, and dined there. About seven o'clock he went down to call on his neighbors.

No painter of manners and customs has dared to initiate us — restrained, perhaps, by a sense of propriety — into the truly singular interiors of certain Parisian homes, into the secret of those dwellings whence issue such fresh, such elegant toilets, women so brilliant on the outside who nevertheless betray signs

of an equivocal fortune. If the painting of such a home is here too frankly drawn, if you find it tedious, do not blame the description, which forms, as it were, an integral part of the history ; for the aspect of the apartments occupied by his neighbors had a great influence upon the hopes and feelings of Hippolyte Schinner.

The house belonged to one of those proprietors in whom there is a pre-existent horror of repairs or improvements, — one of the men who consider their position as house-owners in Paris as their business in life. In the grand chain of moral species such men hold the middle place between usurers and misers. Optimists from self-interest, they are all faithful to the *statu quo* of Austria. If you mention moving a cupboard or a door, or making the most necessary of ventilators, their eyes glitter, their bile rises, they rear like a frightened horse. When the wind has knocked over a chimney-pot they fall ill of it, and deprive themselves and their families of an evening at the Gymnase or the Porte-Saint-Martin to pay damages. Hippolyte, who, apropos of certain embellishments he wished made to his studio, had enjoyed, gratis, the playing of a comic scene by Monsieur Molineux, the proprietor, was not at all surprised by the blackened, soiled colors, the oily tints, the spots, and other disagreeable accessories which adorned the woodwork. These stigmata of poverty are never without a certain poetry to an artist.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur herself opened the door. Recognizing the young painter she bowed to him; then, at the same moment, with Parisian dexterity, and that presence of mind which pride affords, she turned and shut the door of a glazed partition through which Hippolyte might have seen linen hung to dry on lines above a cheap stove, an old flock bed, coal, charcoal, flatirons, a water-filter, china and glass, and all utensils necessary to a small household. Muslin curtains, that were sufficiently clean, carefully concealed this "capharnaüm,"—a word then familiarly applied to such domestic laboratories, ill-lighted by narrow windows opening on a court.

With the rapid glance of an artist Hippolyte had seen the furnishing, the character, and the condition of this first apartment, which was in fact one room cut in two. The respectable half, which answered the double purpose of ante-chamber and dining-room, was hung with an old yellow paper, and a velvet border, manufactured no doubt by Réveillon, the holes and the spots of which had been carefully concealed under wafers. Engravings representing the battles of Alexander, by Lebrun, in tarnished frames, decorated the walls at equal distances. In the centre of the room was a massive mahogany table, old-fashioned in shape, and a good deal rubbed at the corners. A small stove, with a straight pipe and no elbow, hardly

seen, stood before the chimney, the fireplace in which was turned into a closet. By way of an odd contrast, the chairs, which were of carved mahogany, showed the relics of past splendor, but the red leather of the seats, the gilt nails, and the gimps showed as many wounds as an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard. This room served as a museum for a variety of things that are only found in certain amphibious households, unnameable articles, which belong both to luxury and poverty. Among them Hippolyte noticed a spy-glass, handsomely ornamented, which hung above the little greenish mirror on the mantel-shelf. To complete the oddity of this furniture, a shabby sideboard stood between the chimney and the partition, made of common pine painted in mahogany, which of all woods is least successfully imitated. But the red and slippery floor, the shabby bits of carpet before the chairs, and all the furniture, shone with the careful rubbing which gives its own lustre to old things, and brings out all the clearer their dilapidations, their age, and their long service.

The room gave out an indefinable odor resulting from the exhalations of the capharnaüm mingled with the atmosphere of the dining-room and that of the staircase, though the window was open and the breeze from the street stirred the cambric curtains, which were carefully arranged to hide the window-frame where

preceding tenants had marked their presence by various carvings, — a sort of domestic frescoing.

Adélaïde quickly opened the door of the next room, into which she ushered the painter with evident pleasure. Hippolyte, who had seen the same signs of poverty in his mother's home, noticed them now with that singular keenness of impression which characterizes the first acquisitions of our memory ; and he was able to understand, better perhaps than others could have done, the details of such an existence. Recognizing the things of his childhood, the honest young fellow felt neither contempt for the hidden poverty before him, nor pride in the luxury he had lately achieved for his mother.

“ Well, monsieur, I hope you are none the worse for your fall ? ” said the mother, rising from an old-fashioned sofa at the corner of the fireplace, and offering him a chair.

“ No, madame. I have come to thank you for the good care you gave me ; and especially mademoiselle, who heard me fall. ”

While making this speech, full of the adorable stupidity which the first agitations of a true love produce in the soul, Hippolyte looked at the young girl. Adélaïde lighted the lamp with the double current of air, no doubt for the purpose of suppressing a tallow candle placed in a large pewter candlestick that was covered with drippings from an unusual flow of

tallow. She bowed slightly, placed the candlestick on the chimney-piece, and sat down near her mother, a little behind the painter, so as to look at him at her ease, while seemingly engaged in making the lamp burn; for the feeble flame of the double current, affected by the dampness of the tarnished chimney, sputtered and struggled with an ill-cut, black wick. Observing the mirror above the mantel-shelf, Hippolyte promptly looked into it to see and admire Adélaïde. The little scheme of the young girl served therefore only to embarrass them both.

While talking with Madame Leseigneur, for Hippolyte at first gave her that name, he examined the salon, but discreetly and with propriety. The Egyptian figures of the andirons (made of iron) could scarcely be seen on the hearth full of ashes, where two small sticks of wood were trying to meet each other in front of an imitation back-log of earthenware. An old Aubusson carpet, well-mended and much faded and worn, hardly covered the tiled floor, which felt cold to the feet. The walls were hung with a reddish paper in the style of a brocade with buff designs. In the centre of the partition opposite to the windows the painter observed an indentation and cracks in the paper, made by the two doors of a folding-bed, where Madame Leseigneur doubtless slept, and which was only partly concealed by a sofa placed in front of it. Opposite to the chimney, and

above a chest of drawers in mahogany, the style of which was handsome and in good taste, was the portrait of an officer of high rank, which the poor light hardly enabled the painter to make out; but, from what he could see of it the thought occurred to him that the frightful daub must have been painted in China. The red silk curtains to the windows were faded, like the coverings of the furniture in this salon with two purposes. On the marble top of the chest of drawers was a valuable tray of malachite, holding a dozen coffee-cups, exquisitely painted, and made no doubt at Sèvres. On the mantel-shelf was the inevitable Empire clock, a warrior driving the four horses of a chariot, the twelve spokes of the wheel each telling an hour. The wax tapers in the candelabra were yellow with smoke, and at each end of the shelf was a china vase filled with artificial flowers covered with dust and mixed with mosses.

Hippolyte noticed a card-table in the centre of the room, laid out with new packs of cards. To an observer there was something indescribably sad in this scene of poverty decked out like an old woman who tries to give the lie to her face. Most men of common sense would have secretly and immediately formulated to their own minds a problem: were these women honor and uprightness itself; or did they live by cards and scheming? But the sight of Adélaïde was to a young man as pure as Schinner the proof of perfect

innocence, and it provided the incoherencies of the room with honorable causes.

“My dear,” said the old lady to her daughter, “I am cold; make us a little fire, and give me my shawl.”

Adélaïde went into an adjoining room, where no doubt she slept herself, and returned, bringing her mother a cashmere shawl which when new must have been of great value, but being old, faded, and full of darns, it harmonized with the furniture of the room. Madame Leseigneur wrapped it artistically about her with the cleverness of an old woman who wishes to make you believe in the truth of her words. The young girl darted into the capharnaüm, and reappeared with a handful of small wood which she threw into the fire.

It would be difficult to write down the conversation which took place between these three persons. Guided by the tact which deprivations and trials endured in youth nearly always give a man, Hippolyte did not venture on the slightest allusion to the position of his neighbors, though he saw all around him the signs of an ill-disguised indigence. The simplest question would have been indiscreet, and permissible only in the case of an old friend. And yet the painter was deeply preoccupied by this hidden poverty; his generous heart ached for it; knowing, however, that all kinds of pity, even the most sympathetic, may be offensive, he grew embarrassed by the conflict that existed between his

thoughts and his words. The two ladies talked first of painting; for women readily understand the secret embarrassments of a first visit; perhaps they feel them, and the nature of their minds gives them the art of overcoming them. By questioning the young man on matters of his profession and his studies Adélaïde and her mother emboldened him to converse. The little nothings of their courteous and lively conversation soon led him naturally to remarks and reflections which showed the nature of his habits and his mind.

Sorrows had prematurely withered the face of the old lady, who must once have been handsome, though nothing remained of her good looks but the strong features and outlines, — in other words, the skeleton of a face which still showed infinite delicacy and much charm in the play of the eyes, which possessed a certain expression peculiar to the women of the old court, and which no words can define. These delicate and subtle points may, however, denote an evil nature; they may mean feminine guile and cunning raised to their highest pitch as much as they may, on the other hand, reveal the delicacy of a noble soul. In fact, the face of a woman is embarrassing to all commonplace observers, inasmuch as the difference between frankness and duplicity, between the genius of intrigue and the genius of the heart is, to such observers, imperceptible. A man endowed with a penetrating insight can guess

the meaning of those fleeting tones produced by a line more or less curved, a dimple more or less deep, a feature more or less rounded or prominent. The understanding of such diagnostics lies entirely within the domain of intuition, which alone can discover what others are seeking to hide. The face of this old lady was like the apartment she occupied; it seemed as difficult to know whether the penury of the latter covered vices or integrity as to decide whether Adélaïde's mother was an old coquette accustomed to weigh and to calculate and to sell everything, or a loving woman full of dignity and noble qualities.

But at Schinner's age the first impulse of the heart is to believe in goodness. So, as he looked at Adélaïde's noble and half-disdainful brow, and into her eyes that were full of soul and of thought, he breathed, so to speak, the sweet and modest perfumes of virtue. In the middle of the conversation he took occasion to say something about portraits in general that he might have an opportunity to examine the hideous pastel over the chimney-piece, the colors of which had faded and in some places crumbled off.

“No doubt that portrait is valuable to you, ladies, on account of its resemblance,” he said, looking at Adélaïde, “for the drawing is horrible.”

“It was done in China, in great haste,” said the old lady, with some emotion.

She looked up at the miserable sketch with that surrender to feeling which the memory of happiness brings when it falls upon the heart like a blessed dew, to whose cool refreshment we delight to abandon ourselves. But in that old face thus raised there were also the traces of an eternal grief. At least, that was how the painter chose to interpret the attitude and face of his hostess, beside whom he now seated himself.

“Madame,” he said, “before long the colors of that pastel will have faded out. The portrait will then exist only in your memory. You will see there a face that is dear to you, but which no one else will be able to recognize. Will you permit me to copy that picture on canvas? It will be far more durable than what you have there on paper. Grant me, as a neighbor, the pleasure of doing you this service. There come times when an artist is glad to rest from his more important compositions by taking up some other work, and it will really be a relief to me to paint that head.”

The old lady quivered as she heard these words, and Adélaïde cast upon the artist a thoughtful glance which seemed like a gush of the soul itself. Hippolyte wished to attach himself to his two neighbors by some tie, and to win the right to mingle his life with theirs. His offer, addressing itself to the deepest affections of the heart, was the only one it was possible for him to

make ; it satisfied his artist's pride, and did not wound that of the ladies. Madame Leseigneur accepted it without either eagerness or reluctance, but with that consciousness of generous souls, who know the extent of the obligations such acts fasten on them, and who accept them as proofs of respect, and as testimonials to their honor.

“I think,” said the painter, “that that is a naval uniform?”

“Yes,” she said, “that of a captain in the navy. Monsieur de Rouville, my husband, died at Batavia, in consequence of wounds received in a fight with an English vessel which he met off the coast of Asia. He commanded a frigate mounting fifty-six guns, but the ‘Revenge’ was a ninety-gun ship. The battle was unequal, but my husband maintained it bravely until night, under cover of which he was able to escape. When I returned to France, Bonaparte was not yet in power, and I was refused a pension. Lately, when I applied for one again, the minister told me harshly that if the Baron de Rouville had emigrated I should not have lost him, and he would now in all probability be a vice-admiral ; his Excellency finally refused my application under some law of forfeiture. I made the attempt, to which certain friends urged me, only for the sake of my poor Adélaïde. I have always felt a repugnance to hold out my hand for money on the ground of

a sorrow which deprives a woman of her voice and her strength. I do not like these valuations of blood irreparably shed."

"Dear mother, it always harms you to talk on this subject."

At these words the Baronne Leseigneur de Rouville bowed her head and said no more.

"Monsieur," said the young girl to Hippolyte, "I thought that the occupation of a painter was generally a rather quiet one?"

At this question Schinner blushed, recollecting the noise he had been making overhead. Adélaïde did not finish what she seemed about to say, and perhaps saved him from telling some fib, for she suddenly rose at the sound of a carriage driving up to the door. She went into her room and returned with two gilt candelabra filled with wax tapers which she quickly lighted. Then, without waiting for the bell to ring, she opened the door of the first room and placed the lamp on the table. The sound of a kiss given and received went to the depths of Hippolyte's heart. The impatience of the young man to see who it was that treated Adélaïde so familiarly was not very quickly relieved, for the new arrivals held a murmured conversation with the girl, which he thought very long.

At last, however, Mademoiselle de Rouville reappeared, followed by two men whose dress, physiognomy,

and general appearance were a history in themselves. The first, who was about sixty years of age, wore one of those coats invented, I believe, for Louis XVIII., then reigning, in which the most difficult of all vestuary problems was solved by the genius of a tailor who ought to be immortalized. That artist knew, not a doubt of it! the art of transitions, which constituted the genius of that period, politically so fickle. Surely, it was a rare merit to know how to judge, as that tailor did, of his epoch! This coat, which the young men of the present day may consider a myth, was neither civil nor military, but might pass at a pinch for either military or civil. Embroidered fleurs-de-lis adorned the flaps behind. The gold buttons were also fleur-de-lised. On the shoulders, two unused eyelet-holes awaited the useless epaulets. These military symptoms were there like a petition without a backer. The buttonhole of the old man who wore this coat (of the color called "king's blue") was adorned with numberless ribbons. He held, and no doubt always did hold in his hand his three-cornered hat with gold tassels, for the snowy wings of his powdered hair showed no signs of the pressure of that covering. He looked to be no more than fifty, and seem to enjoy robust health. While there was in him every sign of the frank and loyal nature of the old *émigrés*, his appearance denoted also easy and libertine habits, — the gay passions and the careless joviality

of the *mousquetaires*, once so celebrated in the annals of gallantry. His gestures, his bearing, his manners, all proclaimed that he did not intend to change his royalism, nor his religion, nor his mode of life.

A truly fantastic figure followed this gay "*voltigeur* of Louis XIV." (that was the nickname given by the Bonapartists to these relics of the old monarchy); but to paint it properly the individual himself ought to be the principal figure in a picture in which he is only an accessory. Imagine a thin and withered personage, dressed like the first figure, and yet only the reflection or the shadow of it. The coat was new on the back of the one, and old and faded on that of the other. The powder in the hair of the counterpart seemed less white, the gold of the fleurs-de-lis less dazzling, the eyelets more vacant, the mind weaker, the vital strength nearer its termination, than in the other. In short, he realized that saying of Rivarol about Champcenetz: "He is my moonlight." He was only the echo of the other, a faint, dull echo; between the two there was all the difference that there is between the first and last proof of a lithograph. The chevalier — for he was a chevalier — said nothing, and no one said anything to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who stayed by the old beau, as a female companion by an old woman? Was he a mixture of dog, parrot, and friend? Had he saved the fortune, or merely the life of his benefactor?

Was he the Trim of another Uncle Toby? Elsewhere, as well as at Madame de Rouville's, he excited curiosity. Who was there under the Restoration who could recollect an attachment before the Revolution on the part of the Chevalier to his friend's wife, now dead for over twenty years?

The personage who seemed to be the less ancient of these two relics, advanced gallantly to the Baronne de Rouville, kissed her hand, and seated himself beside her. The other bowed and sat beside his chief, at a distance represented by two chairs. Adélaïde came up and put her elbows on the back of the chair occupied by the old gentleman, imitating unconsciously the attitude which Guérin has given to Dido's sister in his famous picture. Though the familiarity of the old gentleman was that of a father, it seemed for a moment to displease her.

“What! do you mean to pout at me?” he said.

Then he cast one of those oblique glances full of shrewdness and perception at Schinner, — a diplomatic glance, the expression of which was prudent uneasiness, the polite curiosity of well-bred people who seem to ask on seeing a stranger, “Is he one of us?”

“This is our neighbor,” said the old lady, motioning to Hippolyte. “Monsieur is the celebrated painter, whose name you must know very well in spite of your indifference to art.”

The gentleman smiled at his old friend's mischievous omission of the name, and bowed to the young man.

“Yes, indeed,” he said, “I have heard a great deal about his pictures in the Salon. Talent has many privileges, monsieur,” he added, glancing at the artist's red ribbon. “That distinction which we acquire at the cost of our blood and long services, you obtain young; but all glories are sisters,” he added, touching the cross of Saint-Louis which he wore.

Hippolyte stammered a few words of thanks and retired into silence, content to admire with growing enthusiasm the beautiful head of the young girl who charmed him. Soon he forgot in this delightful contemplation the evident poverty of her home. To him, Adélaïde's face detached itself from a luminous background. He answered briefly all questions which were addressed to him, and which he fortunately heard, thanks to that singular faculty of the soul which allows thought to run double at times. Who does not know what it is to continue plunged in a deep meditation, pleasurable or sad, to listen to the inward voice, and yet give attention to a conversation or a reading? Wonderful dualism, which often helps us to endure bores with patience! Hope, fruitful and smiling, brought him a thousand thoughts of happiness; what need for him to dwell on things about him? A child full of trust, he thought it shameful to analyze a pleasure.

After a certain lapse of time he was aware that the old lady and her daughter were playing cards with the old gentleman. As to the satellite, he stood behind his friend, wholly occupied with the latter's game, answering the mute questions the player made to him by little approving grimaces which repeated the interrogative motions of the other's face.

“Du Halga, I always lose,” said the gentleman.

“You discard too carelessly,” said the baroness.

“It is three months since I have been able to win a single game,” said he.

“Monsieur le comte, have you aces?” asked the old lady.

“Yes, mark one,” he answered.

“Don't you want me to advise you?” said Adélaïde.

“No, no ; stay there in front of me ! It would double my losses if I could n't see your face.”

At last the game ended. The old gentleman drew out his purse and threw two louis on the table, not without ill-humor. “Forty francs, as true as gold !” said he ; “and, the deuce ! it is eleven o'clock.”

“It is eleven o'clock,” repeated the mute personage, looking at the painter.

The young man, hearing those words rather more distinctly than the others, thought it was time to withdraw. Returning to the world of common ideas, he uttered a few ordinary phrases, bowed to the baroness,

her daughter, and the two gentlemen, and went home, a prey to the first joys of true love, without trying to analyze the little events of this evening.

The next day the painter was possessed with the most violent desire to see Adélaïde again. If he had listened to his passion he would have gone to his neighbors on arriving at his studio at six o'clock in the morning. But he still kept his senses sufficiently to wait till the afternoon. As soon, however, as he thought he could present himself he went down and rang their bell, not without much palpitation of the heart, and then, blushing like a girl, he timidly asked Mademoiselle Le-seigneur, who had opened the door, for the portrait of Monsieur de Rouville.

“But come in,” said Adélaïde, who had no doubt heard his step on the stairway.

The painter followed her, abashed and out of countenance, not knowing what to say, — so stupid did his happiness make him. To see Adélaïde, to listen to the rustle of her gown after longing all the morning to be near her, after jumping up a dozen times and saying, “I will go!” and yet not daring to do so, — this, to him, was so rich and full a life that such emotions if too prolonged would have exhausted his soul. The heart has the singular property of giving an extraordinary value to nothings. We know the joy a traveller feels in gathering the twig of a plant or a leaf unknown to him,

when he has risked his life in the quest. The nothings of love are precious in the same way.

The old lady was not in the salon. When the young girl found herself alone with the painter she brought a chair and stood on it to take down the portrait; but perceiving that she could not unhook it without stepping on the chest of drawers, she turned to Hippolyte and said to him, blushing:—

“I am not tall enough. Will you take it down?”

A feeling of modesty, shown in the expression of her face and the accent of her voice, was the real motive of her request; and the young man, so understanding it, gave her one of those intelligent glances which are the sweetest language of love. Seeing that the painter had guessed her feeling, Adélaïde lowered her eyes with that impulse of pride which belongs only to virgins. Not finding a word to say and feeling almost intimidated, the painter took down the picture, examined it gravely in the light from the window, and then went away without saying anything more to Mademoiselle Leseigneur than, “I will return it soon.”

Each during that rapid moment felt one of those mysterious, violent commotions the effects of which in the soul can be compared only to those produced by a stone when flung into a lake. The soft expansions which then are born and succeed each other, indefinable, multiplying, unending, agitate the heart as the rings in

the water widen in the distance from the centre where the stone fell.

Hippolyte returned to his studio, armed with the portrait. His easel was already prepared with a canvas, the palette was set with its colors, the brushes cleaned, the light arranged. Until his dinner-hour he worked at the picture with that eagerness which artists put into their caprices. In the evening he again went to Madame de Rouville's and remained from nine to eleven. Except for the different topics of conversation, this evening was very like its predecessor. The old men arrived at the same hour, the same game of piquet was played, the same phrases were repeated, and the sum lost by Adélaïde's old friend was the same as that lost the night before, — the only change being that Hippolyte, grown a little bolder, ventured to talk to Adélaïde.

Eight days passed in this way, during which the feelings of the painter and those of the young girl underwent those delicious, slow transformations which lead young souls to a perfect understanding. So, day by day, Adélaïde's glance as she welcomed her friend became more intimate, more trustful, gayer, and more frank; her voice, her manners grew more winning, more familiar. They both laughed and talked and communicated their ideas to each other, talking of themselves with the naïveté of two children, who in the course of one day can make acquaintance as if they had lived

together for three years. Schinner wished to learn piquet. Totally ignorant of the game he naturally made blunder after blunder; and, like the old gentleman, he lost nearly every game.

Without having yet told their love, the two lovers knew very well that they belonged to each other. Hippolyte delighted in exercising his power over his timid friend. Many a concession was made to him by Adélaïde, who, tender and devoted as she was, was easily the dupe of those pretended sulks which the least intelligent of lovers, and the most artless of maidens invent, and constantly employ, just as spoiled children take advantage of the power their mother's love has given them. For instance, all familiarity suddenly ceased between the old count and Adélaïde. The young girl understood the painter's gloom, and the thoughts hidden beneath the folds of his brow, from the harsh tone of the exclamations he made as the old man unceremoniously kissed her hands or throat. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Leseigneur soon began to hold her lover to a strict account of his slightest actions. She was so uneasy and so unhappy if he did not come; she knew so well how to scold him for his absence, that the painter renounced seeing his friends, and went no longer into society. Adélaïde showed a woman's jealousy on discovering that sometimes, after leaving Madame de Rouville's

at eleven o'clock, the painter made other visits and appeared in several of the gayest salons of Paris. That sort of life, she told him, was very bad for his health, and she asserted, with the profound conviction to which the tones, the gesture, the look of those we love give such immense power, that "a man who was obliged to give his time and the charms of his mind to several women at once, could never be the possessor of a really deep affection."

So the painter was soon led, as much by the despotism of his passion as by the exactions of a young girl, to live almost wholly in the little home where all things pleased him. No love was ever purer or more ardent. On either side the same faith, the same mind, the same delicacy, made their passion grow apace without the help of those sacrifices by which so many persons seek to prove their love. Between these lovers there existed so constant an interchange of tender feelings that they never knew who gave or who received the most. A natural, involuntary inclination made the union of their souls close indeed. The progress of this true feeling was so rapid that two months after the accident through which the painter obtained the happiness of knowing Adélaïde, their lives had become one and the same life. From early morning the young girl, hearing a step above her, said to herself, "He is there!" When Hippolyte returned home to

dine with his mother he never failed to stop on his way to greet his friends ; and in the evening he rushed to them, at the usual hour, with a lover's punctuality. Thus the most tyrannical of loving women, and the heart most ambitious of love could have found no fault with the young painter. Adélaïde did indeed taste an unalloyed and boundless happiness in finding realized to its fullest extent the ideal of which youth dreams.

The old gentleman now came less often ; the jealous Hippolyte took his place in the evening at the green table, and was equally unlucky at cards. But in the midst of his happiness, he thought of Madame de Rouville's disastrous position, — for he had seen more than one sign of her distress, — and little by little an importunate thought forced its way into his mind. Several times, as he returned home, he had said to himself, “ What ! twenty francs every evening ? ” The lover dared not admit a suspicion. He spent two months on the portrait, and when it was finished, varnished, and framed, he thought it one of his best works. Madame de Rouville had never mentioned it to him ; was it indifference or pride which kept her silent ? The painter could not explain it to himself. He plotted gayly with Adélaïde to hang the picture in its right place when Madame de Rouville had gone out for her usual walk in the Tuileries.

The day came, and Adélaïde went up, for the first time alone, to Hippolyte's studio, under pretence of seeing the portrait favorably in the light in which it was painted. She stood before it silent and motionless, in a delicious contemplation where all the feelings of womanhood were blended into one,—and that one, boundless admiration for the man she loved. When the painter, uneasy at her silence, leaned forward to look at her, she held out her hand to him unable to say a word; but two tears dropped from her eyes. Hippolyte took that hand and kissed it, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, both wishing to avow their love, neither of them daring to. As the painter held her hand within his own, an equal warmth, an equal throb, told them that their hearts were beating with the same pulse. Too deeply moved, the young girl gently left her lover's side, saying, with a guileless look, "You will make my mother very happy."

"Your mother — only?" he asked.

"Oh, as for me, I am too happy," she replied.

The painter bent his head and was silent, frightened at the violence of the feeling the tone of those words awakened in his heart. Both understood the danger of their position, and they went downstairs with the portrait and put it in its place. That night Hippolyte dined for the first time with the baroness, who kissed

him with tearful gratitude. In the evening the old *émigré*, a former comrade of the Baron de Rouville, made a special visit to his two friends to announce his appointment as a vice-admiral. His terrestrial navigations across Germany and Russia had been credited to him as naval campaigns. When he saw the portrait, he shook the painter by the hand, exclaiming: "Faith! though my old carcass is not worth preserving, I'd gladly give five hundred pistoles for anything as like me as that is like my friend Rouville."

Hearing the proposal, the baroness looked at her friend with a smile, and let the signs of a sudden gratitude appear on her face. Hippolyte fancied that the old admiral intended to pay the price of the two portraits in paying for his own; he was offended, and said stiffly, "Monsieur, if I were a portrait-painter I should not have painted that one."

The admiral bit his lips and began to play. The painter sat by Adélaïde, who proposed him six kings which he accepted. While playing, he noticed in Madame de Rouville a degree of eagerness for the game which surprised him. The old lady had never before manifested such anxiety to win, or looked with such pleasure at the admiral's gold coins. During that evening suspicions once more came up in Hippolyte's mind to trouble his happiness and give him a certain sense of distrust. Did Madame de Rouville live by

cards? Was she playing at that moment to pay some debt, or was she driven to it by some necessity? Perhaps her rent was due. That old man seemed too worldly-wise to let her win his money for nothing. What interest brought him to that poor house, — he, a rich man? Why, though formerly so familiar with Adélaïde, had he lately renounced all familiarities, — his right perhaps? These involuntary thoughts prompted Schinner to examine the old man and the baroness, whose glances of intelligence and the oblique looks they cast on Adélaïde and himself displeased him greatly.

“Can it be that they deceive me?”

To Hippolyte the thought was horrible, withering; and he believed it just so far as to let it torture him. He resolved to remain after the departure of the two old men, so as to confirm his suspicions or get rid of them. He drew out his purse at the end of the game, intending to pay Adélaïde, but his mind was so filled with these poignant thoughts that he laid it on the table and fell into a revery which lasted several minutes. Then, ashamed of his silence, he rose, answered some commonplace inquiry of Madame de Rouville's, going close up to her to scrutinize that aged face. He left the salon a prey to dreadful uncertainties. After going down a few stairs, he recollected his purse and went back to get it. “I left my purse,” he said to Adélaïde.

“No,” she answered, coloring.

“ I thought I left it there,” he said, pointing to the card-table.

Ashamed for both mother and daughter at not finding it, he stood looking at them with a bewildered air which made them both laugh ; then he turned pale, and felt in his waistcoat pockets, stammering, “ I am mistaken, I must have it somewhere.”

At one end of the purse were fifteen louis, at the other some small change. The robbery was so flagrant, so impudently denied; that Hippolyte had no doubt as to the character of his neighbors. He stood still on the staircase, for he could hardly go down ; his legs trembled, his head swam, he perspired, his teeth chattered in a cold chill, and he was literally unable to walk in the grasp of that cruel convulsion caused by the overthrow of all his hopes. At that moment, a crowd of apparently trifling circumstances came back into his mind, all corroborating his dreadful suspicions ; taken together with the certainty of this last act, they opened his eyes to the character and the life of the two women. Had they waited till the portrait was done to steal his purse? Thus combined with profit, the theft seemed more odious than at first. The painter remembered, with anguish, that for the last two or three evenings Adélaïde had examined, with what seemed girlish curiosity, the netting of the worn silk, probably to ascertain the sum contained in the purse, — making jests that

seemed innocent, but were no doubt intended to cover the fact that she was watching for the time when the purse should be well filled.

“The old admiral must have good reasons for not marrying her, and the baroness intends that I —”

He stopped, and did not continue the thought, for it was checked by one more just.

“If,” thought he, “the baroness wished me to marry her daughter they would not have robbed me.”

Then, unable to renounce his illusions, or to abandon a love so deeply rooted in his being, he tried to find some explanation. “My purse must have fallen on the ground; perhaps it was under my chair; perhaps I have it, I am so absent-minded!” He felt in all his pockets with rapid motions, — but no, that cursed purse was not in them. His cruel memory recalled every particular of the fatal facts; he distinctly saw the purse lying on the table. Unable to doubt the theft, he now excused Adélaïde, saying to himself that no one ought to judge the poor and unfortunate too hastily. No doubt there was some secret in this apparently degrading action. He would not allow himself to believe that that proud, noble face was a lie. Nevertheless, that miserable apartment had now lost all those poesies of love which once embellished it; he saw it as it was, dirty and faded; it seemed the outward likeness of an inward life without nobleness, unoccupied and vicious.

Are not our feelings written, so to speak, on the things about us?

The next morning he rose without having slept. The anguish of the heart, that serious moral malady, had made great strides into his being. To lose an imagined happiness, to renounce an expected future, is far more bitter suffering than that caused by the ruin of an experienced joy, however great that joy may have been. Is not hope better than memory? The meditations into which our souls suddenly fall are then like a shoreless sea, on whose bosom we may float for a moment, though nothing can save our love from sinking and perishing. It is a dreadful death. Are not our feelings the most vivid and glorious part of our lives? From such partial death as this come those great ravages seen in certain organizations that are both delicate and strong, when assailed by disillusion or by the balking of hopes and passions. Thus it was with the young painter. He went out early in the morning and walked about in the cool shade of the Tuileries, absorbed in thought, and taking no notice of any one. There, by chance, one of his young friends met him, a college and atelier comrade, with whom he had lived as with a brother.

“Why, Hippolyte, what’s the matter?” said François Souchet, a young sculptor who had just obtained the *grand prix* and was soon going to Italy.

“I am very unhappy,” replied Hippolyte, gravely.

“Nothing but a love-affair can make you so. Wealth, fame, consideration, — you have everything else!”

Little by little, the confidences began, and finally the painter acknowledged his love. When he spoke of the rue de Suresnes, and of a young girl living on the fourth story, “Halt!” cried Souchet, gayly, “that’s a little girl I go to see every morning at the Assumption; I’m courting her. Why, my dear fellow, we all know her. Her mother is a baroness. Do you believe in baronesses who live on a fourth floor? Brrr! Well, well! you belong to the age of gold. The rest of us meet that old mother every day in the Tuileries. That face of hers, and the way she carries herself tells all. Come now, did you never guess what she is, from the way she carries her bag?”

The two friends walked about for some time, and several young men who knew Schinner and Souchet joined them. The painter’s love-affair was related by the sculptor, who supposed it of little importance.

Many were the outcries, the laughs, the jests, innocent enough, but full of the familiar gayety of artists, and horribly painful to Hippolyte. A certain chastity of soul made him suffer at the sight of his heart’s secret lightly tossed about, his passion torn to shreds, the young girl, whose life had seemed to him so modest, judged, truly or falsely, with such careless indifference.

“But, my dear fellow, have you never seen the baroness’s shawl?” said Souchet.

“Don’t you ever follow the little one when she goes to the Assumption?” said Joseph Bridau, a young art-student in Gros’s atelier.

“Ha! the mother has, among her other virtues, a gray dress which I regard as a type,” said Bixiou, the caricaturist.

“Listen, Hippolyte;” said the sculptor, “come here at four o’clock, and analyze the demeanor of the mother and daughter. If, after that, you have any doubts, I give you up, — nothing can ever be made of you; you’ll be capable of marrying your porter’s daughter.”

The painter parted from his friends a victim to a contradiction of feelings. Adélaïde and her mother seemed to him above such accusations, and at the bottom of his heart he felt remorse for having ever doubted the purity of that young girl, so beautiful and so simple. He went to his studio, he passed the door of the room where she was sitting, and he felt within his soul the anguish that no man ever misunderstands. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately that, in spite of the robbery of his purse, he adored her still. His love was like that of the Chevalier des Grieux, adoring and purifying his mistress in his thoughts as she sat in the cart on her way to the prison for lost women.

“Why should not my love make her the purest of beings? Shall I abandon her to sin and vice, and stretch no friendly hand to her?” That mission pleased him. Love makes profit out of all. Nothing attracts a young man so much as the thought of playing the part of a good genius to a woman. There is something truly chivalrous in such an enterprise which commends itself to lofty souls. Is it not the deepest devotion under the highest form, and the most gracious form? What grandeur in knowing that we love enough to love still where the love of others would be a dead thing!

Hippolyte sat down in his studio, and contemplated his picture without touching it. Night overtook him in that attitude. Wakened from his reverie by the darkness, he went downstairs, met the old admiral on the stairway, gave him a gloomy glance and a bow, and fled away. He had meant to go to his neighbors, but the sight of Adélaïde’s protector froze his heart and overcame his resolution. He asked himself, for the hundredth time, what interest it could be that brought that old beau, a man worth eighty-thousand francs a year, to that fourth story where he lost forty francs a night; that interest, he fancied, alas, he knew.

The next day and the following days Hippolyte spent on his work, trying to fight his passion by flinging himself into the rush of ideas and the fire of conception. He succeeded only partially. Study comforted him,

but it did not stifle the memory of those dear hours passed with Adélaïde. One evening, leaving his studio, he found the door of the apartments of the two ladies half-open. Some one was standing in the recess of the window. The position of the door and the stairs was such that Hippolyte could not pass without seeing Adélaïde. He bowed coldly, with a glance of indifference; then, judging of her sufferings by his own, an inward tremor overcame him, thinking of the bitterness his cold glance might have carried to a loving heart. What! end the sweetest joys that ever filled two sacred hearts, with the scorn of an eight days' absence, with a contempt too deep for words? — horrible conclusion! Perhaps that purse was found! he had never inquired; perhaps Adélaïde had expected him, in vain, every evening! This thought, so simple, so natural, filled the lover with fresh remorse; he asked himself if the proofs of attachment the young girl had given him, if those delightful conversations bearing the impress of love and of a mind which charmed him did not deserve at least an inquiry, — whether indeed they were not a pledge of justification. Ashamed of having resisted the longings of his heart for one whole week, thinking himself almost criminal in the struggle, he went that same evening to Madame de Rouville's. All his suspicions, all his thoughts of evil vanished at the sight of the young girl, now pale and thin.

“ Good God! what is the matter?” he said to her, after bowing to Madame de Rouville.

Adélaïde made no answer, but she gave him a sad, discouraged look which went to his heart.

“ You look as if you had been working too hard,” said the old lady. “ You are changed. I fear we have been the cause of your seclusion. That portrait must have delayed other work more important for your reputation.”

Hippolyte was only too happy to find so good an excuse for his absence. “ Yes,” he said, “ I have been very busy — but I have suffered — ”

At these words Adélaïde raised her head; her eyes no longer reproached him.

“ You have, then, thought us indifferent to what makes you happy or unhappy?” said the old lady.

“ I have done wrong,” he said. “ And yet there are sufferings which we can tell to no one, no matter who it is, even to a heart that may have known us long.”

“ The sincerity and the strength of friendship ought not to be measured by time. I have seen old friends who could not shed a tear for each other’s misfortune,” said the baroness, nodding her head.

“ But tell me, what is the matter?” asked Hippolyte of the poor girl.

“ Oh, nothing,” said the baroness; “ Adélaïde insisted on sitting up two or three nights to finish a piece

of work; she would not listen to me when I told her that a day more or less could make no difference — ”

Hippolyte was not listening. Seeing those two faces, so calm, so noble, he blushed for his suspicions and attributed the loss of the purse to some mysterious accident. That evening was delightful to him, and perhaps to her. There are secrets that young souls understand so well. Adélaïde divined her lover's thoughts. Without intending to reveal his wrongdoing, Hippolyte tacitly admitted it; he returned to his mistress more loving, more affectionate than ever, as if to buy a silent pardon. Adélaïde now tasted joys so sweet, so perfect, that the pangs which had cruelly bruised her spirit seemed but a slight penalty to pay for them. And yet that absolute accord between their hearts, that comprehension which was full of magic, was clouded suddenly by a little speech of Madame de Rouville's. “Let us get ready for our game,” she said. “My old Kergarouët insists upon it.”

That speech roused all the poor painter's fears; he blushed as he looked at Adélaïde's mother. Yet he could see on that face no other expression than one of a true kind-heartedness without insincerity; no latent thought destroyed its charm; in its shrewdness there was no perfidy; the gentle satire it expressed seemed tender, and no remorse marred its placidity. So he sat down at the card-table. Adélaïde shared his game,

pretending that he did not know piquet and needed an adviser. While they played, signs of an understanding passed between the mother and daughter which again made Hippolyte anxious, — all the more because, for once, he was winning. At last, however, a lucky throw put the lovers in Madame de Rouville's debt. Hippolyte withdrew his hands from the table to search for money in his pockets, and suddenly saw lying before him a purse which Adélaïde had slipped there without his noticing her; the poor child held his own purse in her hand, and was hiding her confusion by pretending to look for money to pay her mother. The blood rushed so violently to Hippolyte's heart that he almost lost consciousness. The new purse substituted for the old one had the fifteen louis in it, and was worked with gold beads. The rings, the tassels, all proved the good taste of the maker, who had no doubt spent her little savings on those ornaments of her pretty work. It was impossible to say with greater delicacy that the painter's gift could be acknowledged only by a pledge of tenderness.

When Hippolyte, overcome with happiness, turned his eyes on Adélaïde and her mother he saw them trembling with pleasure, happy in the success of their little fraud. He felt himself small, petty, contemptible; he longed to punish himself, to rend his heart. Tears came into his eyes, and he sprang up with an irresistible

impulse, took Adélaïde in his arms, pressed her to his heart, snatched a kiss, and cried, with the honest good-faith of an artist, looking straight at the baroness:—

“ I ask you to give her to me for my wife ! ”

Adélaïde's eyes as she looked at him were half-angry, and Madame de Rouville, somewhat astonished, was seeking a reply when the scene was interrupted by a ring at the bell. The vice-admiral appeared, followed by Madame Schinner. After guessing the cause of her son's grief, which he had vainly tried to hide from her, Hippolyte's mother had made inquiries among her friends as to Adélaïde. Alarmed by the calumnies which assailed the young girl, unknown to the old admiral, the Comte de Kergarouët, she went to the latter and told him what she had heard. In his fury he wanted, he said, “ to cut the ears of those rascals.” Excited by his wrath he told Madame Schinner the secret of his visits and his intentional losses at cards, that being the only way in which the baroness's pride gave him a chance to succor the widow of his old friend.

When Madame Schinner had paid her respects to Madame de Rouville, the latter looked at the Comte de Kergarouët, the Chevalier du Halga (the former friend of the late Comtesse de Kergarouët), then at Hippolyte and Adélaïde, and said, with the delightful manners of the heart, “ We seem, I think, to be a family party.”

LA GRENADIÈRE.

TO CAROLINE.

TO THE POESY OF HIS JOURNEY.

A Grateful Traveller.

LA GRENADIÈRE is a little habitation on the right bank of the Loire, sloping towards it and about a mile from the bridge of Tours. Just here the river, broad as a lake, is strewn with green islets, and margined by rocky shores, on which are numerous country-houses, all built of white stone and surrounded by vineyards and gardens, in which the finest fruits in the world ripen under a sunny exposure. Industriously terraced by generation after generation, the hollows of the rock reflect the rays of the sun, and the artificial temperature thus produced allows the cultivation of the products of hot climates in the open ground.

From one of the least sunken of these hollows which cut into the hillside, rises the sharp steeple of Saint-Cyr, a little village to which the scattered houses nominally belong. A little beyond, the Choisille falls into

the Loire, through a rich valley which runs up among the hills. *La Grenadière* [The Pomegranate], standing half-way up the rocky shore, about three hundred feet from the church, is one of those venerable homesteads some two or three hundred years old, which are seen in every lovely situation in Touraine. A cleft in the rock has facilitated the making of a stairway, which descends by easy steps to the "levée," — the local name given to the dike built at the base of the slope to keep the Loire to its bed, and along which runs the mail road from Paris to Nantes.

At the top of this flight of steps is a gate opening on a narrow, stony road, cut between two terraces which resemble fortifications, covered with vines and palings to prevent the rolling down of the earth. This pathway, starting from the foot of the upper terrace, and nearly hidden by the trees that crown it, leads to the house by a steep pitch, giving a view of the river which enlarges at every step. This sunken path ends at a second gate, gothic in character, arched, and bearing a few simple ornaments, which is now in ruins and overgrown with gilli-flowers, ivy, mosses, and pellitory. These ineradicable plants decorate the walls of all the terraces, hanging from the clefts of the stone courses and designating each season by a garland of its own flowers.

Beyond this mouldy gate a little garden, wrested

from the rock by another terrace, with an old and blackened balustrade which overlooks the rest, presents a lawn adorned by a few trees, and a multitude of roses and other flowering plants. Opposite to the gate, at the other end of the terrace, is a wooden pavilion resting against a neighboring wall, the posts of which are hidden under jasmine, honeysuckle, vines, and clematis. In the middle of the garden stands the house, beyond a vaulted portico covered with vines, on which is the gate of a huge cellar hollowed in the rock. The house is surrounded with vine-clad arbors, and pomegranate-trees — which give their name to the place, — are growing in the open ground. The façade has two large windows separated by a very countrified front-door, and three attic windows, placed very high up in the roof relatively to the low height of the ground floor. This roof has two gables and is covered with slate. The walls of the main building are painted yellow, and the door, the shutters on the lower floor, and the blinds on the roof are green.

When you enter the house, you find a little hall-way with a winding staircase, the grade of which changes at every turn; the wood is rotten, and the balusters, turning like a screw, are discolored by long usage. To the right of the door is a vast dining-room with antique panelling, floored in white tiles, manufactured at Château-Regnault; on the left is the salon, a room

of the same size, but without panels, hung with a gold-colored paper with green bordering. Neither of the two rooms has a plastered ceiling. The joists are of walnut, and the spaces are filled in with a natural white clay mixed with hair. On the first floor are two large chambers with white-washed walls; the stone chimney-pieces in these rooms are less richly carved than those in the rooms below. All the windows face south. To the north there is only a door opening behind the staircase on a vineyard.

On the left of the house, a building with a wooden front backs against the wall; the wood being protected from the sun and rain by slates which lie in long blue lines, upright and transversal, upon the walls. The kitchen, consigned as it were to this cottage, communicates with the house, but it has an entrance of its own raised from the ground by a few steps, near to which is a deep well covered with a rustic pump; its sides overgrown with water-plants and tall grass and juniper. This recent construction proves that *La Grenadière* was originally a mere *vendangeoir*, where the owners, living in the city (from which it is separated only by the broad bed of the Loire), came only to attend to their vintages, or to bring parties of pleasure. On such occasions they sent provisions for the day, and slept there at night only when the grapes were being gathered.

But the English have fallen like a swarm of grass-hoppers upon Touraine, and La Grenadière was furnished with a kitchen that they might hire it. Fortunately this modern appendage is concealed by the first lindens planted along a path running down a ravine behind the orchard. The vineyard, of about two acres, rises above the house, and overlooks it on a slope so steep that it is very difficult to climb. Between the back of the house and this hill, green with trailing shoots, is a narrow space of not more than five feet, always cold and damp, a sort of ditch full of rampant vegetation, and filled in rainy weather with the drainage from the vineyard, used to enrich the soil of the flower-beds of the terrace with the balustrade.

The little house of the vine-dresser backs against the left gable; it has a thatched roof and makes a sort of pendant to the kitchen. The whole property is enclosed by walls and palings; the orchard is planted with fruit-trees of all kinds; in short, not an inch of the precious soil is lost to cultivation. If man neglects an arid corner of this rock, Nature flings into it a fig-tree perhaps, or wild-flowers, or a few strawberry-vines sheltered among the stones.

Nowhere in the world can you find a home so modest, yet so grand, so rich in products, in fragrance, and in outlook. It is in the heart of Touraine, a little

Touraine in itself, where all the flowers, all the fruits, all the beauties of that region are fully represented. There are the grapes of every clime, the figs, the peaches, the pears of every species, melons growing wild in the open ground, as well as liquorice, the yellow broom of Spain, the oleanders of Italy, the jasmine of the Azores. The Loire flows at your feet. You look down upon it from a terrace raised thirty fathom above its capricious waters. You inhale its breezes coming fresh from the sea and perfumed on their way by the flowers along its shores. A wandering cloud, which changes at every instant its color and its form as it moves in space beneath the cloudless blue of heaven, gives a thousand varied aspects to each detail of that glorious scenery which meets the eye wherever turned. From there, you may see the river shores from Amboise, the fertile plain where rises Tours, its suburbs, its manufactories, and Le Plessis ; also a portion of the left bank, from Vouvray to Saint-Symphorien, describing a half-circle of smiling vineyards. The view here is limited only by the rich slopes of Cher, a blue horizon broken by parks and villas. To the west the soul is lost in contemplation of the broad sheet of waters which bears upon its bosom, at all hours, vessels with white sails filled with the winds which ever sweep its vast basin.

A prince might make La Grenadière his villa ; a poet would make it his home ; lovers would count it

their sweetest refuge ; a worthy burgher of Tours might live there, — the spot has poems for all imaginations, for the humblest, for the coldest, as for the highest and the most fervent ; no one ever stayed there without breathing an atmosphere of happiness, without comprehending a tranquil life devoid of ambition, relieved of care. Revery is in the air, in the murmuring flow of waters ; the sands speak, they are sad or gay, golden or sullied ; all is in motion around the possessor of this spot, motionless amid its ever-blooming flowers and its toothsome fruits. An Englishman gives a thousand francs merely to live six months in that humble dwelling, and he binds himself to gather no products ; if he wants the fruits, he pays a double rent ; if the wine tempts him, he doubles it again. What, then, is La Grenadière worth, with that flight of steps, the sunken path, the triple terrace, the two acres of vineyard, those balustrades, those roses, the portico, its pump, the wealth of tangled clematis and the cosmopolitan trees ? Offer no price. La Grenadière cannot be bought. Sold once in 1690 for forty thousand francs, and left with bitter regret, as the Arab of the desert abandons a favorite horse, it still remains in the same family, of which it is the pride, the patrimonial jewel, the Regent diamond. 'To see is not to have, saith the poet. From these terraces you see three valleys of Touraine and the cathedral suspended in ether like a delicate flagree.

Can you pay for such treasures? Could you buy the health you will recover beneath those lindens?

In the spring of one of the finest years of the Restoration, a lady, accompanied by a maid and two children, came to Tours in search of a house. She saw *La Grenadière* and hired it. Perhaps the distance that separated it from the town decided her to take it. The salon was her bed-chamber; she put each child in one of the rooms on the upper floor, and the maid slept in a little chamber above the kitchen. The dining-room became the living-room of the little family. The lady furnished the house very simply, but with taste; there was nothing useless and nothing that conveyed a sense of luxury. The furniture was of walnut, without ornament. The neatness, and the harmony of the interior with the exterior made the charm of the house.

It was difficult to know whether Madame Williamson (that was the name the lady gave) belonged to the rich bourgeoisie, or to the upper nobility, or to certain equivocal classes of the feminine species. Her simplicity of life gave grounds for contradictory suppositions, though her manners seemed to confirm the most favorable. It was, therefore, not long after her arrival at Saint-Cyr that her reserved conduct excited the curiosity of idle persons, who had the provincial habit of remarking upon everything that promised to enliven the narrow sphere in which they lived.

Madame Williamson was rather tall, slight and thin, but delicately made. She had pretty feet, more remarkable for the grace with which they were joined to the ankles than for their narrowness, — a vulgar merit. Her hands were handsome when gloved. A certain redness, that seemed movable and rather dark in tone, disfigured her white skin, which was naturally fair and rosy. Premature wrinkles had aged a brow that was fine in shape and crowned with beautiful auburn hair, always braided in two strands and wound around the head, — a maidenly fashion which became her melancholy face. Her black eyes, sunken in dark circles and full of feverish ardor, assumed a calmness that seemed deceptive; for at times, if she forgot the expression she imposed upon them, they revealed some secret anguish. Her oval face was rather long, but perhaps in other days happiness and health may have rounded its outlines. A deceptive smile, full of gentle sadness, was ever on her pallid lips, but the eyes grew animated, and the smile expressed the delights of maternal love when the two children, by whom she was always accompanied, looked at her and asked those idle and endless questions which have their meaning to a mother's heart.

Her walk was slow and dignified. She wore but one style of dress, with a constancy that showed a deliberate intention to take no further interest in personal adornment, and to forget the world, by which, no doubt, she

wished to be forgot. Her gown was black and very long, fastened round the waist with a watered ribbon, and over it, in guise of a shawl, was a cambric kerchief with a broad hem, the ends passed negligently through her belt. Her shoes and her black silk stockings betrayed the elegance of her former life, and completed the conventional mourning that she always wore. Her bonnet, always of the same English shape, was gray in color and covered with a black veil.

She seemed very weak and ill. The only walk she took was from La Grenadière to the bridge of Tours, where, on a calm evening she would take the two children to breathe the cool air from the river and admire the effects of the setting sun upon a landscape as vast as that of the Bay of Naples or the Lake of Geneva. During the time she lived at La Grenadière she went but twice to Tours, — once to ask the principal of the college to direct her to the best masters of Latin, mathematics, and drawing; and next to arrange with the persons thus designated the price of their instructions, and the hours at which her sons could take their lessons. But it sufficed to show herself once or twice a week on the bridge in the evening, to rouse the interest of nearly all the inhabitants of the town, who made it their habitual promenade.

And yet, in spite of the harmless spying which the dreary leisure and uneasy curiosity of provincial towns

forces upon their leading societies, no real information as to the unknown lady, her rank, her fortune, or even her present condition, was obtained. The owner of La Grenadière did, however, tell some of his friends the name (and it was no doubt a true one) under which she had taken the lease. She gave it as "Augusta Williamson, Countess of Brandon." The name was doubtless that of her husband. The later events of her history confirmed this statement; but it was never made public beyond the little world of merchants frequented by the owner.

So Madame Williamson continued a mystery to the leading society of Tours, and all that she allowed them to discover was her simple manners, delightfully natural, her personal distinction, and the tones of an angelic voice. The complete solitude in which she lived, her melancholy, and her beauty so cruelly obscured and even faded, charmed the minds of a few young men, who fell in love with her. But the more sincere they were, the less bold they became; moreover, she was so imposing that it was difficult to address her. When one or two, more courageous than the rest, wrote to her, Madame Williamson put their letters unopened into the fire. She seemed to have come to this enchanting retreat to abandon herself wholly to the pleasure of living there. The three masters who were admitted to La Grenadière spoke with respectful

admiration of the close and cloudless union which bound the children and the mother in one.

The children also excited a great deal of interest, and no mother ever looked at them without envy. Both resembled Madame Williamson, who was really their mother. Each had a bright, transparent complexion and high color, clear, limpid eyes, long eyelashes, and the purity of outline which gives such brilliancy to the beauties of childhood. The eldest, named Louis-Gaston, had black hair, and a brave, intrepid eye. Everything about him denoted robust health, just as his broad, high forehead, intelligently rounded, foretold an energetic manhood. He was brisk and agile in his movements, a strapping lad, with nothing assuming about him, not easily surprised, and seeming to reflect on all he saw. His brother, named Marie-Gaston, was very fair, though a few locks of his hair were beginning to show the auburn color of his mother's. He had also the slender figure, the delicate features, and the winning grace so attractive in Madame Williamson. He seemed sickly, his gray eyes had a gentle look, his cheeks were pale; there was a good deal of the woman about him. His mother still kept him to embroidered collars, long curls, and those pretty jackets with frogged fastenings which are worn with so pleasing an effect, and which betray a feminine love of dress.

This dainty attire contrasted with the plain jacket of the elder brother, over which the plain linen collar of his shirt was turned. The trousers, boots, and color of the clothes were the same in the two brothers, and proclaimed their relationship as much as did their physical likeness. Seeing them together, it was impossible not to be struck with the care which Louis took of Marie. The look he gave him was paternal; and Marie, in spite of his childlike heedlessness, seemed full of gratitude to his brother. These two little flowers, scarcely apart on the same twig, were shaken by the same breezes and warmed by the same sun-ray; but while one was vigorous and rosy, the other was half-etiolated. A word, a look, an inflection of the voice sufficed to catch their attention, to make them turn their heads and listen, hear an order, a request, a suggestion, and obey. Madame Williamson made them understand her wishes and her will as though there were but one thought among them.

When they were running or playing before her in their walks, gathering a flower, examining an insect, her eyes rested upon them with such deep and tender emotion that the most indifferent observers were touched; sometimes they even stopped to watch the smiling children, and saluted the mother with a friendly glance. Who, indeed, would not have admired the exquisite nicety of their garments, the

pretty tones of their voices, the grace of their movements, their happy faces, and that instinctive nobility which told of careful training from their cradles? Those children seemed never to have wept or screamed. The mother had an almost electric sense of their wishes and their pains, and she calmed them or forestalled them ceaselessly. She seemed to dread a plaint from her children more than eternal condemnation for herself. All things in and about them were to her honor; and the picture of their triple life, seeming one and the same life, gave birth to vague, alluring visions of the joys we dream of tasting in a better world.

The domestic life of these harmonious beings was in keeping with the ideas their outward appearance conveyed; it was orderly, regular, and simple, as became a home where children were educated. The two boys rose early, by daybreak, and said a short prayer, taught them in infancy, — true words said for seven years on their mother's bed, begun and ended by two kisses. Then the brothers, trained to that minute care of the person so essential to health of body and purity of soul, dressed themselves as carefully as a pretty woman might have done. They neglected nothing, so fearful were they of a word of blame, however tenderly their mother might utter it, — as, for instance, when she said at breakfast one morning, “My dear angels, how did you get your nails so black already?”

After dressing, the pair would go down into the garden and shake off the heaviness of the night in its dewy freshness, while waiting for the servant to put in order the dining-room, where they studied their lessons till their mother woke. But from time to time they peeped and listened to find out if she were awake, though forbidden to enter the room before a given hour; and this daily irruption, made in defiance of a compact, was a delightful moment both to them and to their mother. Marie would jump upon the bed and throw his arms about his idol, while Louis, kneeling beside the pillow, held her hand. Then followed tender inquiries like those of a lover, angelic laughter, caresses that were passionate and pure, eloquent silence, words half-uttered, childish stories interrupted by kisses, begun again, always listened to, seldom finished.

“Have you studied your lessons?” the mother would say, in a gentle voice, ready to pity idleness as a misfortune, but readier still with a tearful glance for the one who could say he had done his best. She knew those children desired only to satisfy her; they knew she lived only for them, — that she led them by the wisdom of love and gave them all her thoughts and all her time. A marvellous instinct, which is neither reason nor egotism, which we may perhaps call sentiment in its first sincerity, teaches children whether they are or are not, the object of exclusive care, and whether

others find happiness in caring for them. Do you truly love them? then the dear creatures, all frankness and all justice, are delightfully grateful. They love passionately and jealously; they possess the sweetest delicacy, they can find the tenderest words; they confide to you, they trust to you in all things. Perhaps there are no bad children without bad mothers, for the affection children feel is always in reply to that they receive, to the first caress given to them, to the first words they have heard, to the first looks from which they have sought for love and life. At that period all to them is attraction or repulsion. God has put children in the womb of the mother to teach her that she must bear them long.

And yet we find some mothers cruelly misunderstood by their children; we see sublime maternal tenderness constantly wounded by horrible ingratitude and neglect, — showing how difficult it is to lay down absolute principles in matters of feeling.

In the heart of this mother and in those of her sons no one of the thousand ties which could attach them to one another was missing. Alone on earth they lived a united life and understood each other. When Madame Williamson was silent the boys said nothing, respectful even to the thoughts they could not share. But the elder, gifted with a mind that was already strong, was never satisfied with his mother's assurances that her

health was good ; he studied her face with silent uneasiness, unaware of danger, yet foreboding it when he noticed the purple tints round the sunken eyes and saw that the hollows deepened and the red patches on the face grew more inflamed. Full of true perception, when he thought that his brother's games were beginning to tire her he would say, " Come, Marie, let's go and breakfast ; I'm hungry."

But when he reached the door he would turn back to catch the expression on his mother's face, which always wore a smile for him, though sometimes tears would start from her eyes as a gesture of her boy revealed his exquisite feeling, his precocious comprehension of her sorrow.

The mother was always present at the lessons which took place from ten to three o'clock, interrupted at midday by the second breakfast, generally taken in the garden pavilion. After this meal came a play-hour, when the happy mother, the unhappy woman, lay on a sofa in the pavilion, whence she could see that sweet Touraine, incessantly changing, ceaselessly rejuvenated by the varying accidents of light and sky and season.

The boys ran about the place, climbing the terraces, chasing the lizards, themselves as agile ; they watched the seeds, and studied the insects and the flowers, running constantly to their mother with questions. Children need no playthings in the country ; the things about them are amusement and occupation enough.

During the lessons Madame Williamson sat in the room with her work; she was silent and never looked at either masters or pupils, but she listened attentively to catch the meaning of the words and know if Louis were understanding them, and whether his mind were acquiring force. If he interrupted his master with a question, that was surely a sign of progress; then the mother's eyes would brighten, she smiled, and gave the boy a look full of hope. She exacted very little of Marie; all her anxiety was for the elder, to whom she showed a sort of respect, employing her womanly and motherly tact to lift his soul and give him a high sense of what he should become. Behind this course was a hidden purpose which the child was one day to comprehend — and he did comprehend it. After each lesson she inquired carefully of the masters what they thought of Louis's progress. She was so kindly and so winning that the teachers told her the truth and showed her how to make Louis work in directions where they thought him wanting.

Such was their life, uniform but full, — a life where work and play, cheerfully mingled, left no opening for ennui. Discouragement or anger was impossible, the mother's boundless love made all things easy. She had taught her sons discretion by refusing nothing to them; courage, by awarding them just praise; resignation, by showing them its necessity under all cir-

cumstances. She developed and strengthened the angelic nature within them with the care of a guardian angel. Sometimes a few tears would moisten her eyes, when, watching them at play, the thought came that they had never caused her a moment's grief. She spent delightful hours lying on her rural couch, enjoying the fine weather, the broad sheet of water, the picturesque country, the voices of her children, their merry laughs rippling into fresh laughter, and their little disputes, which only evidenced their union, and Louis's fatherly care of Marie, and the love of both for her.

They all spoke French and English equally well, and the mother used both languages in conversing with her boys. She ruled them by kindness, — hiding nothing, but explaining all. She allowed no false idea to gain a lodgment in their minds, and no mistaken principle to enter their hearts. When Louis wished to read she gave him books that were interesting and yet sound, true to the facts of life, — lives of famous sailors, biographies of great men, illustrious captains; finding in such books the occasions to explain to him the world and life, to show him the means by which obscure persons who had greatness within their souls, coming from the lower walks of life and without friends, had succeeded in rising to noble destinies.

Such lessons she gave him in the evening, when

Marie, tired with his play, was sleeping on her knees in the cool silence of a beauteous night, when the Loire reflected the heavens. But they increased her secret sadness, and ended often in leaving her exhausted, thoughtful, and with her eyes full of tears.

“Mother, why do you cry?” asked Louis, one rich June evening, just as the half-tints of a softly-lighted night were succeeding a warm day.

“My son,” she answered, winding her arm around the neck of the boy, whose concealed emotion touched her deeply, “because the hard lot of Jameray Duval, who reached distinction without help, is the fate I have brought on you and your brother. Soon, my dear child, you will be alone in the world, with no one to lean on, no protector. I am forced to leave you, still mere children; and yet I think that you, my Louis, know enough, and are strong enough to be a guide to Marie. I love you too well not to suffer from such thoughts. God grant you may not some day curse me.”

“Why should I curse you, mother?”

“Some day, my child,” she answered, kissing his brow, “you will realize that I have done you wrong. I abandon you, here, without means, without fortune, without” — she hesitated — “without a father,” she added.

Tears choked her voice; she gently pushed her son away from her, and he, understanding by a sort of

intuition that she wished to be alone, carried the sleeping Marie away with him. An hour later, when his brother was in bed, Louis returned with cautious steps to the pavilion where his mother was still lying. He heard her call, in a voice that sounded sweetly on his ear, —

“Louis, come!”

The boy flung himself into his mother’s arms, and they kissed each other almost convulsively.

“Dearest,” he said, for he often gave her that name, finding even that too feeble to express his tenderness, “dearest, why do you fear that you will die?”

“I am very ill, my poor loved angel,” she said. “I grow weaker daily; my disease is incurable, and I know it.”

“What disease is it?”

“I must forget; and you, you must never know the cause of my death.”

The child was silent for a moment, glancing furtively at his mother whose eyes were raised to heaven, watching the clouds. Moment of tender melancholy! Louis did not believe in his mother’s approaching death, but he felt her griefs without understanding them. He respected her long revery. Were he less a child he might have read upon that sacred face thoughts of repentance mingled with happy memories, — the whole of a woman’s life; a careless girlhood, a cold marriage,

a terrible passion, flowers born of a tempest, hurled by the lightning to the depths of that abyss from which there is no return.

“My precious mother,” said Louis at last, “why do you hide your sufferings from me?”

“My son,” she answered, “we should always hide our troubles from the eyes of strangers, and show to them a smiling face; we should never speak to others of ourselves, but think only of them. Those things, if we practise them in our homes, will make others happy. Some day you, too, will suffer deeply. Then remember your poor mother, who died before your eyes hiding her griefs, and smiling for you; it will give you courage to bear the woes of life.”

Smothering her feelings, she tried to show her boy the mechanism of existence, the just value, the groundwork, and the stability of wealth; the power of social relations; the honorable means of amassing money for the wants of life; and the necessity of education. Then she revealed to him one cause of her sadness and her tears, and told him that on the morrow of her death he and Marie would be destitute, possessing only a trifling sum of money, and with no other protector than God.

“What haste I must make to learn!” cried the boy, glancing at his mother, with a deep, yet plaintive look.

“Ah, I am happy!” she exclaimed, covering her son with tears and kisses. “He has understood me!

Louis," she added, "you will be your brother's guardian, will you not? you promise me? You are no longer a child."

"Yes," he answered, "I promise; but you will not die yet? Say you will not!"

"Poor children!" she said, "my love for you detains me; and this country is so beautiful, the air is so reviving, perhaps —"

"I shall love Touraine more than ever now," said the lad, with emotion.

From that day Madame Williamson, foreseeing her end, talked to her eldest son of his future lot. Louis, who had now completed his fourteenth year, became more thoughtful, applied himself better, and cared less for play. Whether it were that he persuaded Marie to read, instead of caring only for games of play, it is certain that the two boys made much less noise in the sunken paths and in the terraces and gardens of *La Grenadière*. They conformed their life to the sad condition of their mother, whose face grew paler day by day, with yellow tints, the lines deepening night after night.

In the month of August, six months after the arrival of the little family, all was changed at *La Grenadière*. The pretty house, once so gay, so lively, had grown sad and silent, and its occupants seldom left the premises. Madame Williamson had scarcely strength to walk to the bridge. Louis, whose imagination had

suddenly developed, and who had now identified himself, as it were, with his mother, guessing her weariness, invented pretexts to avoid a walk which he felt was too long for her. Happy couples passing along the road to Saint-Cyr and the groups of pedestrians below upon the *levée* saw, in the warm evenings, the pale, emaciated woman in deep mourning, near her end yet still brilliant, pacing like a phantom along the terraces. Great sufferings are divined. Even the cottage of the vine-dresser became silent. Sometimes the peasant and his wife and children were grouped about their door, Fanny, the old English servant, would be washing near the well, Madame Williamson and her boys sitting in the pavilion, and yet no sound was heard in the once gay gardens, and all eyes turned, when the dying woman did not see them, to contemplate her. She was so good, so thoughtful for others, so worthy of respect from all who approached her!

Since the beginning of the autumn, which is always fine and brilliant in Touraine, and which, with its beneficent influences, its fruits, its grapes, did somewhat prolong the mother's life beyond the natural term of her hidden malady, she had thought of nothing but her children, and rejoiced over every hour she had them with her as though it were her last.

From the month of June to the month of September Louis studied at night without his mother's knowledge

and made enormous progress ; he was already in the equations of the second degree in algebra, had learned descriptive geometry, and drew admirably well. He was, in fact, prepared to pass an entrance examination to the *École Polytechnique*. Occasionally in the evenings he went to walk on the bridge of Tours, where he had met a lieutenant of the navy on half-pay ; the manly face, the decorated breast, the hearty bearing of this sailor of the Empire, affected his imagination. The lieutenant, on the other hand, took a fancy to the lad whose eyes sparkled with energy. Louis, eager for military tales and liking to ask questions, walked about with the old salt and listened to him. The lieutenant had a friend and companion in an infantry colonel ; young Gaston could therefore hear of the two lives, military and naval, life in camp and life on seaboard, and he questioned the two officers incessantly.

After a time, entering into their hard lot and their rough experience, he suddenly asked his mother for permission to roam about the canton to amuse himself. As the astonished masters had told Madame Williamson that her son was studying too hard, she acceded to his request with extreme pleasure. The boy took immense walks. Wishing to harden himself to fatigue he climbed the highest trees with agility, he learned to swim, and he sat up working at night. He was no longer the same child ; he was a young man, on whose face the sun

had cast its brown tones, bringing out the lines of an already deep purpose.

The month of October came, and Madame Williamson could rise only at midday, when the sun-rays, reflected from the Loire and concentrated on the terraces, produced the same equable warmth at La Grenadière that prevails on warm, moist days around the Bay of Naples, — a circumstance which leads physicians to recommend Touraine. On such days she would sit beneath an evergreen, and her sons no longer left her. Studies ceased, the masters were dismissed. Children and mother wished to live in one another's hearts, without a care, without distractions from the outside. No tears were shed, no happy laughter heard. The elder, lying on the grass beside his mother, was like a lover at her feet, which he sometimes kissed. Marie, restless and uneasy, gathered flowers, which he brought to her with a sad air, rising on tiptoe to take from her lips the kiss of a young girl. That pallid woman with the large black eyes, lying exhausted, slow in all her motions, making no complaint, smiling at her two children so full of health, so living, was indeed a touching spectacle amid the melancholy glories of autumn, with its yellowing leaves, its half-bared trees, the softened light of the sun and the white clouds of a Touraine sky.

The day came when Madame Williamson was ordered by the doctor not to leave her room. Daily it was



Lavrent-Desrousseaux

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Procede Goussier

adorned with the flowers she loved best, and her children stayed there. Early in November she opened her piano for the last time. A Swiss landscape hung above it. Beside the window the brothers, with their arms around each other, showed her their mingled heads. Her eyes moved constantly from her children to the landscape, from the landscape to her children. Her face colored, her fingers ran with passion along the ivory notes. It was her last fête, a fête hidden from others, a fête celebrated in the depths of her soul by the genius of memory.

The doctor came and bade her keep her bed. The sentence was received by her and by her sons in a silence that was almost stupid.

When the physician went away she said: "Louis, take me on the terrace that I may see the country once more."

At these words, simply said, the lad gave her his arm and took her to the centre of the terrace. There her eyes sought, involuntarily perhaps, the heavens rather than the earth; it would have been difficult at that moment to say where was the finer landscape, for the clouds represented vaguely the majestic glaciers of the Alps. Her brow contracted violently, her eyes took an expression of remorse and sorrow, she caught the hands of her children and pressed them to her beating heart.

“Father and mother unknown!” she cried, casting an agonized look upon them. “Poor children! what will become of you? And when you are men, what stern account will you not demand of me for my life and yours?”

She pushed her children from her, placed both elbows on the balustrade, hid her face in her hands, and remained for a few moments alone with her soul, fearing to be seen. When she roused herself from her grief she saw Louis and Marie kneeling beside her like two angels; they watched her looks and both smiled at her.

“Could I but take those smiles with me!” she said, drying her eyes.

She returned to the house and went to her bed, to leave it no more until they placed her in her coffin.

Eight days went by, each day like the rest. The old waiting-woman and Louis took turns to watch that bed at night, their eyes fixed on the patient. It was the same drama, profoundly tragic, which is played at all hours and in all families where they dread that every breath may be the last of some adored member. On the fifth day of this fatal week the doctor proscribed flowers. One by one the illusions of life were taken from her.

After that day Louis and Marie found fire beneath their lips when they kissed their mother’s brow. At

last, on the Saturday night, she could bear no noise, and her room was left in disorder. That necessary neglect marked the beginning of the death of this woman, once so fastidious, so enamoured of elegance. Louis no longer left her even for a moment.

During the night of Sunday, in the midst of deepest silence, Louis, who thought her dozing, saw by the light of the lamp a white, moist hand put back the curtain.

“My son,” she said.

The tones of the dying woman were so solemn that their power, proceeding from her troubled soul, reacted violently on her child; he felt a burning heat in the marrow of his bones.

“What is it, mother?”

“Listen to me. To-morrow all will be over. We shall see each other no more. To-morrow you will be a man, my child. I am obliged to make certain arrangements which must remain a secret between you and me. Take the key of my little table. You have it? Open the drawer. You will find on the left two sealed papers. On one is marked LOUIS, on the other, MARIE.”

“I have them, mother.”

“My darling son, they are the legal records of your birth, of great importance to you. Give them to my poor old Fanny, who will take care of them for you, and return them to you when needed. Now,” she continued,

“look again in the same place and see if there is not another paper on which I have written a few lines?”

“Yes, mother.”

And Louis began to read: “Marie Augusta Williamson, born at —”

“That will do,” she said quickly, “Don’t go on. My son, when I am dead, give that paper also to Fanny and tell her to take it to the mayor’s office at Saint-Cyr, where they will need it to draw up the record of my death. Now bring what you require to write a letter at my dictation.”

When she saw that her son was ready and that he turned to her as if to listen, she said, in a calm voice, dictating: “Sir, your wife, Lady Brandon, died at Saint-Cyr, near Tours, department of the Indre-et-Loire. She forgave you. Sign it —”

She stopped, hesitating and agitated.

“Do you feel worse?” asked Louis.

“Sign it, ‘Louis Gaston.’”

She sighed, then continued: “Seal the letter and direct it to ‘The Earl of Brandon, Brandon Square, Hyde Park, London, England.’ Have you written it? Very good,” she said. “On the day of my death you must mail that letter from Tours. Now,” she continued, after a pause, “bring my little pocket-book — you know it — and come close to me, dear child. In it,” she said, when Louis had returned to her, “are twelve thousand

francs. They are rightfully yours, alas! You would have had far more had your father —”

“My father!” exclaimed the lad, “where is he?”

“Dead,” she replied, laying a finger on her lips, — “dead to save my honor and my life.”

She raised her eyes to heaven; she would have wept had she still had tears for sorrows “Louis,” she said, “swear to me on this pillow that you will forget all that you have written, and all that I have said to you.”

“Yes mother.”

“Kiss me, dear angel.”

She made a long pause as if to gather courage from God, and to limit her words to the strength that was left to her.

“Listen,” she said at last. “These twelve thousand francs are your whole fortune; you must keep them upon your person, because when I am dead, the legal authorities will come here and put seals on everything. Nothing will belong to you, not even your mother. Poor orphans! all you can do is to go away — God knows where. I have provided for Fanny; she will have three hundred francs a year and stay in Tours. But what will you do with yourself and your brother?”

She raised herself in the bed and looked at the brave boy, who, with great drops on his forehead, pale from emotion, his eyes half-veiled in tears, stood erect before her.

“Mother,” he replied in a deep voice, “I have thought of it. I shall take Marie to the college of Tours. I shall give ten thousand francs to old Fanny and tell her to put them in safety, and to watch over my brother. Then, with the rest, I will go to Brest, and enter the navy as an apprentice. While Marie is getting his education I shall be promoted lieutenant. Mother, die easy; I shall be rich; I will put our boy into the *École Polytechnique*, and he shall follow his bent.”

A flash of joy came from the half-quenched eyes of the mother; two tears rolled down her burning cheeks; then a great sigh escaped her lips. She barely escaped dying at that moment from the joy of finding the soul of the father in that of her son, now suddenly transformed into a man.

“Angel from heaven!” she said, weeping, “you have healed my sorrows with those words. Ah! I can die now. He is my son,” she added; “I have made, I have trained, a man.”

She raised her hands in the air and clasped them, as if to express a boundless joy; then she lay back on the pillows.

“Mother, you are turning white,” cried the boy.

“Fetch a priest,” she answered, in a dying voice.

Louis woke old Fanny, who ran in terror to the parsonage of Saint-Cyr.

Early in the morning Madame Williamson received the sacraments in presence of her children, with old Fanny, and the family of the vine-dresser, simple folk, now part of the family, kneeling round her. The silver cross borne by a humble choir boy, a village choir boy! was held before the bed; an old priest administered the viaticum to the dying mother. The viaticum! sublime word, idea more sublime than the word, which the apostolic religion of the Roman Church alone employs.

“This woman has suffered much,” said the curate in his simple language.

Madame Williamson heard no longer; but her eyes remained fastened on her children. All present, in mortal terror, listened in the deep silence to the breathing of the dying woman as it slackened and grew slower. At intervals, a deep sigh showed that life was still continuing the inward struggle. At last, the mother breathed no longer. Those present wept, excepting Marie, too young, poor child, to be aware of death. Fanny and the vine-dresser’s wife closed the eyes of the once exquisite creature, whose beauty reappeared in all its glory. They sent away those present, took the furniture from the room, placed the body of the departed in its shroud, lighted the wax-tapers around the bed, arranged the basin of holy water, the branch of box, and the crucifix, after the manner of that region of country, closed the blinds

and drew the curtains. Then the vicar came and passed the night in prayer with Louis, who would not leave his mother.

The funeral took place Tuesday morning; old Fanny, the children, and the vine-dresser alone followed the body of a woman whose beauty, wit, and grace had given her in other days a European fame; and whose funeral would have been pompously heralded in the newspapers of London, as an aristocratic solemnity, had she not committed a tender crime, a crime always punished on this earth, perhaps to allow the pardoned angel to enter heaven. When the earth fell on his mother's coffin, Marie wept, comprehending then that he should see her no more.

A simple wooden cross stands above her grave and bears these words, given by the curate of Saint-Cyr.

HERE LIES

A SORROWFUL WOMAN.

SHE DIED AGED THIRTY-SIX,

BEARING THE NAME AUGUSTA IN HEAVEN.

PRAY FOR HER.

When all was over the children returned to La Grenadière to cast a last look upon their home; then, holding each other by the hand, they prepared to

leave it with Fanny, making the vine-dresser responsible to the authorities.

At the last moment the old waiting-woman called Louis to the steps of the well, and said to him apart:

“Monsieur Louis, here is madame’s ring.”

The boy wept, — moved at the sight of a living memorial of his dead mother. In his strong self-command he had forgotten this last duty. He kissed the old woman. Then all three went down the sunken pathway, and down the flight of steps, and on to Tours without once looking back.

“Mamma used to stand here,” said Marie, when they reached the bridge.

Fanny had an old cousin, a retired dressmaker, living in the rue de la Guerche. There she took the lads, thinking they could all live together. But Louis explained his plans, gave her Marie’s certificate of birth and the ten thousand francs, and the next day, accompanied by the old woman, he took his brother to the school. He told the principal the facts of the case, but very briefly, and went away, taking his brother with him to the gate. There he tenderly and solemnly told him of their loneliness in the world and gave him counsel for the future, looked at him silently a moment, kissed him, looked at him again, wiped away a tear, and went away, looking back again and again at his brother, left alone at the college gate.

A month later Louis Gaston was an apprentice on board a government ship, leaving the Rochefort roads. Leaning against the shrouds of the corvette "Iris," he watched the coasts of France as they dropped below the blue horizon. Soon he saw himself alone, lost in the midst of ocean, as he was in the midst of life.

"Must n't cry, young fellow; there's a God for all the world," said an old seaman, in his gruff voice, both harsh and kind.

The lad thanked him with an intrepid look. Then he bowed his head and resigned himself to a sailor's life, for — was he not a father?

A DOUBLE LIFE.

A DOUBLE LIFE.



TO MADAME LA COMTESSE LOUISE DE TÜRHEIM,
AS A MARK OF REMEMBRANCE AND AFFECTIONATE RESPECT
FROM HER HUMBLE SERVANT,
DE BALZAC.

I.

THE SECOND LIFE.

THE rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous streets of the old quarter of Paris which encircles the Hôtel-de-Ville, wound round the little gardens of the prefecture till it ended in the rue du Martroi at the angle of an old wall, now pulled down. Here could be seen the turnstile to which the street owed its name, a relic of the past that was not destroyed until 1823, when the city of Paris caused to be constructed on the site of a little garden belonging to the Hôtel-de-Ville a splendid ball-room for the fête given to the Duc d'Angoulême on his return from Spain.

The widest part of the rue du Tourniquet was near its junction with the rue de la Tixeranderie, where it was only five feet wide. Consequently, in rainy weather the blackened water of the gutter washed the feet of the old houses, bringing along with it the filth and refuse deposited by each household at the various

posts along the street. The carts for the removal of such rubbish could not enter the narrow way, and the dwellers thereon reckoned upon the storms of heaven to cleanse their ever-muddy street — though it never could be clean. When the summer sun struck vertically down, a line of gold, sharp as the blade of a sabre, illuminated momentarily the darkness of the street, but without drying the perpetual dampness which reigned from the ground-floor to the next floor of these dark and silent houses.

The inhabitants, who lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the month of June, never put them out in winter. Even to-day, if some courageous pedestrian ventures to go from the Marais to the quays by taking, at the end of the rue du Chaume, the several streets named L'Homme Armé, Des Billettes, and Des Deux-Portes, which lead into that of the Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, he will fancy he has been walking through a crypt or cellar.

Nearly all the streets of the old Paris resembled this damp and sombre labyrinth, where antiquaries can still find several historical singularities to admire. For instance, when the house which stood at the corner of the rue du Tourniquet and the rue de la Tixeranderie still existed, observers would have noticed two heavy iron rings built into the wall, a remnant of the chains which the watchman of the quarter put up each night as a measure of public safety.

This house, remarkable for its antiquity, had been built with precautions which fully proved the unhealthiness of these old dwellings; for, in order to sweeten the ground-floor, the walls of the cellar were raised

fully two feet above the level of the soil, which necessitated a rise of three steps in order to enter the house. The door-casing described a semicircular arch, the apex of which was adorned with the carving of a woman's head and sundry arabesques, much injured by time. Three windows, the sills of which were about on a level with a man's head, belonged to a small apartment on the ground-floor looking on the rue du Tourniquet. These windows were protected by strong iron bars placed far apart, ending in a round projection like those of a baker's grating.

If any inquisitive pedestrian had cast his eyes upon the two rooms of this apartment in the daytime, he could have seen nothing within them; a July sun was needed to distinguish in the second room two beds draped with green serge under the panelled ceiling of an old alcove. But in the afternoons, toward three o'clock, when a lamp was lighted, it was possible to see through the window of the first room an old woman sitting on a stool at the corner of a fireplace, where she was, at that hour, stirring something in a chafing-dish which resembled those stews that Parisian portresses know so well how to concoct. A few kitchen utensils hanging on the wall at the end of this room could be seen in the half-light. An old table, standing on three legs and devoid of linen, held knives and forks and pewter plates, and, presently, the dish which the old crone was cooking. Three miserable chairs furnished the room, which served the inhabitants for kitchen and dining-room. Over the fireplace was a fragment of mirror, a tinder-box, three glasses, some sulphur matches, and a large white pot, much cracked.

The tiled floor of the hearth, the utensils, the fireplace, were pleasing to the eye from the evident spirit of neatness and economy which reigned in that cold, dark home.

The pale and wrinkled face of the old woman was in keeping with the gloom of the street and the mouldiness of the building. One might have thought, to see her seated in her chair when doing nothing, that she stuck to the house as a snail to its shell. Her face, in which a vague expression of malice underlay an assumed good-humor, was topped by a flat tulle cap, which scarcely covered her white hair; her large gray eyes were as still as the street, and the many wrinkles on her skin might be compared to the cracks and crevices of the walls. Whether she was born to poverty, or whether she had fallen from some better estate, she now seemed long resigned to her melancholy existence. From sunrise till evening, except while preparing the meals, or, basket in hand, she went out for provisions, this old creature spent her time in the adjoining room, before the third window and opposite to a young girl.

At all hours of the day this young girl, sitting in an old arm-chair covered with red velvet, her head bent down over an embroidery-frame, worked industriously. Her mother had a green tambour-frame on her lap and seemed to be making tulle; but her fingers moved the bobbins stiffly, and her sight was evidently failing, for her nose, of three-score years and over, bore a pair of those old-fashioned spectacles which hold to the tips of the nostrils according to the force with which they are pinched on. At night, these two laborious creatures

placed a lamp between them; the light of which, falling through two glass globes filled with water, threw a strong ray upon their work, which enabled the old woman to see the looser strands of the bobbins of her tambour, and the young girl the more delicate parts of the pattern she was embroidering.

The curve of the iron bars had enabled the girl to put on the sill of the window a long wooden box filled with earth; in which were vegetating sweet-peas, nasturtiums, a sickly honeysuckle, and a few convolvuli whose weakly tendrils were clinging to the bars. These etiolated plants produced a few pale flowers; another feature strangely in keeping, which mingled I scarcely know what of sweetness and of sadness in the picture, framed by the window, of those toiling figures. A mere glance at that interior would have given the most self-absorbed pedestrian a perfect image of the life led by the work-women of Paris; for it was evident that the girl lived solely by her needle. Many persons reaching the turnstile had wondered how any young creature living in that noisome place could have kept the bright colors of youth. The lively imagination of a student on his way to the "pays latin" might have compared this dark and vegetative life to that of ivy draping a cold stone-wall, or to that of peasants born to toil, who labor and die ignored by the world they have contributed to feed. A man of property said to himself as he looked at the house with the eye of an owner: —

"What would become of those two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?"

Among the persons whose duty took them at fixed

hours through this narrow way, either to the Hôtel de Ville or to the Palais, some might perhaps have been found, whose interest in the sight would take a more selfish view of it; some widower, perhaps, or some elderly Adonis might have thought that the evident distress of the mother and daughter would make the innocent work-girl a cheap and easy bargain. Or perhaps some worthy clerk with a salary of twelve hundred francs a year, the daily witness of the girl's industrious ardor, might have reckoned from that the purity of her life and have dreamed of uniting one obscure life to another obscure life, one plodding toil to another as laborious, — bringing at any rate the arm of a man to sustain existence, and a peaceful love, colorless as the flowers in the window.

Such vague hopes did at times brighten the dull gray eyes of the old mother. In the morning, after their humble breakfast, she would take her tambour-frame (more for appearances, it would seem, than for actual work, because she laid down her spectacles on the table beside her) and proceeded to watch from half-past eight to about ten o'clock all the habitual passers through the street at that hour. She noted their glances; made observations on their demeanor, their dress, their countenances; she seemed to bargain with them for her daughter, so eagerly did her keen eyes seek to open communications, by manœuvres like those behind the scenes of a theatre. To her this morning review was indeed a play; perhaps it was her only pleasure.

The daughter seldom raised her head: modesty, or perhaps the painful sense of poverty, kept her eyes

closely fixed upon her work; so that sometimes, in order to make her show her face to a passer in the street, her mother would give a cry of surprise. A clerk with a new overcoat, or an habitual passer appearing with a woman on his arm might then have beheld the slightly turned-up nose of the little work-girl, her rosy mouth, and her gray eyes, sparkling with life in spite of her crushing toil. Those wakeful, laborious nights were only shown by the more or less white circle beneath the eyes on the fresh, pure skin above the cheek-bones. The poor young thing seemed born for love and gayety, — for love, which had painted above her rounded eyelids two perfect arches, and had given her such a forest of chestnut hair that she might have hidden her whole person under its impenetrable veil; for gayety, which moved her expressive nostrils, and made two dimples in her glowing cheeks, — for gayety, that flower of hope, which gave her strength to look without faltering at the barren path of life before her.

The beautiful hair of the girl was always carefully arranged. Like all other work-women of Paris, she thought her toilet complete when she had braided and smoothed her hair and had twirled into circles the two little locks on either side of the temples, the effect of which was to set off the whiteness of her skin. The way her hair grew upon her head was so full of grace, the bistre line clearly defined upon her neck gave so charming an idea of her youth and its attractions, that an observer beholding her as she bent over her work, not raising her head at any noise, would have put down such apparent unconsciousness to coquetry.

“Caroline, there’s a new regular man! none of the old ones compare with him.”

These words, said in a low voice by the mother one morning in the month of August, 1815, conquered, apparently, the indifference of the girl, for she looked into the street; but the new man was nearly out of sight.

“Which way did he go?” she asked.

“He’ll be back, no doubt, about four o’clock. I shall see him coming and I’ll kick your foot. I’m certain he’ll come back, for it is now three days since he took to coming through the street. But he is n’t regular as to time. The first day he came at six, next day it was four, yesterday five. I am sure I have seen him at some time or other, elsewhere. I dare say he’s a clerk at the prefecture who has gone to live in the Marais — Oh, look here!” she added, after glancing into the street, “our monsieur with the brown coat has taken to a wig! Heavens! how it does change him!”

The monsieur with the brown coat must have been the last of the *habitués* who formed the daily procession, for the old mother now put on her spectacles, resumed her work with a sigh, and looked at her daughter with so singular an expression that Lavater himself would have been puzzled to analyze it, — admiration, gratitude, a sort of hope for better things, mingled with the pride of possessing so pretty a daughter.

That evening, about four o’clock, the old woman pushed the girl’s foot, and Caroline raised her head in time to see the new actor whose periodical passing

was now to enliven the scene of their lives. Tall, thin, pale, and dressed in black, the man, who was about forty years old, had something solemn in his gait and demeanor. When his tawny, piercing eye met the curious glance of the old woman, it made her tremble; and she fancied he had the gift, or the habit, of reading hearts. Certainly his first aspect was chilling as the air itself of that gloomy street.

Was the cadaverous, discolored complexion of that haggard face the result of excessive toil, or the product of enfeebled health? This problem was solved by the old mother in a score of different ways. But the next day, Caroline divined at once that the wrinkled brow bore signs of long-continued mental suffering. The slightly hollowed cheeks of the stranger bore an imprint of that seal with which misfortune marks its vassals, as if to leave them the consolation of recognizing one another with fraternal eye, and uniting together to resist it.

The warmth of the weather happened at this moment to be so great, and the stranger was so absent-minded, that he omitted to put on his hat while passing through the unhealthy street. Caroline then noticed the stern aspect given to the face by the cut of the hair, which stood up from his forehead like a brush. Though the girl's eyes were first brightened by innocent curiosity, they took a tender expression of sympathy and pity as the stranger passed on, like the last mourner in a funeral procession.

The strong, but not pleasing, impression felt by Caroline at the sight of this man resembled none of the sensations which the other habitual passers had

conveyed to her. For the first time in her life her compassion was aroused for another than her mother and herself. She made no reply to the fanciful conjectures which furnished food for the irritating loquacity of the old woman, but silently drew her long needle above and below the tulle in her frame; she regretted that she had not seen more of the unknown man, and waited until the morrow to make up her mind more decisively about him. For the first time, too, a passer beneath the window had suggested reflections to her mind. Usually she replied with a quiet smile to the various suppositions of her mother, who was always in hopes of finding a protector for her child among these strangers. If such ideas, imprudently expressed, awoke no evil thoughts in the girl's mind, we must attribute Caroline's indifference to the cruelly hard work which consumed the forces of her precious youth, and must infallibly change ere long the limpid light of her eyes and ravish from those fair cheeks the tender color which still brightened them.

For two whole months the "black monsieur" — such was the name they gave him — passed through the street almost daily, but capriciously as to time. The old woman often saw him at night when he had not passed in the morning; also he never returned at the fixed hours of other employees, who served as clocks to Madame Crochard, and never, since the first day when his glance had inspired the old mother with a sort of terror, had his eyes appeared to take notice of the picturesque group of the two female gnomes, — an indifference which piqued Madame Crochard who was not pleased to see her "black monsieur" gravely pre-

occupied, walking with his eyes on the ground or looking straight in front of him, as if he were trying to read the future in the damp mists of the rue du Tourniquet.

However, one morning toward the last of September, the pretty head of Caroline Crochard stood out so brilliantly on the dark background of her dingy chamber, and she looked so fresh among her spindling flowers and the sparse foliage that twined about the bars of the window, — the scene, in short, presented so many contrasts of light and shade, of white and rose, blending so well with the muslin the girl was embroidering and the tones of the old velvet chair in which she sat, — that the unknown pedestrian did look attentively at the effects of this living picture. Madame Crochard, weary of the indifference of her black gentleman, had, in truth, taken the step of making such a clatter with her reels and bobbins that the gloomy, thoughtful stranger was perhaps compelled by this unusual noise to look up at the window.

He exchanged one glance with Caroline, rapid, it is true, but in it their souls came slightly in contact, and they each were conscious of a presentiment that they should think of one another. That evening when the stranger returned, about four o'clock, Caroline distinguished the sound of his step upon the pavement, and when they looked at each other they did so with a species of premeditation; the eyes of the stranger were brightened with an expression of benevolence, and he smiled, while Caroline blushed. The old mother watched them both with a satisfied air.

After that memorable morning the black monsieur passed through the rue du Tourniquet twice every day, with a few exceptions which the two women noted; they judged, from the irregularity of his hours of return that he was neither so quickly released nor so strictly punctual as a subaltern clerk would be.

During the first three winter months Caroline and the stranger saw each other twice a day for the length of time which it took him to walk the distance flanked by the door and the three windows of the house. Daily this brief interview took on more and more a character of benevolent intimacy, until it ended in something that was almost fraternal. Caroline and the stranger seemed from the first to understand each other; and then, by dint of examining one another's faces a deeper knowledge of their characters came about. The meeting became a sort of visit which the stranger paid to Caroline; if, by chance, her black monsieur passed without giving her the half-formed smile on his eloquent lips or the friendly glance of his brown eyes, something was lacking to her day. She was like those old men to whom the reading of their newspaper becomes such a pleasure that if some accident delays it they are wholly upset at missing the printed sheet which helps them for an instant to cheat the void of their dreary existence.

These fugitive meetings soon had, both to Caroline and to the unknown man, the interest and charm of familiar conversation between friends. The young girl could no more conceal from the intelligent eye of her silent friend an anxiety, an illness, a sad thought, than he could hide from her the presence in

his mind of some painful preoccupation. "Something troubled him yesterday," was a thought that often came into the girl's heart as she noticed a strained look on the face of her black gentleman. "Oh! he must have been working too hard!" was another exclamation caused by other signs and shadows that Caroline had learned to distinguish.

The stranger, on his side, seemed to know when the girl had spent her Sunday in finishing a lace dress, in the design of which he felt an interest. He saw how the pretty face darkened as the rent-day came round; he knew when Caroline had been sitting up all night; but more especially did he notice how the sad thoughts now beginning to tarnish the freshness and the gayety of that young face were dissipated little by little as their unspoken acquaintance increased.

When winter dried the foliage and the tendrils of the puny garden, and the window was closed, a smile that was softly malicious came to the stranger's lips as he saw the bright light in the room casting Caroline's reflection through the panes. An evident parsimony as to fire, and the reddened noses of the two women, revealed to him the indigence of the little household; but if a pained compassion was reflected in his eyes, Caroline proudly undermined it with a feigned gayety.

But all this while the sentiments that were budding in their hearts were buried there, and no event happened to teach them the strength or the extent of their own feelings; they did not even know the sound of each other's voices. These two mute friends avoided a closer union as though it were an evil. Each seemed

to fear to bring upon the other a heavier misfortune than those they each were bearing. Was it the reticence of friendship that thus restrained them, or that dread of selfishness, that atrocious distrust which puts a barrier between all persons collected within the walls of a crowded city? Did the secret voice of their consciences warn them of coming peril? It is wholly impossible to explain the feeling which kept them enemies even more than friends, seemingly as indifferent to each other as they were, in truth, attached; as much united by instinct as they were parted by fact. Perhaps each was desirous of keeping both his and her illusion. It almost seemed as though this nameless black gentleman feared to hear from those fresh lips, pure as a flower, some vulgar speech, and that Caroline felt herself unworthy of that mysterious being who bore to her eyes the unmistakable signs of power and fortune.

As for Madame Crochard, that observant mother, half angry at her daughter's indecision, began to show a sulky face to her black monsieur, on whom she had hitherto smiled with an air as complacent as it was servile. Never did she bemoan herself to her daughter so bitterly at the hard fate which obliged her, at her age, to cook; never did her rheumatism and her catarrh draw from her so many moans. Her state of mind was such that she failed to do, that winter, the number of yards of tulle on which the poor household counted.

Under these circumstances and toward the end of December, when bread was becoming dearer and the poor were already feeling that rise in the cost of

grains which made the year 1816 so cruel to poverty, the unknown man observed on the face of the girl, whose name was unknown to him, the traces of some painful thought which her friendly smiles were unable to chase away. He recognized also in her eyes the weary indications of nocturnal labor. On one of the last nights of the month he returned, contrary to custom, through the rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean about one in the morning. The stillness of the hour enabled him to hear, even before he reached the house, the whining voice of the old woman, and the still more distressing tones of the girl, the sound of which mingled with the hissing sound of a fall of snow.

He walked slowly; then, at the risk of being arrested, he crouched before the window to listen to the mother and daughter, examining them through one of the many holes in the muslin curtains. A legal paper lay on the table which stood between their two work-frames, on which were the lamp and the globes of water. He recognized at once a summons of some kind. Madame Crochard was weeping bitterly, and the voice of the girl was guttural with her grief, completely changing its soft and caressing ring.

“Why make yourself so unhappy, mother? Monsieur Moulineux will never sell our furniture, and he cannot turn us out before I have finished this gown. Two nights more and I shall carry it to Madame Roguin.”

“And she’ll make you wait for the money, as usual. Besides, the price of that gown won’t pay the baker, too.”

The spectator of this scene had so great a habit of

reading faces that he thought he saw as much hypocrisy in the mother's grief as there was truth in the daughter's. He disappeared at once; but presently returned. Again he looked through the ragged muslin. The mother had gone to bed. The girl was bending over her frame with indefatigable energy. On the table beside the summons lay a small piece of bread cut in a triangle, meant, no doubt to support her during the night, perhaps to sustain her courage. The black gentleman shuddered with pity and with pain; he flung his purse through a hole in the window that was covered with paper, in such a way that it fell at the girl's feet. Then, without waiting to see her surprise, he escaped, his heart beating, his cheeks on fire.

The next day the sad and alien man passed by as usual, affecting a preoccupied air. But he was not allowed to escape the girl's gratitude. Caroline had opened the window and was digging about the box of earth with a knife, a pretext of ingenuous falsity which proved to her benefactor that on this occasion she was determined not to see him through glass. With eyes full of tears she made a sign with her head as if to say, "I can only pay you with my heart."

But the black gentleman seemed not to understand the expression of this true gratitude. That evening, when he passed again, Caroline was busy in pasting another paper over the broken window and so was able to smile to him, showing the enamel of her brilliant teeth, like, as it were, a promise. From that day the black gentleman took another road, and appeared no more in the rue du Tourniquet.

During the first week of the following May, on a Saturday morning, as Caroline was watering her honeysuckle, she beheld between the two black lines of houses a narrow strip of cloudless sky, and called to her mother in the next room :—

“Mamma! let us go to-morrow for a day’s pleasuring at Montmorency!”

The words had scarcely left her lips when the black monsieur passed, sadder and evidently more oppressed than ever. The look of pleasure which Caroline gave him might have passed for an invitation. In fact, the next day, when Madame Crochard, arrayed in a reddish-brown merino pelisse, a silk bonnet, and a striped shawl made to imitate cashmere, went with her daughter to choose a *coucou* at the corner of the rue d’Enghien and the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis, she found her black monsieur standing there, with the air of a man who was waiting for a woman.

A smile of pleasure softened the face of the stranger when he beheld Caroline, whose little feet, shod in puce-colored prunella boots, appeared beneath her white muslin gown, which, blown by the wind (too often perfidious to ill-made forms), showed off her beautiful figure, while her face, shaded by a straw hat lined with pink, seemed illuminated by a ray from heaven. A broad belt, also puce-colored, set off a little waist he might have spanned between his fingers; her hair, parted into two brown bandeaus round a forehead white as milk, gave her an air of simple purity which nothing marred. Pleasure seemed to make her as light as the straw of her hat; but a hope darted into her mind on seeing the black gentleman,

eclipsing all else. He himself appeared irresolute. Perhaps the sudden revelation of joy on the girl's face caused by his presence may have decided him, for he turned and hired a cabriolet, with a fairly good horse, to go to Saint-Leu-Taverny; then he asked Madame Crochard and her daughter to take seats in it.

The mother accepted without further urging; but no sooner had the vehicle fairly started than she brought forth scruples and regrets for the inconvenience that two women would cause to their companion.

“Perhaps monsieur would rather go alone to Saint-Leu?” she said hypocritically.

Presently she complained of the heat, and especially of her troublesome catarrh, which, she said, had kept her awake all night, and the carriage had hardly reached Saint-Denis before she was asleep, though certain of her snores seemed doubtful to the black monsieur, who frowned heavily and looked at the old woman with singular suspicion.

“Oh! she's asleep,” said Caroline, naïvely. “She coughed all night, and must be tired.”

For all answer, the gentleman cast a shrewd smile upon the girl which seemed to mean: —

“Innocent creature! you don't know your mother.”

However, in spite of his distrust, by the time the cabriolet was rolling along the avenue of poplars which leads to Eau Bonne, the black gentleman believed that Madame Crochard was really asleep; perhaps, however, he no longer cared to know whether the sleep was real or feigned. Whether it was that the beauty of the skies, the pure country air, and those delicious scents wafted by the budding poplars, the

willow catkins, the blossoms of the eglantine, had inclined his heart to open and expand; or that further silence became irksome to him; or that the sparkling eyes of the young girl were answering his, — it is certain that the black monsieur now began a conversation, as vague as the quivering of the foliage to the breeze, as vagabond as the circlings of a butterfly, as little without real motive as the voice, softly melodious, of the fields, but marked, like Nature herself, with mysterious love.

At this season the country quivers like a bride who has just put on her bridal robes; it invites to pleasure the coldest heart. To leave the darksome streets of the Marais for the first time since the previous autumn, and to find one's self suddenly in the bosom of that harmonious and picturesque valley of Montmorency; to pass through it in the morning when the eye can follow the infinity of its horizons, and to turn from that to an infinity of love in the eyes beside us, — what heart will continue icy, what lips will keep their secrets?

The unknown man found Caroline more gay than clever, more loving than informed. But if her laugh was a trifle giddy, her words bore evidence of true feeling; and when to the leading questions of her companion she replied with that effusion of the heart which the lower classes lavish, when they feel it, without the reticence of persons of good society, the face of the black gentleman brightened, and seemed, as it were, reborn; it lost by degrees the sadness that contracted its features, and gradually, tint by tint, it gained a look of youth and a character of beauty

which made the young girl proud and happy. She divined instinctively that her friend, deprived of tenderness and love, no longer believed in the devotion of women. At last a sudden gush of Caroline's light chatter carried off the last cloud which veiled on the stranger's face his real youth and his native character; he seemed to come to some eternal divorce from oppressive ideas, and he now displayed a vivacity of heart which the solemnity of his face had hitherto concealed. The talk became insensibly so familiar that by the time the carriage stopped at the first houses of the village of Saint-Leu Caroline was calling her friend "Monsieur Roger." Then, for the first time, Madame Crochard woke up.

"Caroline, she must have heard us," said Roger, suspiciously, in the young girl's ear.

Caroline answered by a charming smile of incredulity, which dispersed the dark cloud brought by the fear of a scheme to the forehead of the distrustful man. Without expressing any surprise, Madame Crochard approved of everything, and followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger to the park of Saint-Leu, where the pair had agreed to ramble about the smiling meadows and the balmy groves which the taste of Queen Hortense had rendered celebrated.

"Heavens! how lovely!" cried Caroline, when, having reached the green brow of the hill where the forest of Montmorency begins, she saw at her feet the vast valley winding its serpentine way dotted with villages, steeples, fields, and meadows, a murmur of which came softly to her ear like the purling of waves, as her eyes rested on the blue horizon of the distant hills.

The three excursionists followed the banks of an artificial river until they reached the Swiss valley with its chalet where Napoleon and Queen Hortense were wont to stay. When Caroline had seated herself with sacred respect upon the mossy wooden bench where kings and princesses and the Emperor had reposed themselves, Madame Crochard manifested a desire to take a closer view of a suspension bridge between two cliffs a little farther on. Wending her way to that rural curiosity she left her daughter to the care of Monsieur Roger, remarking, however, that she should not go out of sight.

“Poor little thing!” cried Roger, “have you never known comfort or luxury? Don’t you sometimes wish to wear the pretty gowns you embroider?”

“I should n’t be telling the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I said I never thought of the happiness rich people must enjoy. Yes, I do think often, specially when asleep, of the pleasure it would be to see my poor mother saved the trouble of going out to buy our food and then preparing it at her age. I would like to have a charwoman come in the morning before she is out of bed, and make her a cup of coffee with plenty of sugar, white sugar, in it. She likes to read novels, poor dear woman! Well, I’d rather she used her eyes on her favorite reading than strain them counting bobbins from morning till night. Also, she really needs a little good wine. I do wish I could see her happy, she is so kind.”

“Then she has always been kind to you?”

“Oh, yes!” said the girl, in an earnest voice.

As they watched Madame Crochard, who had reached

the middle of the bridge, and now shook her finger at them, Caroline continued: —

“Oh, yes! she has always been kind to me. What care she gave me when I was little! She sold her last forks and spoons to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me to embroider. And my poor father! she took such pains to make him happy in his last days!”

At this remembrance the girl shuddered, and put her hands before her eyes.

“Bah! don’t let us think of past troubles,” she resumed, gayly.

Then she colored, perceiving that Roger was much affected, but she dared not look at him.

“What did your father do?” asked Roger.

“He was a dancer at the Opera before the Revolution,” she replied, with the simplest air in the world, “and my mother sang in the chorus. My father, who managed the evolutions on the stage, chanced to be present at the taking of the Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him if he could n’t lead a real attack as he had led so many sham ones at the theatre. Father was brave, and he agreed; he led the insurgents, and was rewarded with the rank of captain in the army of the Sambre-et-Meuse, where he behaved in such a way that he was rapidly promoted and became a colonel. But he was terribly wounded at Lutzen, and returned to Paris to die, after a year’s illness. The Bourbons came back, and of course my mother could not get a pension, and we fell into such dreadful poverty that we had to work for our living. Of late the poor dear woman has been

ailing; and she is n't as resigned as she used to be; she complains, and I don't wonder, — she, who once had all the comforts of an easy life. As for me, I can't regret comforts I never had; but there's one thing I do hope Heaven will grant me."

"What is that?" asked Roger, who seemed dreamy.

"That ladies will always wear embroidered gowns, so that I shall never want work."

The frankness of these avowals interested her hearer so much that when Madame Crochard slowly returned to them, he looked at her with an eye that was less hostile.

"Well, my children, have you had a good talk?" she asked, in a tone both indulgent and sly. "When one thinks, Monsieur Roger, that 'the little corporal' sat on that bench where you are sitting!" she continued, after a moment's silence. "Poor man! how my husband loved him! Ah! it is a good thing Crochard died; he never could have borne to think of him at that place where *those others* have put him."

Roger laid a finger on his lips, and the old woman, nodding her head, said, gravely: —

"Enough; I'll keep a dead tongue in my head and my lips tight. But," she added, opening the front of her dress, and showing the cross of the Legion of honor and its red ribbon fastened to her throat with a black bow, "nothing can prevent me from wearing what *he* gave to my poor Crochard; I mean to be buried with it."

Hearing these words, which at that time were held to be seditious, Roger interrupted the old woman by rising abruptly, and they started to return to the vil-

lage through the park. The young man absented himself for a few moments to order a meal at the best restaurant, then he returned to fetch the two women, guiding them along the paths through the forest.

The dinner was gay. Roger was no longer that gloomy shadow which for months had passed through the rue du Tourniquet; no longer the "black monsieur," but rather a hopeful young man ready to let himself float upon the current of life like the two women who were happy in the day's enjoyment, though the morrow might find them without food. He seemed, indeed, to be under the influence of the joys of youth; his smile had something caressing and childlike about it. When, at five o'clock, the pleasant dinner came to an end with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose that they should go to the village ball, under the chestnut-trees, where he and Caroline danced together. Their hands met in one thought, their hearts beat with the same hope, and beneath that azure sky, glowing toward the west with the level rays of the setting sun, their glances had a brilliancy which, to each other's heart, paled even that of the heaven above them. Strange power of a thought and a desire! nothing seemed impossible to these two beings. In such magic moments, when pleasure casts its reflections on the future, the soul can see naught but happiness. This charming day had created for both of them memories to which they could compare no other experience of their lives. Is the spring more perfect than the current, the desire more ravishing than its fulfilment? is the thing hoped-for more attractive than the thing possessed?

“There’s our day already over!”

At this exclamation which escaped the young man when the dance ended, Caroline looked at him compassionately, for she saw the sadness beginning again to cloud his face.

“Why are you not as happy in Paris as you have been here?” she said. “Is there no happiness except at Saint-Leu? It seems to me I can never again be discontented anywhere.”

Roger quivered at those words, dictated by the soft abandonment which often leads women farther than they mean to go, — just as, on the other hand, prudery makes them stiffer than they really are. For the first time since that look which began their intimacy, Caroline and Roger had one and the same thought. Though they did not express it, they each felt it by a mutual impression something like that of the warmth of a glowing hearth beneficently comforting in winter. Then, as if they feared their silence, they hastened to the place where their vehicle awaited them. But before they reached it they took each other by the hand and ran along a wood-path in advance of Madame Crochard. When the white of the old woman’s tulle cap was no longer visible through the foliage, Roger turned to the girl and said, with a troubled voice and a beating heart: —

“Caroline?”

The girl, confused, stepped back a few paces, understanding the desires that interrogation implied; nevertheless she held out her hand, which was ardently kissed, though she quickly withdrew it, for at that moment her mother came in sight. Madame Crochard

pretended to have seen nothing, as if, remembering her stage experience, the scene was only an aside.

The history of Roger and Caroline does not continue in the rue du Tourniquet; to meet them again we must go to the very centre of modern Paris, where, among the newly built houses, there are found apartments which seem expressly made for the honeymoon of bridal couples. The paper and painting are as fresh as they; the decoration, like their love, is in its bloom; all is in harmony with young ideas and bounding desires. About the middle of the rue Taitbout, in a house where the copings were still white, the columns of the vestibule and the door unsoiled, the walls shining with that coquettish paint which our renewed relations with England brought into fashion, was a little apartment on the second floor, arranged by an architect as if he had foreseen the uses to which it would be put. A simple airy antechamber with a stucco wainscot gave entrance to a salon and a very small dining-room. The salon communicated with a pretty bedchamber, beyond which was a bathroom. The mantels were adorned with mirrors choicely framed. The doors were painted with arabesques in excellent taste, and the style of the cornices was pure. An amateur would have recognized, better there than elsewhere, that science of arrangement and decoration which distinguishes the work of our modern architects.

For the last month Caroline had occupied this pretty apartment, which was furnished by upholsterers under direction of the architect. A short description of the principal room will give an idea of the marvels this

apartment presented to Caroline's eyes when Roger brought her there.

Hangings of gray cloth enlivened by green silk trimmings covered the walls of the bedroom. The furniture, upholstered with pale-green cassimere, was of that light and graceful shape then coming into fashion. A bureau of native wood inlaid with some darker wood held the treasures of the trousseau; a secretary of the same, a bed with antique drapery, curtains of gray silk with green fringes, a bronze clock representing Cupid crowning Psyche, and a carpet with gothic designs on a reddish ground were the principal features of this place of delight. Opposite to a *psyche* mirror stood a charming toilet-table, in front of which sat the ex-embroidery girl, very impatient with the scientific labor of Plaisir, the famous *coiffeur*, who was dressing her hair.

"Do you expect to get it done to-day?" she was saying.

"Madame's hair is so long and thick," responded Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The flattery of the artistic hair-dresser reminded her, no doubt, of the passionate admiration expressed by her friend for the beautiful hair he idolized. When Plaisir had departed, Caroline's maid came to hold counsel with her mistress as to which dress was most likely to please Roger. It was then the beginning of September, 1816; a dress of green grenadine trimmed with chinchilla was finally chosen.

As soon as her toilet was over Caroline darted into the salon, opened a window looking upon the street,

and went out upon the elegant little balcony which adorned the façade of the house; there she folded her arms on the railing in a charming attitude, not taken to excite the admiration of the passers who frequently turned to look at her, but to fix her eyes on the boulevard at the end of the rue Taitbout. This glimpse, which might be compared to the hole in a stage-curtain through which the actors see the audience, enabled her to watch the multitude of elegant carriages and the crowds of people carried past that one spot like the rapid slide of a magic lantern. Uncertain whether Roger would come on foot or in a carriage, the former lodger in the rue du Tourniquet examined in turn the pedestrians and the tilburys, a light style of phaeton recently brought to France by the English. Expressions of love and mutinous provocation crossed her face when, after watching for half an hour, neither heart nor sight had shown her the person for whom she waited. What contempt, what indifference was on her pretty face for all the other beings who were hurrying along like ants beneath her! Her gray eyes, sparkling with mischief, were dazzling. Wholly absorbed in her passion, she avoided the admiration of others with as much care as some women take to obtain it; and she troubled herself not at all as to whether a remembrance of her white figure leaning on the balcony should or should not disappear on the morrow from the minds of the passers who were now admiring her; she saw but one form, and she had in her head but one idea.

When the dappled head of a certain horse turned from the boulevard into the street, Caroline quivered and stood on tiptoe, trying to recognize the white

reins and the color of the tilbury. Yes, it was he! Roger, as he turned the corner, looked toward the balcony and whipped his horse and soon reached the bronze door, with which the animal was now as familiar as its master. The door of the apartment was opened by the maid, who had heard her mistress's cry of pleasure. Roger rushed into the salon, took Caroline in his arms, and kissed her with that effusion of feeling which accompanies the rare meetings of two creatures who love each other. Then they sat down together on a sofa before the fire, and silently looked at one another, — expressing their happiness only by the close grasp of their hands, and communicating their thoughts through their eyes.

“Yes, it is he!” she said at last. “Yes, it is you! Do you know that it is three whole days since I last saw you? — an age! But what is the matter? I know you have some trouble on your mind.”

“My poor Caroline — ”

“Oh, nonsense! poor Caroline — ”

“Don't laugh, my angel; we can't go to-night to the Feydeau.”

Caroline made a face of discontent, which faded instantly.

“How silly of me! why should I care about the theatre when I have you here. To see you! is n't that the only play I care for?” she cried, passing her hand through his hair.

“I am obliged to dine with the attorney-general. We have a most troublesome affair on hand. He met me in the great hall of the Palais; and as I open the case, he asked me to dinner that we might talk it

over previously. But, my darling, you can take your mother to the Feydeau and I'll join you there, if the conference ends early."

"Go to the theatre without you!" she cried, with an expression of astonishment; "enjoy a pleasure you can't share! Oh, Roger, you don't deserve to be kissed," she added, throwing her arm round his neck with a motion as naïve as it was seductive.

"Caroline, I must go now, for I have to dress, and it takes so long to reach the Marais; besides, I have business that must be finished before dinner."

"Monsieur," said Caroline, "take care what you say! My mother assures me that when men begin to talk to us of business that means they no longer love us."

"But, Caroline, I did come as I promised; I snatched this hour from my pitiless —"

"Oh, hush!" she said, putting her finger on his lips; "hush! don't you see that I was joking?"

At this moment Roger's eye lighted on an article of furniture brought that morning by the upholsterer, — the old rosewood embroidery-frame the product of which supported Caroline and her mother when they lived in the rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, — which had just been "done-up" like new, and on it a very beautiful tulle dress was already stretched.

"Yes, look at it, dear friend! I shall work to-night; and while I work I shall be thinking of those first days and weeks and months when you passed me without a word — but not without a look! those days when the memory of a look kept me awake at night. Oh! my dear frame, the handsomest bit of furniture

in the room, though you did not give it to me. Ah! you don't know!" she continued, seating herself on Roger's knee. "Listen! I want to give to the poor all I can now earn by embroidery. You have made me so rich, I want for nothing. How I love that dear property of Bellefeuille! less for what it is, however, than because you gave it to me. But tell me, Roger; I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille; can I? you ought to know. Is it legal or allowable?"

Seeing the little nod of affirmation to which Roger was led by his hatred for the name of Crochard, Caroline danced lightly about the room, clapping her hands together.

"It seems to me," she cried, "that I shall belong to you more in that way. Generally a girl gives up her own name and takes that of her husband."

An importunate idea, which she drove away instantly, made her blush. She took Roger by the hand and led him to the piano.

"Listen," she said. "I know my sonata now like an angel."

So saying, her fingers ran over the ivory keys, but a strong arm caught her round the waist and lifted her.

"Caroline, I ought to be far away by this time."

"You must go? Well, go, then," she said, pouting.

But she smiled as she looked at the clock, and cried out, joyously: —

"At any rate, I have kept you a quarter of an hour more."

"Adieu, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," he said, with the gentle mockery of love.

She took a kiss and led him to the door. When the

sound of his steps was no longer to be heard on the staircase she ran to the balcony to see him get into his tilbury, pick up the reins, and send her a last look. Then she listened to the roll of the wheels along the street, and followed with her eyes the mettlesome horse, the hat of the master, the gold lace on the groom's livery, and even looked long at the corner of the street which parted her from that vision of her heart.

Five years after the installation of Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille in the pretty apartment in the rue Taitbout, another domestic scene was happening there which tightened still further the bonds of affection between the two beings who loved each other.

In the middle of the blue salon and in front of the window that opened on the balcony, a little boy about four and a half years old was making an infernal racket by whipping and urging his rocking-horse, which was going at a pace that did not please him. The curls of his pretty blond head were falling in disorder on his collarette, and he smiled like an angel at his mother when she called to him from her sofa:

“Not so much noise, Charles; you'll wake your little sister.”

At that the inquiring boy jumped hastily from his horse and came on tiptoe, as if he feared to make a sound on the carpet; then, with a finger between his little teeth, he stood in one of those infantine attitudes which have so much grace because they are natural, and gently lifted the white muslin veil that hid the rosy face of a baby asleep on its mother's knee.

“Is she really asleep?” he said, much surprised. “Why does Eugénie sleep when we are all awake?” he inquired, opening wide his great black eyes which floated in liquid light.

“God only knows that,” replied Caroline, smiling.

Mother and son gazed at the little girl baptized that morning. Caroline, now about twenty-four years old, had developed a beauty which happiness unalloyed and constant pleasure had brought into bloom. In her, the woman was now complete. Happy in obeying all the wishes of her dear Roger, she had by degrees acquired the accomplishments in which she was formerly lacking. She could play quite well on the piano, and sang agreeably. Ignorant of the usages of society (which would have repulsed her, and where she would not have gone had it even desired her, for a happy woman does not seek the world), she had not learned how to assume the social elegance of manner nor how to maintain the conversation teeming with words and empty of thought which passes current in the world. But, on the other hand, she had laboriously obtained the knowledge and the accomplishments necessary to a mother whose ambition lies in bringing up her children properly.

Never to part from her son; to give him from his cradle those lessons of every hour which imprint upon the youthful soul a love of goodness and of beauty, to preserve him from all evil influences, to fulfil the wearisome functions of a nurse and the tender obligations of a mother, — such were her pleasures. From the very first day of her love the discreet and gentle creature resigned herself so thoroughly to make no

step beyond the enchanted sphere in which she found her joys, that after six years of the tenderest union she knew her friend only by the name of Roger. In her bedroom an engraving of Psyche coming with her lamp to look at Cupid, though forbidden by the god to do so, reminded her of the conditions of her happiness.

During these six years no ill-placed ambition on her part wearied Roger's heart, a treasure-house of kindness. Never did she wish for display, for diamonds, for toilets; she refused the luxury of a carriage offered a score of times to her vanity. To watch on the balcony for Roger's cabriolet, to go with him to the theatre, to ramble with him in fine weather in the country about Paris, to hope for him, to see him, to hope for him again, — that was the story of her life, poor in events, rich in affection.

While rocking to sleep with a song the baby, a girl, born a few months before the day of which we speak, she pleased herself by evoking her memories of the past. The period she liked best to dwell on was the month of September in every year, when Roger took her to Bellefeuille to enjoy the country at that season. Nature is then as prodigal of fruit as of flowers; the evenings are warm, the mornings soft, and the sparkle of summer still keeps at bay the melancholy ghost of autumn.

During the first period of their love Caroline attributed the calm equability of soul and the gentleness of which Roger gave her so many proofs to the rarity of their meetings, always longed for, and to their manner of life, which did not keep them perpetually in each other's presence, as with husband and wife. She

recalled with delight how, during their first stay on the beautiful little property in the Gâtinais, tormented by a vague fear, she watched him. Useless espial of love! Each of those joyful months passed like a dream in the bosom of a happiness that proved unchangeable. She had never seen that kind and tender being without a smile on his lips, — a smile that seemed the echo of her own. Sometimes these pictures too vividly evoked brought tears to her eyes; she fancied she did not love him enough, and was tempted to see in her equivocal situation a sort of tax levied by fate upon her love.

At other times an invincible curiosity led her to wonder for the millionth time what events they were which could have driven so loving a man as Roger to find his happiness in ways that were clandestine and illegal. She invented a score of romances, chiefly to escape admitting the real reason, long since divined, though her heart refused to believe in it.

She now rose, still holding her sleeping child in her arms, and went into the dining-room to superintend the arrangements of the table for dinner. The day was the 6th of May, 1822, the anniversary of their excursion to the park of Saint-Leu, when her life was decided; during every succeeding year that day had been kept as a festival of the heart. Caroline now selected the linen and ordered the arrangement of the dessert. Having thus taken the pains which she knew would please Roger, she laid the baby in its pretty cradle and took up her station on the balcony to watch for the useful cabriolet which had now replaced the elegant tilbury of former years.

After receiving the first onset of Caroline's caresses and those of the lively urchin who called him "papa," Roger went to the cradle, looked at his sleeping daughter, kissed her forehead, and drew from his pocket a long paper, covered with black lines.

"Caroline," he said, "here's the dowry of Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille."

The mother took the paper (a certificate of investment on the Grand-livre) gratefully.

"Why three thousand francs a year to Eugénie, when you only gave fifteen hundred a year to Charles?" she asked.

"Charles, my angel, will be a man," he answered. "Fifteen hundred francs will suffice to support him. With that income a man of energy is above want. If, by chance, your son should be a nullity, I do not wish to give him enough to make him dissipated. If he has ambition, that small amount of property will inspire him with a love of work, and it will also enable to work. Eugénie is a woman, and must be provided for."

The father began to play with Charles, whose lively demonstrations were proofs of the independence and liberty in which he was being educated. No fear between child and father destroyed that charm which compensates paternity for its heavy responsibilities; the gayety of the little family was as sweet as it was genuine. That evening a magic lantern was produced which cast upon a white sheet mysterious scenes and pictures to the great amazement of the boy. More than once the raptures of the innocent little fellow excited the wild laughter of his father and mother.

Later, when the child had gone to bed, the baby woke, demanding its legitimate nourishment. By the light of the lamp, beside the hearth, in that chamber of peace and pleasure, Roger abandoned himself to the happiness of contemplating the picture of Caroline with her infant at her breast, white and fresh as a lily when it blooms, her beautiful brown hair falling in such masses of curls as almost to hide her throat. The light, as it fell, brought out the charms of this young mother, — multiplying upon her and about her, on her clothes and on her infant, those picturesque effects which are produced by combinations of light and shade. The face of the calm and silent woman seemed sweeter than ever before to Roger, who looked with tender eyes at the red and curving lips from which no bitter or discordant word had ever issued. The same love shone in Caroline's own eyes as she examined Roger furtively, either to enjoy the effect she was producing, or to know if she might keep him that evening.

Roger, who saw that meaning in her glance, said, with feigned regret: —

“I must soon be going. I have important business to attend to; they expect me at home. Duty first; is n't that so, my darling?”

Caroline watched him with a sad and gentle look, which did not leave him ignorant of the pain of her sacrifice.

“Adieu, then,” she said. “Go now! If you stay an hour longer perhaps I shall not then be able to let you go.”

“My angel,” he said, smiling, “I have three days’

leave of absence, and I am supposed to be at this moment twenty leagues from Paris."

A few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was hurrying one morning to the rue Saint-Louis in the Marais, hoping not to arrive too late at a house where she usually went regularly once a week. A messenger had been sent to tell her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was dying from a complication of ills brought on by catarrh and rheumatism.

While Caroline was still on the way, certain scrupulous old women with whom Madame Crochard had made friends for the last few years, introduced a priest into the clean and comfortable apartment of the old mother on the second floor of the house. Madame Crochard's servant was ignorant that the pretty young lady with whom her mistress often dined was the old woman's daughter. She was the first to propose calling in a confessor, hoping, secretly, that the priest would be of as much use to her as to the sick woman.

Between two games of cards, or while walking together in the Jardin Turc, the old women with whom Madame Crochard gossiped daily had contrived to instil into the hardened heart of their friend certain scruples as to her past life, a few ideas of the future, a few fears on the subject of hell, and certain hopes of pardon based on a sincere return to the duties of religion. Consequently, during this solemn morning three old dames from the rue Saint-François and the rue Vieille-du-Temple established themselves in the salon where Madame Crochard was in the habit of receiving them every Tuesday. They each took turns

to keep the poor old creature company and give her those false hopes with which the sick are usually deluded.

It was not until the crisis seemed approaching and the doctor, called in the night before, refused to answer for the patient's life, that the three old women consulted one another to decide if it were necessary to notify Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Françoise, the maid, was finally instructed to send a messenger to the rue Taitbout to inform the young relation whose influence was feared by the four old women, each of whom devoutly hoped that the man might return too late with the person on whom Madame Crochard had seemed to set a great affection. The latter, rich to their minds, and spending at least three thousand francs a year, was courted and cared for by the female trio solely because none of these good friends, nor even Françoise herself, knew of her having any heirs. The opulence in which her young relation Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille lived (Madame Crochard refrained from calling Caroline her daughter, according to a well-known custom of the Opera of her day) seemed to justify their scheme of sharing the property of the dying woman among themselves.

Presently one of the three crones, who was watching the patient, put her shaking head into the room where the other two were waiting, and said: —

“It is time to send for the Abbé Fontanon. In two hours from now she will be unconscious, and could n't sign her name.”

Old Françoise departed immediately, and soon returned with a man in a black coat. A narrow fore-

head bespoke a narrow mind in this priest, whose face was of the commonest, — his heavy, hanging cheeks, his double chin, showing plainly enough a comfort-loving egotist. His powdered hair gave him a speciously mild appearance until he raised his small brown eyes, which were very prominent, and would have been in their proper place beneath the brows of a Kalmuc Tartar.

“Monsieur l’abbé,” Françoise was saying to him, “I thank you for your advice, but you must please to remember the care I have taken of this dear woman —”

Here she suddenly paused, observing that the door of the apartment was open and that the most insinuating of the three crones was standing on the landing to be the first to speak with the confessor.

When the ecclesiastic had graciously received the triple broadside of the three pious and devoted friends of the widow he went into the latter’s chamber and sat down by her bedside. Decency and a certain sense of propriety forced the three ladies and old Françoise to remain in the adjoining room, where they assumed looks of grief and mourning, which none but wrinkled old faces like theirs can mimic to perfection.

“Ah! but haven’t I been unlucky?” cried Françoise, with a sigh. “This is the fourth mistress I’ve had the grief to bury. The first left me an annuity of a hundred francs, the second a hundred and fifty, the third a sum down of three thousand. After thirty years’ service that’s all I’ve got!”

The servant presently used her right of going and

coming to slip into a little closet where she could overhear the priest's words.

"I see with pleasure," said Fontanon, "that your feelings, my daughter, are those of true piety. You are wearing, I see, some holy relic."

Madame Crochard made a vague movement which showed perhaps that she was not wholly in her right mind, for she dragged out the imperial cross of the Legion of honor.

The abbé rolled back his chair on beholding the effigy of the emperor. But he soon drew closer to his penitent, who talked to him in so low a voice that for a time Françoise could hear nothing.

"A curse upon me!" cried the old woman suddenly, in a louder voice. "Don't abandon me, monsieur l'abbé. Do you really think I shall have to answer for my daughter's soul?"

The priest spoke in so low a voice that Françoise could not hear him through the partition.

"Alas!" cried the widow, shrilly, "the wretch has given me nothing that I can will to any one. When he took my poor Caroline, he separated her from me, and gave me only three thousand francs a year, the capital of which is to go to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and only an annuity!" cried Françoise, hastening into the salon.

The three old women looked at each other in amazement. The one whose chin and nose were nearest together (thus revealing a certain superior hypocrisy and shrewdness) winked at the other two, and as soon as Françoise had turned her back she made them a sign which meant, 'She's a sly one; she has got herself down on three wills already.'

The three old women remained therefore where they were. But the abbé presently joined them, and after they had heard what he had to say, they hurried like witches down the stairs and out of the house, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress.

Madame Crochard, whose sufferings were increasing cruelly, rang in vain for her maid, who was busy in making a search among the old woman's receptacles, and contented herself by calling out from time to time: —

“Yes, yes! I'm coming! — presently!”

The doors of the closets and wardrobes were heard to open and shut, as if Françoise were looking for some lottery-ticket or bank-note hidden among their contents. At this moment, when the crisis was impending, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille arrived.

“Oh! my dear mother,” she cried, “how criminal I am not to have got here sooner! You suffer, and I did not know it! my heart never told me you were in pain! But here I am now —”

“Caroline.”

“Yes.”

“They brought me a priest.”

“A doctor is what you want,” cried Caroline. “Françoise, fetch a doctor. How could those ladies neglect to have a doctor?”

“They brought me a priest,” reiterated Madāme Crochard, with a sigh.

“How she suffers! and not a thing to give her; no quieting medicine, nothing!”

The mother made an indistinct sign; but Caroline's intelligent eye saw what was meant; she was instantly silent herself that her mother might speak.

“They brought me a priest,” said the old woman for the third time, “on pretence of confessing me. Beware for yourself, Caroline,” she cried out painfully, making a last effort; “the priest dragged out of me the name of your protector.”

“How did you know it, my poor mother?” The old woman died while striving to look satirically at her daughter. If Caroline had observed her mother’s face at that moment she would have seen what no one will ever see, namely, — Death laughing.

To understand the secrets underlying this introduction to our present Scene, we must for a time forget these personages and turn back to the story of anterior events. The conclusion of that story will be seen to be connected with the death of Madame Crochard. These two parts will then form one history, which, by a law peculiar to Parisian life, had produced two distinct and separate lines of action.

II.

THE FIRST LIFE.

TOWARD the close of November, 1805, a young lawyer, then about twenty-six years of age, was coming down the grand staircase of the mansion occupied by the arch-chancellor of the Empire, about three in the morning. When he reached the court-yard in his evening dress and saw a thin coating of ice, he gave an exclamation of dismay, through which, however, shone that sense of amusement which seldom deserts a Frenchman. Looking about him he saw no hackney-coaches, and heard in the distance none of those familiar sounds produced by the wooden shoes of Parisian coachmen and their gruff voices. The trampling of a few horses were heard in the court-yard, among them those of the chief-justice, whom the young man had just seen playing cards with Cambacérés. Suddenly he felt the friendly clap of a hand upon his shoulder; looking round, he beheld the chief-justice and bowed to him.

As the footman was letting down the steps of his carriage, the former legislator of the Convention had observed the young man's predicament.

"All cats are gray at night," he said, gayly. "The chief-justice won't compromise himself if he does take a barrister to his lodgings. Especially," he

added, "if the said barrister is the nephew of an old colleague, and one of the lights of that great Council of State which gave the Code Napoléon to France."

The young man got into the carriage, obeying an imperative sign from the chief law officer of imperial justice.

"Where do you live?" asked the minister, while the footman awaited the order before he closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur."

The horses started, and the young lawyer found himself *tête à tête* with the minister, whom he had vainly endeavored to speak with both during and after the sumptuous dinner of Cambacérès; it was evident to his mind that the chief-justice had taken pains to avoid him during the whole evening.

"Well, Monsieur de Granville, it seems to me that you are on the right road now —"

"So long as I am seated by your Excellency —"

"I'm not joking," said the minister. "You were called to the bar two years ago, and since then your defence in the Simeuse and the Hauteserre trials have placed you very high."

"I have thought, until now, that my devotion to those unfortunate *émigrés* did me an injury."

"You are very young," said the minister, gravely. "But," he added, after a pause, "you pleased the arch-chancellor to-night. Enter the magistracy of the bar; we back the right men there. The nephew of a man for whom Cambacérès and I feel the deepest interest ought not to remain a mere pleader for want of influence. Your uncle helped us to come safely through a stormy period, and such services must not be forgotten."

The minister was silent for a moment. "Before long," he resumed, "I shall have three places vacant, in the Lower court and in the Imperial court of Paris; come and see me then, and choose the one that suits you. Until then, work hard; but do not come to my court. In the first place, I am overrun with work; and in the next, your rivals will guess your intentions and try to injure you. Cambacérés and I, by saying not one word to you to-night, were protecting you from the dangers of favoritism."

As the minister ended these words the carriage drew up on the Quai des Augustins. The young barrister thanked his generous protector with effusive warmth of heart, and rapped loudly on the door, for the keen north wind blew about his calves with wintry rigor. Presently an old porter drew the cord, and, as the young man entered, he called to him in a wheezy voice:—

"Monsieur, here's a letter for you."

The young man took it, and tried, in spite of the cold, to read the writing by the paling gleam of a street-lamp.

"It is from my father!" he exclaimed, taking his candlestick from the porter. He then ran rapidly up to his room and read the following letter:—

"Take the mail coach, and, if you get here promptly, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister; she is now the only child, and we know that she does not hate you. Madame Bontems will probably leave her forty thousand francs a year in addition to her dowry. I have prepared your

way. Our friends may be surprised to see a noble family like ours ally itself with the Bontems. It is true that old Bontems was a *bonnet rouge* of the deepest dye, who got possession of a vast amount of the national property for almost nothing. But in the first place, what he got was the property of monks who will never return, and in the next, inasmuch as you have already derogated from our station in making yourself a barrister, I don't see why we should shrink from making another concession to modern ideas. The girl will have three hundred thousand francs, and I will give you one hundred thousand; your mother's property is worth a hundred and fifty thousand more, or nearly that. Therefore, my dear son, if you are willing to enter the magistracy, I see you in a fair way to become a senator like the rest of them. My brother-in-law, the councillor of State, will not lend a hand for that, I know, but as he is not married, his property will be yours some day. In reaching that position you perch high enough to watch events.

“Adieu; I embrace you.”

Young de Granville went to bed with his head full of projects, each one more delightful than the last. Powerfully protected by Cambacérès, the chief-justice, and his maternal uncle, who was one of the constructors of the Code, he was about to begin his career in an enviable position before the leading court of France and a member of that bar from which Napoleon was selecting the highest functionaries of his empire. And now, in addition to these prospects, came that of a

fortune sufficiently brilliant to enable him to sustain his rank, to which the puny revenue of five thousand francs which he derived from an estate left him by his mother would not have sufficed.

To complete his dreams of ambition came those of personal happiness; he evoked the naïve face of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the companion of his childish plays. So long as he remained a mere child his father and mother had not opposed his intimacy with the pretty daughter of their country neighbor; but when, during his short visits to Bayeux at the time of his college vacations, his parents, bigoted aristocrats, noticed his affection for the young girl, they forbade him to think of her. For ten years past young Granville had seldom seen his former companion, whom he called his "little wife." On the few occasions when the young pair had managed to evade the watchfulness of their families, they had scarcely done more than exchange a few words as they passed in the street or sat near each other in church. Their fortunate days were those when they met at some rural fête, called in Normandy an "assembly," when they were able to watch each other furtively. During his last vacation, Granville had seen Angélique twice; and the lowered eyes and dejected look of his "little wife" made him think she was oppressed by some secret despotism.

The morning after receiving his father's letter, the young lawyer appeared at the coach office in the rue Notre-Dame des Victoires, by seven o'clock, and was lucky enough to get a seat in the diligence then starting for Caen.

It was not without deep emotion that the new barrister beheld the towers of the cathedral of Bayeux. No hope of his life had yet been disappointed; his heart was opening to all the noblest sentiments which stir the youthful mind. After an over-long banquet of welcome with his father and a few old friends, the impatient young man was taken to a certain house in the rue Teinture, already well-known to him. His heart beat violently as his father—who was still called in Bayeux the Comte de Granville—rapped loudly at a porte-cochère, the green paint of which was peeling off in scales.

It was four in the afternoon. A young servant-girl, wearing a cotton cap, saluted the gentlemen with a bob courtesy, and replied that the ladies were at vespers, but would soon be home. The count and his son were shown into a lower room which served as a salon and looked like the parlor of a convent. Panels of polished walnut darkened the room, around which a few chairs covered with tapestry were symmetrically placed. The sole ornament of the stone chimney-piece was a green-hued mirror, from either side of which projected the twisted arms of those old-fashioned candelabra made at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. On the panelled wall opposite to the fireplace young Granville saw an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory weathed with consecrated box.

Though lighted by three windows, which looked upon a provincial garden of symmetrical square beds outlined with box, the room was so dark that it was difficult to distinguish on the wall opposite to the windows three church pictures, the work of some learned artist,

and bought, during the Revolution no doubt, by old Bontems, who, in his capacity as head of the district, did not forget his own interests.

From the carefully waxed floor to the curtains of green checked linen everything shone with monastic cleanliness. The heart of the young man was chilled involuntarily by this silent retreat in which Angélique lived. His recent experience of the brilliant salons of Paris in the vortex of continual fêtes had easily effaced from his mind the dull and placid life of the provinces; the contrast was now so abruptly presented that he was conscious of a species of inward repugnance. To come from a reception at Cambacérès, where life was so ample, where intellects had breadth and compass, where the imperial glory was so vividly reflected, and to fall suddenly into a circle of mean ideas was like being transported from Italy to Greenland.

“To live here! why, it is not living,” he said inwardly, as he looked round this salon of methodism.

The old count, who noted the surprise on his son’s face, took his arm and led him to a window where there was still a little light, and while the woman lit the yellowed candles above the chimney-piece, he endeavored to disperse the clouds that this aspect of dulness gathered on the young man’s brow.

“Listen, my boy,” he said. “The widow of old Bontems is desperately pious, — when the devil gets old, you know! I see that the odor of sanctity is too much for you. Well, now, here’s the truth. The old woman is besieged by priests; they have persuaded her that she has still time to go straight to heaven;

and so, to make sure of Saint Peter and his keys, she buys them. She goes to mass every day, takes the sacrament every Sunday that God creates, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has given the cathedral so many ornaments, albs, and copes, she has bedizened the canopy with such loads of feathers that the last procession of the Fête-Dieu brought a greater crowd than a hanging, merely to see the priests so gorgeously dressed and all their utensils regilt. This house, my boy, is holy ground. But I've managed to persuade the foolish old thing not to give those pictures you see there to the church; one is a Domenichino, the other two, Correggio and Andrea del Sarto, — worth a great deal of money."

"But Angélique?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"If you don't marry her Angélique is lost," replied the count. "Our good apostles keep advising her to be a virgin and martyr. I've had a world of trouble to rouse her little heart by talking of you, — ever since she became an only child. But can't you see that, once married, you'll take her to Paris, and once there fêtes, and marriage, and the theatre and the excitements of Parisian life will soon make her forget the confessionals and fasts, hair-shirts and masses on which these creatures feed?"

"But won't the fifty thousand francs a year derived from ecclesiastical property be given back?"

"Ah! there's the rub," cried the count, with a knowing look. "In consideration of this marriage — for Madame Bontems' vanity is not a little tickled at the idea of grafting the Bontems on the genealogical tree of the Granvilles — the said mother gives her

fortune outright to her daughter, reserving to herself only a life-interest in it. Of course the clergy oppose the marriage; but I have had the banns published; all is ready; in a week you'll be out of the claws of the old woman and her abbés. You'll get the prettiest girl in Bayeux, — a little duck who'll never give you any trouble, for she has principles. She has been mortified in the flesh, as they say in their jargon, by fasts and prayers, and," he added, in a low voice, "by her mother."

A rap discreetly given to the door silenced the count, who expected to see the two ladies enter. A young servant-lad with an air of important business entered, but, intimidated by the sight of two strangers, he made a sign to the woman, who went up to him. The lad wore a blue jacket with short tails which flapped about his hips, and blue and white striped trousers; his hair was cut round, and his face was that of a choir-boy, so expressive was it of that forced compunction which all the members of a *dévôte* household acquire.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne, do you know where the books for the Office of the Virgin are? The ladies of the congregation of the Sacré-Cœur are to make a procession this evening in the church."

Gatienne went to fetch the books.

"Will it take long, my little friar?" asked the count.

"Oh! not more than half an hour."

"Suppose we go and see it; lots of pretty women," said the father to the son. "Besides, a visit to the cathedral won't do us any harm"

The young lawyer followed his father with an irresolute air.

“What’s the matter with you?” asked the count.

“Well, the fact is, father, that I — I — I think I am right.”

“But you have n’t yet said anything.”

“True; but I have been thinking that having saved a part of your former fortune you will leave it to me some day, and a long day hence I hope. Now if you are willing to give me, as you say, a hundred thousand francs to make this marriage, which may be a foolish one, I’d rather take fifty thousand to escape unhappiness and stay a bachelor. Even so I shall have a fortune equal to that which Mademoiselle Bontems will bring me.”

“Are you crazy?”

“No, father. Here is what I mean. The chief-justice promised me two days ago an appointment at the Paris bar. Fifty thousand francs joined to what I now possess, together with the salary of the place, will give me an income of twelve thousand francs; and I should undoubtedly have opportunities of fortune far preferable to those of a marriage which may prove as poor in happiness as it is rich in means.”

“I see plainly,” said his father, laughing, “that you never lived under the *ancien régime*. Did we of that day ever trouble ourselves about our wives, I’d like to know?”

“But, father, marriage has become in our day —”

“*Ah ça!*” said the count, interrupting his son, “then all is true that my old friends of the emigration used to tell me? Has the Revolution bequeathed us

nothing but life without gayety, infecting the youth of France with equivocal principles? Are you going to talk to me, like my brother-in-law the Jacobin, of the Nation, and public morality, and disinterestedness? Good heavens! without the Emperor's sisters what would become of us?"

The old man, still vigorous, whom the peasants on his property continued to call the Seigneur de Granville, concluded these words as they entered the cathedral. Disregarding the sanctity of the place, he hummed an air from the opera of "Rose et Colas" while taking the holy water; then he led his son along the lateral aisles, stopping at each column to examine the rows of heads, lined up like those of soldiers on parade.

The special office of the Sacré-Cœur was about to begin. The ladies belonging to that society had gathered near the choir; the count and his son moved on to that part of the nave and stood leaning against a column in the darkest corner, whence they could see the entire mass of heads, which bore some resemblance to a meadow studded with flowers.

Suddenly, within a few feet of young Granville, the sweetest voice he could conceive a human being to possess rose like the song of the first nightingale after a dreary winter. Though accompanied by other women's voices and the tones of the organ, that voice stirred his nerves as if they had been suddenly assailed by the too rich, too keen notes of an harmonica. The Parisian turned round and saw a young girl whose face, from the bowed attitude of the head, was completely hidden in a large bonnet of some white material. He

felt it was from her that this clear melody proceeded; he fancied that he recognized Angélique in spite of the brown pelisse which wrapped her figure, and he nudged his father's arm.

"Yes, that 's she," said the count, after looking in the direction his son had pointed out.

The old gentleman showed by a gesture the pale face of an elderly woman whose eyes, encircled by dark lines, had already taken note of the strangers, though her deceitful glance seemed never to have left her prayer-book.

Angélique raised her head toward the altar, as if to inhale the penetrating perfume of the incense, clouds of which were floating near the women. By the mysterious gleams cast from the tapers, the lamp of the nave, and a few wax-candles fastened to the columns, the young man saw a sight which shook his resolutions. A white silk bonnet framed a face of charming regularity, ending the oval by a bow of satin ribbon beneath the dimpled chin. Above a narrow but delicate forehead the pale gold hair was parted into bands which came down upon her cheeks like the shadow of foliage on a bunch of flowers. The arches of the eyebrows were drawn with the precision so much admired on beautiful Chinese faces. The nose, almost aquiline, possessed an unusual firmness of outline, and the lips were like two rosy lines traced by love's most delicate implement. The eyes, of a pale, clear blue, were expressive of purity.

Though Granville remarked a sort of rigid silence upon this charming face, he could readily assign it to the feelings of devotion that were then in the girl's

soul. The sacred words of the prayer passed from those rosy lips in a cloud, as it were, of perfume, which the cold of the church sent visibly into the atmosphere. Involuntarily, the young man bent forward to breathe that divine exhalation. The movement attracted the girl's attention, and her eyes, hitherto fixed on the altar, turned toward Granville. The dim light showed him to her indistinctly, but she recognized the companion of her childhood; a memory more powerful than prayer brought a vivid brilliancy to her face, and she blushed. The young man quivered with joy as the emotions of another life were visibly vanquished by emotions of love, and the solemnity of the sanctuary seemed eclipsed by earthly memories. But his triumph was soon over. Angélique lowered her veil, recovered a calm countenance, and began once more to sing without a thrill in her voice that showed the least emotion. But Granville found himself under the thralldom of a new desire, and all his ideas of prudence vanished.

By the time the service was over his impatience had become so great that without allowing the ladies to return home he went up at once to greet his "little wife." A recognition that was shy on both sides took place in the porch of the cathedral under the eyes of the faithful. Madame Bontems trembled with pride as she took the arm which the Comte de Granville, much provoked by his son's scarcely decent impatience, was forced to offer her before the eyes of all present.

During the fifteen days that now elapsed between the official presentation of the young Vicomte de Granville as the accepted suitor of Mademoiselle Angélique

Bontems and the solemn day of the marriage, the young man came assiduously to visit his love in the gloomy parlor, to which he grew accustomed. These long visits were partly made for the purpose of watching Angélique's nature; for Granville's prudence revived on the day after that first interview. He always found his future wife seated before a little table of Santa Lucia wood, employed in marking the linen of her trousseau. Angélique never spoke first of religion. If the young lawyer began to play with the beads of the handsome rosary which lay beside her in a crimson velvet bag, if he smiled as he looked at a relic which always accompanied that instrument of devotion, Angélique would take the chaplet gently from his hands, giving him a supplicating look; then, without a word, she replaced it in its bag and locked them up. If, occasionally (to test her), Granville risked some objecting remark against certain practices of religion, the pretty creature would listen to him with the settled smile of fixed conviction on her lips.

“We must either believe nothing, or believe all that the Church teaches,” she replied. “Would you wish a girl without religion for the mother of your children? No. What man would dare to judge between God and the unbelievers? Can I blame what the Church enjoins?”

Angélique seemed so inspired by fervent charity, Granville saw her turn such penetrating and beseeching glances on him, that he was several times tempted to embrace her religion. The profound conviction she felt of walking in the true and only path awoke in the

heart of the future magistrate certain doubts of which she endeavored to make the most.

Granville then committed the enormous fault of mistaking the signs of an eager desire for those of love. Angélique was so pleased to unite the voice of her heart with that of her duty, in yielding to an inclination she had felt from childhood, that the young man, misled, did not distinguish which of the two voices was the stronger. Are not all young men primarily disposed to trust the promises of a pretty face, and to infer beauty of soul from beauty of feature? An indefinable feeling leads them to believe that moral perfection must coincide with physical perfection. If her religion had not permitted Angélique to yield to her feelings they would soon have dried up in her heart like a plant watered with an acid. Could a lover beloved become aware of the secret fanaticism of the girl's nature?

Such was the history of young Granville's feelings during this fortnight, devoured like a book whose dénouement is absorbing. Angélique, attentively studied, seemed to him the gentlest of womankind, and he even found himself giving thanks to Madame Bontems, who, by inculcating the principles of religion so strongly in her daughter, had trained her, as it were, to meet the trials of life.

On the day appointed for the signing of the marriage contract Madame Bontems made her son-in-law swear solemnly to respect the religious practices of her daughter, to allow her absolute liberty of conscience, to let her take the sacrament and go to church and to confession as often as she pleased, and never

to oppose her in her choice of a confessor. At this solemn moment Angélique looked at her future husband with so pure and innocent an air that Granville did not hesitate to take the required oath. A smile flickered on the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, the pallid priest who directed the consciences of the family. With a slight motion of her head, Mademoiselle Bontems promised her lover never to make an ill use of that liberty of conscience. As for the old count, he whistled under his breath, to the tune of "Va-t-en voir s'ils viennent."

After the proper number of days granted to the *retours de nocés*, customary in the provinces, Granville returned with his wife to Paris, where the young lawyer was now appointed as substitute to perform the duties of attorney-general to the imperial court of the Seine. When the new couple began to look about them for a residence, Angélique employed the influence possessed by every woman during the honeymoon to induce Granville to take a large apartment on the ground-floor of a house which formed the corner of the rue Vieille-du-Temple and the rue Neuve-Saint-François. The principal reason for her choice was the fact that this house was close to the rue d'Orléans, in which was a church, and it was also near a small chapel in the rue Saint-Louis.

"A good housekeeper makes proper provision," said her husband, laughing.

Angélique begged him to observe that the Marais quarter was in the neighborhood of the Palais de Justice, and that the magistrates he had just called upon lived there. A large garden gave, for a young house-

hold, an additional value to the residence, — their children, “if heaven sent them any,” could play there; the court-yard was spacious, and the stables were fine. Granville would much have preferred a house in the *Chaussée-d’Antin*, where everything was young and lively, where the fashions appear in all their novelty, where the neighboring population is elegant, and the distance less to theatres and other sources of amusement. But he found himself forced to yield to the persuasions of a young wife making her first request, and thus, solely to please her, he buried himself in the *Marais*.

Granville’s new functions required an assiduous labor, all the more because they were new to him; he therefore gave his first thought to the furnishing of his study and the arrangement of his library, where he quickly installed himself in the midst of a mass of documents, leaving his young wife to direct the decoration of the rest of the house. He threw the responsibility of these purchases, usually a source of pleasure and tender recollection to young wives, the more willingly upon *Angélique* because he was ashamed of depriving her of his presence far more than the rules of the honeymoon permitted. But after he had thoroughly settled to his work, the young official allowed his wife to entice him out of his study and show him the effect of the furniture and decorations, which so far he had only seen piecemeal.

If it is true, as the adage says, that we may judge of a woman by the door of her house, the rooms of that house must reveal her mind with even more fidelity. Whether it was that *Madame de Granville*

had given her custom to tradesmen without any taste, or that her own nature was inscribed on the quantity of things ordered by her, certain it is that the young husband was astonished at the dreariness and cold solemnity that reigned in the new home. He saw nothing graceful; all was discord; no pleasure was granted to the eye. The spirit of formality and pettiness which characterized the parlor at Bayeux reappeared in the Parisian salon beneath ceilings and cornices decorated with commonplace arabesques, the long convoluted strands of which were in execrable taste.

With the desire to exonerate his wife, the young man retraced his steps and examined once more the long and lofty antechamber through which the apartment was entered. The color of the woodwork, chosen by his wife, was much too sombre; the dark-green velvet that covered the benches only added to the dullness of the room, — of no great importance, to be sure, except as it gave an idea of the rest of the house; just as we often judge of a man's mind by his first words. An antechamber is a species of preface which announces all, but pledges nothing. The young man asked himself if his wife could really have chosen the lamp in the form of an antique lantern which hung in the middle of this barren hall, that was paved with black and white marble and hung with a paper imitating blocks of stone with here and there green patches of simulated moss and lichen. A large but old barometer hung in the centre of one of the panels as if to make the barrenness of the place more visible.

The husband looked at his wife; he saw her so

satisfied with the red trimmings that edged the cotton curtains, so pleased with the barometer and the decent statue which adorned the top of a huge gothic stove, that he had not the barbarous courage to destroy those fond illusions. Instead of condemning his wife, Granville condemned himself; he blamed his neglect of his first duty, which was surely to guide the steps of a girl brought up in Bayeux and ignorant of Paris.

After this specimen, the reader can easily imagine the decoration of the other rooms. What could be expected of a young woman who took fright at the legs of a caryatide, and rejected with disgust a candelabrum or a bit of furniture if the nudity of an Egyptian torso appeared upon it. At this period the school of David had reached the apex of its fame; everything in France felt the influence of the correctness of his drawing and his love for antique forms, which made his painting, as one might say, a species of colored sculpture. But none of the inventions of imperial luxury obtained a place in Madame de Granville's home. The vast square salon retained the white paint and the faded gilding of the Louis XV. period, in which the architects were prodigal of those insufferable festoons due to the sterile fecundity of the designers of that epoch. If the slightest harmony had reigned, if the articles of furniture had taken, in modern mahogany, the twisted forms brought into fashion by the corrupted taste of Boucher, Angélique's house would merely have offered the odd contrast of young people living in the nineteenth century as if they belonged to the eighteenth; but no, — a mass of heterogeneous things produced the most ridiculous

anachronisms. The consoles, clocks, and candelabra represented warriors and their attributes, which the triumphs of the Empire had rendered dear to Paris. Greek helmets, Roman broad-swords, shields due to military enthusiasm which now decorated the most pacific articles of furniture were little in accordance with the delicate and prolix arabesques, the delight of Madame de Pompadour. Pietistic devotion carries with it a sort of wearisome humility, which does not exclude pride. Whether from modesty or natural inclination, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror for light or gay colors. Perhaps she thought that brown and purple comported best with the dignity of a magistrate. How could a young girl accustomed to an austere life conceive of those luxurious sofas, those elegant and treacherous boudoirs where pleasures and dangers take their rise?

The poor magistrate was in despair. By the tone of approbation with which he echoed the praises which his wife was bestowing upon herself she perceived that she had not pleased him; and she showed such grief at her failure that the amorous Granville saw another proof of love for him in her excessive pain, instead of seeing what it really was, — a wound to her self-love. A young girl suddenly taken from the mediocrity of provincial ideas, unaccustomed to the coquetry and elegance of Parisian life, could she have done better? The young husband preferred to believe that the choice of his wife had been guided by her tradesmen, rather than admit to himself what was really the truth. Less loving, he would have felt that the dealers, quick to divine the thoughts of their customers, must have

blessed heaven for sending them a young *dévoté* devoid of taste, who enabled them to get rid of things that were otherwise unsalable. As it was, he did his best to console his wife.

“Happiness, my dear Angélique, does n’t depend on furniture that is more or less elegant; it depends on the sweetness and kindness and love of a woman.”

“It is my duty to love you; and no duty can ever please me as much,” replied Angélique, softly.

Nature has put into a woman’s heart so great a desire to please, so great a need of love, that even in a bigoted young girl ideas of a future life and of working for salvation must succumb in some degree to the first joys of marriage. So that, since the month of April, the period at which they were married, until the beginning of the winter, the married pair had enjoyed a perfect union. Love and work have the virtue of making a man indifferent to external matters. Obligated to spend half the day at the Palais de Justice, required to debate the solemn interests of the life or fate of men, Granville was less likely than other husbands to see or know what went on within his own household. If on Fridays his table was served with a *maigre* dinner, if by chance he asked for a dish of meat without obtaining it, his wife, forbidden by the Gospels to tell a lie, contrived by various little deceptions (allowable in the interests of religion) to make her premeditated purpose appear like an act of forgetfulness or the result of an empty market; she excused herself often by throwing the blame upon her cook, and even went so far on one occasion as to scold him for it. At this period young

magistrates were not in the habit of keeping fasts, Ember-days, and vigils as they do in our time; Granville therefore did not at first notice the periodicity of his *maigre* meals, which his wife, moreover, took wily care to make extremely delicate by means of teal, wild-duck, and fish, the amphibious flesh of which, or the careful seasoning, deceived his taste.

Thus the young magistrate lived, without being aware of it, in an orthodox manner, and earned his salvation unknown to himself. On week-days he did not know if his wife went to church or not. On Sundays, by a very natural courtesy, he accompanied her to mass as if to reward her for occasionally sacrificing vespers to be with him; he therefore did not at first realize the rigidity of his wife's pious habits. Theatres being intolerable in summer on account of the heat, Granville had no occasion to ask his wife to go there; the serious question of theatre-going was, therefore, not mooted. In the first months of a marriage to which a man has been led by the beauty of a young girl, he is never exacting in his demands; youth is more eager than discriminating. How could he see the coldness, the reserve, the frigidity of a woman to whom he attributed a warmth of enthusiasm equal to his own? It is necessary to reach a certain conjugal tranquillity before perceiving that a true *dévoté* accepts a man's love with her arms crossed. Granville, thus in the dark, regarded himself as sufficiently happy until a fatal event came to influence the future of his marriage.

In the month of September, 1808, the canon of the cathedral at Bayeux, who had formerly directed the

consciences of Madame Bontems and her daughter came to Paris, led by an ambition to obtain a post in one of the great churches, no doubt considering it as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. In recovering his former power over his lamb he shuddered, as he said, to find her already so changed by the air of Paris; and he set himself to the work of drawing her back to his chilly fold. Frightened by the remonstrances of the ex-canon, — a man about thirty-eight years old, who brought into the midst of the enlightened and tolerant clergy of Paris the harshness of provincial Catholicism, with its inflexible bigotry, whose manifold exactions are so many shackles to timid souls, — Madame de Granville repented of her sins and returned to her Jansenism.

It would be wearisome to describe, step by step, the incidents which led insensibly to unhappiness within the bosom of the Granville household; it will perhaps suffice to relate the principal facts without being scrupulous to give them their proper order and sequence. The first misunderstanding between the young couple was, however, sufficiently striking to be carefully related here.

When Granville wished to take his wife into society she never refused any staid receptions, or dinners, concerts, and assemblies at the houses of magistrates ranking above her husband in the judicial hierarchy; but she contrived, for a long time, under pretext of a headache or other illness, to avoid a ball. One day Granville, impatient at last with these wilful excuses, suppressed the written notice of a ball at the house of a councillor of State, and deceived his wife by a ver-

bal invitation. When the evening came her health was not in question, and he took her, for the first time, to a really magnificent fête.

“My dear,” he said, after their return, observing her depressed air, which annoyed him, “your position as my wife, the rank to which you are entitled in society, and the fortune you enjoy, impose obligations upon you which you cannot escape. You ought to go with me into society, especially to large balls, and appear there in a suitable manner.”

“But, my dear friend, what was there so unsuitable in my dress?”

“I did not refer to your dress, my dear, but to your manner. When a young man came up to speak to you, you grew so distant that a foolish observer might have thought that you feared for your virtue. You seemed to think that a smile would compromise you; you really appeared to be asking God to forgive the sins of the persons who surrounded you. The world, my dear angel, is not a convent. As you yourself have mentioned dress, I will also say that it is a duty in your position to follow the fashions and usages of society.”

“Do you wish me to show my shape like those brazen women I saw last night, who wore their gowns so low that any one could plunge his immodest eyes on their bare shoulders and —”

“There’s a difference, my dear, between uncovering the whole bust and giving grace and charm to the figure,” said the husband, interrupting the wife. “You wore three rows of tulle ruches swathing your neck up to your chin. You really seem to have begged

your dressmaker to destroy the grace of your shoulders and the outline of your bust with as much care as a coquettish woman puts into the choice of becoming garments. Your neck was buried under such innumerable pleats and folds that people laughed last night at your affected modesty. You would be horrified if I repeated to you the unpleasant things that were said of you."

"Those to whom such obscenities are pleasing will not be burdened by the weight of my sins," replied the young wife, dryly.

"You did not dance," said Granville.

"I shall never dance," she replied.

"But if I say that you ought to dance?" said the magistrate, hastily. "Yes, you ought to follow the fashions, wear flowers in your hair, and diamonds. Reflect, my dear, that rich people, and we are rich, are bound to maintain the luxury of a State. Isn't it better to keep the manufactories busy and prosperous than spend your money in alms, through the clergy?"

"You talk like a politician," said Angélique.

"And you like a churchman," he replied, sharply.

The discussion now became very bitter. Madame de Granville put into her answers, which were very gentle, and uttered in tones as clear as the tinkling of a bell, a stolid obstinacy which betrayed the sacerdotal influence. She claimed the rights which Granville's promise secured to her, and told him that her confessor had expressly forbidden her to go to balls. In reply Granville endeavored to prove to her that the priest was exceeding the rights of his office according to the regulations of the Church itself.

This odious dispute was renewed with far more violence and acrimony on both sides when Granville wished his wife to accompany him to the theatre. Finally the husband, for the sole purpose of breaking down the pernicious influence exercised by the confessor, brought the quarrel to such a pitch that Madame de Granville, driven to bay, wrote to the court of Rome to inquire whether a woman could, without losing her salvation, wear a low dress and go to the theatre to please her husband. An answer was promptly returned by the venerable Pius VII., who strongly condemned the wife's resistance and blamed the confessor. This letter, a true conjugal catechism, seemed as if it were dictated by the tender voice of Fénelon, whose grace and sweetness emanated from it. "A wife," it said, "is in her right place wherever her husband takes her." "If she commits a sin by his order, it is not she who will answer for that sin." These two passages in the pope's homily made Madame de Granville and her confessor accuse the pontiff of irreligion.

Before the letter arrived, Granville had discovered the strict observance of the ecclesiastical laws of fasting, which his wife now imposed upon him more openly; and he gave orders to the servants that he himself was to be served with meat daily. Notwithstanding the extreme displeasure which this order caused his wife, Granville, to whom feast or fast was of little real consequence, maintained it with virile firmness. The feeblest of thinking creatures is wounded in his inmost being when another will than his own imposes secretly a thing he would have done

of his own monition willingly. Of all tyrannies, the most odious is that which deprives the soul of the merit of its actions and its thoughts; the mind is made to abdicate without having reigned. The sweetest word to say, the tenderest feeling to express, die on our lips when we think they are compulsory.

Before long the young magistrate gave up receiving his friends either at dinner or in the evening; the house soon seemed to be one of mourning. A household which has a *dévôte* for its mistress assumes a peculiar aspect. The servants under the eye of such a woman are chosen from among those self-called pious persons who have a physiognomy of their own. Just as a jovial youth entering the gendarmerie acquires the gendarme face, so domestic servants who are trained to the practice of devotion contract a uniform and peculiar countenance, a habit of lowering the eyes, of maintaining an attitude of compunction, a livery of cant, in short, which humbugs wear marvellously well.

Besides this, *dévôtes* form among themselves a species of republic; they all know one another; their servants, whom they recommend within their own circle, are like a race apart, preserved by them as horse-breeders admit to their stables only such animals as possess a clear pedigree. The more a so-called unbeliever examines the home of a *dévôte*, the more he finds that everything about it is stamped with an indescribable unpleasantness. He finds there the symptoms of avarice and mystery that characterize the house of a usurer; also that perfumed dampness of incense which makes the chilly atmosphere of chapels. The paltry rigor, the poverty of ideas which appear

in all things can only be expressed by the one word *bigotry*. In these repellent, implacable houses bigotry is painted on the walls, the furniture, in the pictures, the engravings; the talk is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are bigoted. The transformation of things and men into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery; but the fact exists. Every one must have observed that bigots do not walk, or sit down, or speak, as walk, sit, and speak the rest of the world: in their presence others are embarrassed; no one laughs; all things are rigid, stiff, uniform, from the cap of the mistress of the house to her pincushion with its even rows of pins; glances are not open or frank; the servants seem shadows; the lady of the house sits enthroned on ice.

One morning poor Granville became aware, with pain and sadness, of the symptoms of bigotry now established in his home. We find in the world certain social spheres where the same effects exist, though produced by other causes. Ennui draws around these unhappy homes a circlet of iron which encloses the horrors of the desert and the infinitude of the void. A household is then, not a tomb, but something worse, — a convent.

In the centre of this glacial sphere the magistrate now contemplated his wife without passion or illusion; he remarked with keen regret the narrowness of her ideas, betrayed externally by the way the hair grew on the low forehead which was hollow beneath the temples. He saw in the perfect regularity of her features something, it is hard to say what, of fixedness and rigidity which made him almost hate the

specious gentleness by which he had been won. He felt that the day might come when those thin lips would say to him in presence of some misfortune: "It is sent for your good, my friend."

Madame de Granville's face was gradually assuming a wan complexion and a stern expression which killed all joy in those who came in contact with her. Was this change brought about by the ascetic habits of a piety which is no more true piety than avarice is economy; or was it produced by the dryness natural to a bigoted soul? It would be difficult to say; beauty without passion is perhaps an imposture. The imperturbable smile which this young woman trained upon her face as she looked at her husband, seemed to be a sort of jesuitized formula of happiness by which she believed she satisfied the demands of marriage. Her charity wounded, her passionless beauty seemed a monstrosity to those who observed her; the softest of her speeches made them impatient, for she was not obeying a feeling, but a sense of duty.

There are certain defects which, in a woman, will often yield to lessons of experience or to the influence of a husband, but nothing can ever overcome the tyranny of false religious ideas. An eternity of happiness to win, put into the scales against earthly pleasure, will always triumph, and make all things bearable. "May not this be called deified egotism, the *I* beyond the grave? Even the pope was condemned before the judgment-seat of the canon and the young *dévôte*. The impossibility of being wrong is a feeling that ends by superseding all others in these despotic souls.

Thus, for some time past, an underground struggle had been going on between the opposing ideas of husband and wife, but Granville was now weary of a battle which he saw would never cease. What husband could bear incessantly before him the sight of a face hypocritically affectionate, and the annoyance of categorical remonstrances opposed to his slightest will? How treat a woman who uses your passion to protect her own want of feeling, who seems resolved to remain inexorably gentle, and prepares with delight to play the part of victim, regarding her husband as an instrument of God, — a scourge, whose flagellations are to spare her those of purgatory? But what description can give an idea of these women who make virtue odious by distorting the precepts of a religion which Saint John summed up in one, namely: “Love one another?”

Thus, in that domestic existence which needs so much expansion, Granville’s life was now companionless. Nothing in his home was sympathetic to him. The large crucifix placed between his wife’s bed and his own was like a symbol of his destiny. Did it not represent the killing of a divine thing, — the death of a God-man in all the beauty of life and youth? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angélique as she sacrificed her husband in the name of virtue. The misery of the young magistrate became intense; he went alone into the world, and to theatres; his wife saw only duties, and pleasures to be shunned in marriage, but what could he say? he could not even complain. He possessed a young and pretty wife, attached to her duties, virtuous, — the model, in fact, of all the

virtues. She brought him a child every year; nursed her children, and trained them up to the highest principles. Her charitable soul was thought angelic. The elderly women who composed the society in which she lived (for in those days young women had not as yet taken it into their heads to make a fashion of devotion) admired Madame de Granville's zealous piety, and regarded her, if not as a virgin, at least as a martyr.

Insensibly, Granville, overwhelmed with toil, deprived of pleasures, weary of society where he wandered alone, fell, by the time he was thirty-two, into a condition of painful apathy. Life became odious to him. Having too high a sense of his obligations to allow himself to fall into irregular ways, he endeavored to stupefy himself by toil, and began a great work on a legal subject. But he did not long enjoy that form of monastic peace on which he had counted.

When the pious Angélique saw that he deserted society and worked at home with a sort of regularity, she thought the time had come to convert him. To feel that her husband's views were not Christian was a genuine grief to her; she often wept at the thought that if he died suddenly he would perish in his sin, and she could then have no hope of saving him from the flames of eternal punishment. Henceforth Granville became a target for the petty thrusts, the paltry arguments, the narrow views by which his wife, who thought she had won a first victory by withdrawing him from the world, endeavored to obtain a second by bringing him into the pale of the Church.

This was the last drop to his cup of misery. What

could be more intolerable than a dumb struggle in which the obstinacy of a narrow mind endeavored to subdue the intelligence of the lawyer; what more horrible to bear than this acrid nagging to which a generous nature would far prefer an open stab? Granville deserted his house, where all was now unbearable to him. His children, subjected to the cold despotism of their mother, were not allowed to accompany him to the theatre; he was literally unable to give them a single pleasure without drawing down upon them a rebuke from his wife. This man, naturally loving, was driven into a condition of indifference, of selfish egotism, which to him was worse than death.

He saved his sons as soon as possible from the hell of this life by sending them to school at an early age, and by maintaining firmly his right to manage them. He did not interfere, or interfered very rarely, between the mother and her daughters, though he resolved to marry the latter as soon as they attained to a marriageable age. If he had taken a more decided and violent course nothing would have justified it. His wife, supported by the formidable circle of pious dowagers among whom she lived, could have shown his injustice to all the world. Granville had literally no other resource than a life of isolation. Crushed under the tyranny of these misfortunes, his very features, withered and hardened by grief and toil, became displeasing to himself; he shrank from all intercourse with others, especially with women of society, from whom he despaired of gaining any comfort.

The didactic history of this sad household during the fifteen years between 1806 and 1821 offers no

scene that is worthy of being related. Madame de Granville remained precisely the same woman after she had lost her husband's heart as she was in the days when she called herself happy. She made novenas, praying God and the saints to enlighten her mind as to the faults by which she displeased her husband, and to show her the means of bringing back that erring sheep into the fold. But the more fervent her prayers, the less her husband appeared in his home. For five years past Granville, now attorney-general under the Restoration, had taken up his abode on the ground-floor of his house to avoid the necessity of living with his wife. Every morning a scene took place which (if we may believe the gossip of society) occurs in the bosom of many a family, — produced by incompatibility of temper, or by mental and physical diseases, or by antagonisms which bring the results related in this history to many a marriage. Every morning at eight o'clock the countess's waiting-woman, looking much like a nun, rang at the door of the count's apartment. Shown into the salon adjoining the magistrate's study, she gave to the valet, and always in the same tone, this stereotyped message: —

“Madame begs to know if Monsieur le comte has passed a good night, and whether she shall have the pleasure of breakfasting with him.”

“Monsieur,” the valet would reply, after conveying the message to his master, “presents his regards to Madame la comtesse and begs her to excuse him; an important affair obliges him to go to the Palais at once.”

A few moments later the maid would reappear to

ask in Madame's name if she should have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le comte before he went out.

"He has gone already," the valet would reply, though the count's carriage might be still in the courtyard.

This ambassadorial dialogue was a daily ceremony. Granville's valet, who, being a favorite with his master, was the cause of more than one quarrel in the household on account of his irreligion and moral laxity, would sometimes take the message as a matter of form into the study when the count was not there, bringing back the accustomed answer. The afflicted wife would often watch for her husband's return and go down to the vestibule and place herself in his way to awaken his remorse. This petty teasing, characteristic of monastic life, was a strong feature in the nature of this woman, who, though she was only thirty-five, now looked to be over forty.

The presidency of a royal court in the provinces was offered to the Comte de Granville, who stood well in favor with the King, but he begged the ministry to allow him to remain in Paris. This refusal, the reasons for which were known only to the Keeper of the Seals, suggested various strange conjectures among the intimates of the countess, and more especially to her confessor. Granville, the possessor of a hundred thousand francs a year, belonged to one of the highest families in Normandy; his appointment to a royal court was a first step to the peerage. Why, then, such a lack of ambition? Why had he given up his great work on Law? Whence this unnatural life which had made him for the last five years almost a

stranger to his home, his duties, and to all that ought to be dear to him? The countess's confessor, who relied on the support of the families where he ruled to advance him to a bishopric, had met with disappointment from Granville, who refused him his influence; and he now aspersed him with suppositions.

"If Monsieur le comte," he said, "was reluctant to live in the provinces, it was probably because he feared the necessity of having to lead a moral life. The position of a chief-justice would force him to live with his wife and abandon all illicit connections. A woman as pure as the Comtesse de Granville could never overlook the fact, if it came to her knowledge, of her husband's irregularities.

Angélique's dowager friends did not leave her in ignorance of these remarks, which, alas! were not groundless; the effect upon her was that of a thunder-bolt.

Without any just ideas of life or of society, ignorant of love and its madness, Madame de Granville was so far from supposing that marriage could bring other troubles than those which alienated her from her husband, that she thought him incapable of the faults which are the crimes of married life. When the count no longer sought her society and lived apart, she imagined that the calmness of such a life was that of nature. She had given him all the affection her heart was capable of giving to a man, and these conjectures of her confessor completely destroyed all the illusions in which she had lived up to that moment. At first, therefore, she defended her husband; although, at the same time, she was unable to put away the suspicions



Georges Cain

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Procédé Goupil

so cleverly introduced into her mind. This struggle caused such ravages in her feeble brain that before long her health gave way and she fell a victim to slow fever.

These events took place during the Lent of 1822, but her piety would not relax its austerities, and she finally reached a state of exhaustion in which her very life seemed threatened. Granville's indifference to her condition wounded her deeply. His attentions were more like those that a nephew compels himself to pay to an uncle. Though the countess tried to greet her husband with pleasant words, and renounced for the time being her system of nagging remonstrance, the sourness of the *dévoté* was still perceptible, and often destroyed by a few words the work of days.

Toward the end of May, the balmy breath of spring and a more nourishing diet than Lent allowed brought back some strength to Madame de Granville. One morning, on her return from mass, she seated herself on a stone bench in her little garden, where the warm caresses of the sunshine recalled to her the pleasant early days of her marriage. Her mind took in at a glance the whole of her married life, striving to see in what possible way she could have failed in her duty as wife and mother. While she sat there the Abbé Fontanon appeared, in a state of very evident agitation.

"Has anything happened to distress you, father?" she asked, with filial solicitude.

"Ah! I would that all the misfortunes which the hand of God is laying heavily upon you, were laid on me," said the Norman priest. "But, my worthy friend, these are trials to which you must submit."

“Can any chastisement be greater than that to which the Divine Providence has already subjected me, using my husband as the instrument of its wrath?”

“Prepare yourself, my daughter, for greater sorrow than any you have hitherto undergone.”

“Then I thank God that he deigns to make use of you to lay his will upon me,” said the countess, “following the vials of his wrath with the treasures of his mercy, even as he showed to Hagar in the desert a living spring.”

“He allots your penalties to the weight of your sins and the measure of your resignation,” said the priest.

“Speak, father; I am ready to hear all;” so saying, the countess raised her eyes to heaven; then she said again, “Speak, Monsieur Fontanon.”

“For the last seven years Monsieur de Granville has committed the crime of adultery with a concubine by whom he has two children. He has spent upon this illicit household more than five hundred thousand francs, which ought to have belonged to his legitimate family.”

“I must see that with my own eyes before I believe it,” said the countess.

“No, be very careful to avoid that,” said the priest. “My daughter, it is your duty to forgive, and to wait, in prayer, till God sees fit to change your husband’s heart. You must not employ such human means against him.”

The long conversation which followed produced a violent change in the whole manner and appearance of the countess. She dismissed the confessor at last, and appeared with a flushed face before her servants,

who were frightened by an activity which seemed almost insane. She ordered her carriage, then she countermanded it, ordered it again, and changed her mind a score of times within an hour. Finally, however, she appeared to come to a decisive resolution, and started from home at three o'clock, leaving her household amazed at her sudden action.

"Will your master be home to dinner?" she asked the valet (to whom she usually never spoke) as she left the house.

"No, madame."

"Did he go to the Palais this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"To-day is Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"Is the Palais open on Mondays now?"

"The devil take her!" thought the valet as the countess got into her carriage and gave the order: "Rue Taitbout."

Caroline de Bellefeuille was weeping; beside her was Roger, holding one of her hands in both of his. He was silent, looking alternately at little Charles, who could not understand his mother's grief, at the cradle where the baby Eugénie was sleeping, and then at the face of his friend, where the tears were falling like rain on a sunshiny day.

"Yes, my angel," said Roger, after a long silence, "that is the truth; I am married. But some day, I hope, I may have but one life, one home. My wife is in wretched health; I do not wish her death; but if it pleases God to take her, I think she will be happier

in paradise than she has been in a world the pains and pleasures of which have never touched her."

"I hate that woman! How could she make you so unhappy? And yet it is to that misfortune that I owe my happiness."

Her tears ceased suddenly.

"Caroline, let us hope on," cried Roger, with a kiss. "Never mind what the abbé said to you. Though that confessor is a dangerous man on account of his influence in the Church, if he attempts to disturb our relation I shall —"

"What?"

"Take you to Italy; I will flee —"

A cry coming from the next room made them start; they both rushed there, and found Madame de Granville fainting on the floor. When she recovered her senses she gave a deep sigh on seeing herself between her husband and her rival, whom she pushed aside with an involuntary gesture of contempt.

Caroline rose to go.

"Stay where you are," said the count. "This is your house."

Then he took his fainting wife in his arms and carried her to her carriage, into which he followed her.

"What has made you desire my death? Why should you wish to flee me?" she asked, in a weak voice, looking at her husband with as much indignation as grief. "Was I not young? Did you not think me beautiful? What blame can you lay at my door? Did I ever deceive you? Have I not been a good and virtuous wife to you? My heart has held no image but yours; my ears have listened to no voice but

yours. What duty did I fail to perform? Have I ever refused you anything?"

"Yes; happiness," replied the count, in a firm voice. "There are two ways of serving God. Some Christians imagine that by entering a church and saying a Pater Noster, by hearing mass at stated times and abstaining from sinful acts they must win heaven; such persons go to hell; they have never loved God for God's sake; they do not worship him as he seeks to be worshipped; they have made him no sacrifice. Though gentle apparently, they are harsh to their neighbor; they see the law, the letter, but not the spirit. That is how you have acted with your earthly husband. You have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation. You were absorbed in the contemplation of that when I came to you with eager heart; you wept and fasted when you might have eased and brightened my toil; you have never satisfied one pleasurable desire of my life."

"But if those desires were criminal," cried the countess, hotly, "was I to lose my soul to please you?"

"That sacrifice a more loving woman has had the courage to make," replied the count, coldly.

"Oh, God!" she said, weeping. "Thou hearest him! Was he worthy of the prayers and penances in which I have spent my life to redeem his sins and my own? Of what good is virtue?"

"To win heaven, my dear; you could not be the bride of heaven and of man both; it was bigamy. You should have chosen between a husband and a convent. Instead of that, for the sake of your future salvation, you have robbed your soul and mine of

love, of all the devotion God bestows upon a woman; of the earthly emotions you have kept but one — and that is hatred.”

“Have I not loved you?”

“No.”

“What, then, is love?” she said, involuntarily.

“Love, my dear?” said Granville, with a sort of ironical surprise. “You are not in a condition to understand it. The sky of Normandy is never that of Spain. Perhaps the question of climate is really one of the secrets of unhappiness. Love is a mutual yielding to each other’s likes and dislikes and dividing them. Love finds pleasure in pain, in sacrificing to another the opinion of the world, self-love, self-interest, religion even, — regarding all such offerings as grains of incense burned on the altar of an idol; that is love.”

“The love of a ballet-girl,” said the countess, horrified; “such passions cannot last; they leave nothing behind them but cinders and ashes, remorse and despair. A wife should give her husband, as I think, true friendship, an equable warmth, an —”

“You talk of warmth as negroes talk of ice,” interrupted the count, with a sardonic smile. “Remember that the humblest wild-flower is more to us than a rose with thorns. But,” he added, “I will do you justice. You have so firmly maintained the line of conduct prescribed by law that, in order to show you where you have failed toward me, I should have to enter upon certain details which your dignity would not permit, and say certain things which would seem to you the reverse of moral.”

“Do you dare to speak of morality, — you who are leaving the house of a mistress where you have squandered the property of your children in debauchery?” cried the countess.

“Madame, I stop you there,” said the count, coolly, interrupting his wife. “If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich it is not at my expense. My uncle was master of his fortune; he had many heirs. During his lifetime, and solely out of regard for a young woman whom he considered in the light of a niece, he gave her the estate of Bellefeuille.”

“Such conduct is worthy of a Jacobin!” cried the pious Angélique.

“You forget that your father was one of those Jacobins whom you, a woman, condemn with so little charity,” said the count, sternly. “The citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants at the time when my uncle was rendering great services to France.”

Madame de Granville made no reply. But, after a moment’s silence, the recollection of what she had just seen awoke the jealousy which nothing can quench in a woman’s soul, and she said, in a low voice, as if speaking to herself: —

“How can a man lose his soul and that of others in this way?”

“Ah! madame,” said the count, weary of the fruitless conversation, “perhaps it is you who will have to answer for all this.”

These words made the countess tremble.

“But you will no doubt be excused in the eyes of that indulgent Judge who understands our faults,” he added, “in virtue of the sincerity with which you have

wrought the ruin of my life. I do not hate you; I hate those who have distorted your heart and mind. You have prayed for me doubtless as sincerely as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and crowned me with love. You should have been both mistress and saint. Do me the justice to acknowledge that I have not been either wicked or debauched. My morals are pure. But alas! at the end of seven years' wretchedness, the need of being happy led me, almost insensibly, to love another woman, and to create for myself another home than mine. Do not think I am the only man in Paris who has done this. Thousands of other husbands are driven, by one cause or another, to lead this double life."

"O God!" cried the countess, "how heavy is the cross I have to bear! If the husband whom thou gavest me in thy wrath can be happy only through my death, recall me to thy bosom!"

"Had you shown those admirable feelings of self-sacrifice earlier," said the count, coldly, "we should still be happy."

"Well, then," said Angélique, bursting into tears, "forgive me if I have really done wrong. Yes, I am ready to obey you in all things, certain that you will only ask that which is natural and right. Henceforth I will be to you whatever you desire."

"If it is your intention to force me to say that I no longer love you, I must have the dreadful courage to say it. Can I control my heart? Can I efface in one moment the memories of fifteen years of misery? I love no more. Those words enfold a mystery as deep

as that contained in those other words, 'I love.' Esteem, respect, regard may be obtained, and lost, and won again, but love, ah, never! I might goad myself a thousand years and it could not live again, especially for one who has wilfully destroyed her charm."

"Ah! Monsieur le comte, I sincerely hope the day may never come when those words shall be said to you by her you love, in the tone and manner with which you say them now."

"Will you come with me to-night to the Opera and wear a ball dress?"

The shudder of repugnance which that sudden demand produced was her answer to the question.

III.

RESULT.

ON one of the first days of December, 1833, a man whose snow-white hair and countenance appeared to show that grief had aged him more than years (for he seemed about sixty) was passing through the rue Gaillon after midnight. He paused before a poor-looking house of three stories to examine one of the windows which were placed at equal distances in the mansarde roof. A faint gleam came from its humble sash, in which some panes were replaced by paper. The passer was looking at that flickering light with the idle curiosity of a Parisian loungeur, when a young man came suddenly and rapidly from the house. As the pale rays of the street lamp fell upon the face of the older man, he seemed not wholly surprised when, in spite of the darkness, the young man came to him, with the precautions used in Paris when one fears to be mistaken in a recognition.

“What!” exclaimed the latter, “is it really you, Monsieur le comte, alone, on foot, at this hour, and so far from the rue Saint-Lazare? Allow me the honor of offering you my arm. The pavement to-night is so slippery that unless we support each other,” he added, to spare the pride of the old man, “we shall find it difficult to escape a fall.”

“But, my dear friend, I am only fifty-nine years of age — unhappily for me,” said the Comte de Granville. “So celebrated a physician as yourself ought to know that a man is in his full vigor at that time of life.”

“Then you must be engaged in some love affair,” replied Horace Bianchon, laughing. “You are not, I am sure, accustomed to go on foot. When a man has such horses as yours — ”

“But the greater part of the time,” said the Comte de Granville, “I do return from the Palais, or the Cercle des Étrangers, on foot ”

“And carrying, no doubt, on your person large sums of money. Isn’t that inviting a dagger, Monsieur le comte?”

“I am not afraid of such daggers,” replied the count with a careless though melancholy air.

“But at any rate you ought not to stand still,” said the physician, drawing the magistrate on toward the boulevard. “A little more, and I shall think you want to rob me of your last illness, and to die by another hand than mine.”

“Well, you surprised me engaged in a bit of spying,” said the count, smiling. “Whether I pass through this street on foot or in a carriage, at any hour of the night I am certain to see at a third story window of the house you have just left the shadow of a person who appears to be working with heroic courage.”

So saying, the count stopped short, as if some sudden pang had seized him.

“I take as much interest in that attic,” he continued, “as a Parisian bourgeois feels in the completion of the Palais-Royal — ”

“Well,” cried Horace, eagerly, interrupting the count, “I can tell you —”

“Tell me nothing,” said Granville, cutting short the doctor’s words. “I wouldn’t give a penny to know if the shadow that flickers on that ragged curtain is that of a man or woman, or if the occupant of that garret is happy or unhappy. If I was surprised to-night not to see that person working, and if I stopped for a moment to gaze at the window, it was solely for the amusement of making conjectures as numerous and as silly as those the street idlers make about buildings in course of erection. For the last nine years, my young —”

He stopped, seemed to hesitate to use some expression, and then, with a hasty gesture, added: —

“No, I will not call you friend; I detest every semblance of sentiment. For the last nine years, as I was saying, I am no longer surprised that old people take pleasure in cultivating flowers and planting trees. The events of life have taught them not to trust in human affections. I grew an old man suddenly; I attach myself now to none but animals; I will call no man friend. I abhor the life of the world, in which I am alone. Nothing, nothing,” added the count, with an expression which made the young man shudder,—“nothing can move me now, and nothing can interest me.”

“But you have children?”

“My children!” he replied, in a tone of strange bitterness. “Yes, my eldest daughter is the Comtesse de Vandenesse. As for the other, her sister’s marriage has opened the way to hers. My two sons have met with great success; the vicomte is attorney-gen-

eral at Limoges, and the younger is king's attorney. My children have their own interests, cares, and solitudes. If a single one among them had tried to fill the void that is *here*," he said, striking his breast, "well, that one would have ruined his or her life by sacrificing it to me! And why have done so, after all, merely to brighten my few remaining years? Besides, could it have been done? Should I not have looked upon such generous care as the payment of a debt? But —"

Here the old man smiled with deepest irony.

"But, doctor, the lessons we teach our children in arithmetic are never lost; they learn how to calculate — their inheritance. At this moment mine are reckoning on that."

"Oh! Monsieur le comte, how can such thoughts have come into your mind?— you, so kind, so obliging, so humane? Am I not myself a living proof of the beneficence of which you take so broad and grand a view?"

"For my own pleasure," said the count, hastily. "I pay for a sensation as I shall pay to-morrow in piles of gold for the paltry excitement of play, which stirs my heart for an instant. I help my fellow-mortals for the same reason that I play at cards. Therefore I look for no gratitude from any one. Ah! young man, the events of life have flowed across my soul like the lava of Vesuvius through Herculaneum; the city exists, dead."

"Those who have brought a soul so warm and living as yours to such a point of insensibility are guilty of an awful wrong."

“Not another word!” cried the count, with a look of horror.

“You have a malady upon you which you ought to let me cure,” said Bianchon, in a voice of emotion.

“Do you know a cure for death?” exclaimed the count, impatiently.

“Yes, Monsieur le comte, I will engage to stir that heart you call so dead.”

“Are you another Talma?”

“No; but Nature is as far superior to Talma as Talma may be to me. Hear me: that garret at which you gazed with interest is inhabited by a woman, some thirty years of age, in whom love has become fanaticism. The object of her worship is a young man of fine appearance, to whom some evil genius gave at birth all the vices of humanity. He is a gambler; whether he loves women or wine best no one could decide; he has committed, to my knowledge, crimes that should have brought him to the correctional police. Well, that unhappy woman sacrificed for him a happy life, a man who adored her, by whom she had two children — What is it, Monsieur le comte? are you ill?”

“No, nothing; go on!”

“She has let him squander her whole property; she would give him, I think, the world if she had it; night and day she works; often, without a murmur, she has seen that monster take the money she had earned to clothe her children — nay, their very food for the morrow! Three days ago she sold her hair, the finest I ever saw; that man came in before she hid the bit of gold; he claimed it; for a smile, a kiss,

she gave him the value of days of life and comfort! Is not such love both shocking and sublime? But toil and hunger have begun to waste her strength; the cries of her children torture her; she has fallen ill; to-night she is moaning on her pallet, unable, as you saw, to work. The children have had no food all day; they have ceased to cry, being too weak; they were silent when I got there."

Bianchon stopped. The Comte de Granville, as if in spite of himself, had plunged his hand into his pocket.

"I foresee, my young friend, that she will live," said the old man, "if you take care of her."

"Ah! poor creature," cried the doctor, "who would not take care of one so wretched? But I hope to do more; I hope to cure her of her love."

"But," said the count, withdrawing his hand full of bank-notes from his pocket, "why should I pity a wretchedness whose joys would seem to me worth more than all my fortune? She feels, she lives, that woman! Louis XV. would have given his whole kingdom to rise from his coffin and have three days of youth and life. Is not that the history of millions of dead men, millions of sick men, millions of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" exclaimed the physician.

Hearing that name the Comte de Granville quivered; he seized the arm of his companion, who fancied himself gripped by iron pincers.

"Is she Caroline Crochard?" asked the old man, in a faltering voice.

"Then you know her?" replied the doctor.

“And that wretch is named Solvet — Ah! you have kept your word; you have stirred my heart by the most terrible sensation I shall know till I am dust,” said the count. “Another of hell’s gifts!” he cried; “but I know how to pay them back.”

At that moment the count and Bianchon had reached the corner of the rue de la Chaussée-d’Antin. One of those night-birds, a scavenger, with his basket on his back and a hook in his hand, was close beside the post where the count had now stopped short. The face of the old rag-picker was worthy of those which Charlet has immortalized in his sketches of the school of sweepers.

“Do you often pick up thousand-franc notes?” the count said to him.

“Sometimes, my master.”

“Do you return them?”

“That’s according to the reward offered.”

“Here, my man,” cried the count, giving him a note for a thousand francs. “Take that; but remember that I give it to you on condition that you spend it at a tavern, get drunk upon it, quarrel, beat your wife, stab your friends. That will set the watch, and surgeons and doctors, perhaps the gendarmes, the attorneys, the judges and the jailers all to work. Don’t change that programme, or the devil will revenge it on you.”

It needs an artist with the pencil of Charlet and Callot and the brushes of Teniers and Rembrandt to give a true idea of this nocturnal scene.

“There’s my account settled, for the present, with hell, and I have had some pleasure out of my money,”

said the count in a deep voice, pointing out to the stupefied physician the indescribable face of the gaping rag-picker. "As for Caroline Crochard," he continued, "she may die in the tortures of hunger and thirst, listening to the cries of her starving children, recognizing the vileness of that man she loves. I will not give one penny to keep her from suffering; and I will never speak to you again, for the sole reason that you have succored her."

The count left Bianchon standing motionless as a statue, and disappeared, moving with the rapidity of a young man in the direction of the rue Saint-Lazare. When he reached the little house which he occupied in that street, he saw, with some surprise, a carriage before the door.

"Monsieur le procureur du roi," said his valet when he entered, "has been here an hour, waiting to speak with monsieur. He is in monsieur's bedroom."

Granville made a sign to the man, who retired.

"What motive could be strong enough to make you break my express orders that none of my children should come to this house without being sent for?" he said to his son as he entered the room.

"Father," said the son, respectfully, in a voice that trembled, "I feel sure you will pardon me when you have heard my reason."

"Your answer is a proper one," said his father, pointing to a chair. "Sit down; but whether I sit or walk about, pay no attention to my movements."

"Father," said the procureur du roi, "a young lad has been arrested this evening at the house of a friend

of mine, where he committed a theft; the lad appeals to you and says he is your son."

"His name?" asked the count, trembling.

"Charles Crochard."

"Enough," said the father, with an imperative gesture.

Granville walked up and down the room in a deep silence which his son was careful not to break.

"My son," he said at last, in a tone so gentle, so paternal that the young man quivered, "Charles Crochard has told the truth. I am glad that you have come to me, my good Eugène. Here is a sum of money," he added, taking up a mass of bank-bills, "which you must use as you see fit in this affair. I trust in you, and I approve, in advance, all that you may do, whether at the present time, or in the future. Eugène, my dear son, kiss me; perhaps we now see each other for the last time. To-morrow I shall ask leave of absence of the king and start for Italy. Though a father is not bound to account to his children for his conduct, he ought to leave them as a legacy the experience which fate has allotted to him,—it is a part of their inheritance. When you marry," continued the count, with an involuntary shudder, "do not commit that act, the most important of all those imposed upon us by society, thoughtlessly. Study long the character of the woman with whom you associate yourself for life; also consult me; I should wish to judge her for myself. A want of union between husband and wife, however it may be caused, leads to frightful evils. We are, sooner or later, punished for

not obeying social laws — But as to that, I will write to you from Florence; a father, especially if he has the honor to be a judge in the highest courts of law, ought not to blush in presence of his son. Farewell.”

THE RURAL BALL.

THE RURAL BALL.

TO HENRI DE BALZAC,
HIS BROTHER,
HONORÉ.

I.

A REBELLIOUS YOUNG GIRL.

THE Comte de Fontaine, head of one of the most ancient families in Poitou, had served the cause of the Bourbons with courage and intelligence during the war which the Vendéans made against the Republic. After escaping the dangers that threatened the royalist leaders during that stormy period of contemporaneous history, he said, gayly: "I am one of those who are fated to be killed on the steps of the throne." This little jest was not without truth, as to a man left for dead on the bloody day of the Quatre-Chemins.

Though ruined by confiscations, the faithful Vendéan refused the lucrative places which were offered to him by the Emperor Napoleon. Uncompromising in his religion of aristocracy he had blindly followed its axioms when he thought proper to take a wife. In spite of the offers of a rich revolutionary parvenu, who was willing to pay a high price for such an alli-

ance, he married a Demoiselle de Kergarouët, a girl without fortune, but whose family is one of the oldest in Brittany. At the time of the Restoration, Monsieur de Fontaine was burdened with a numerous family. Though he did not share the ideas of the greedy nobles who begged for favors, he yielded to his wife's request, left his country domain, the modest revenues of which barely sufficed for the needs of his children, and came to Paris. Shocked by the avidity shown by many of his old comrades for the places and dignities of the new régime, he was about to return to Poitou, when he received an official letter in which a well-known minister informed him of his appointment to the rank of brigadier-general, in virtue of the ordinance which allowed the officers of the Catholic armies to count the twenty years of Louis XVIII.'s exiled reign as years of service. Some days later the count received, without solicitation, the cross of the Legion of honor and that of the order of Saint-Louis.

Shaken in his resolution by these successive favors, which he thought he owed to the monarch's memory, he no longer contented himself with taking his family, as he had done religiously every Sunday morning, to the Salle des Maréchaux to shout "Vive le roi!" when the princes passed on their way to Mass; he asked the favor of a private audience. This audience, instantly granted, had, however, nothing private about it. The royal salon was full of old royalists, whose powdered heads seen at a certain level looked like a carpet of snow. There, the count met with a number of his old companions in arms, who received him rather stiffly; but the princes were *adorable*, a term of

enthusiasm which escaped him when the most gracious of his masters, whom the count supposed to know barely his name, came up and pressed his hand, and called him the purest and most disinterested of the Vendéans.

But in spite of this ovation, none of these august personages thought of asking him the amount of his losses in their cause, nor that of the money he had generously poured out for the maintenance of the Catholic army. He found, too late, that he had made war at his own expense. Toward the end of the evening he thought he might risk a witty allusion to the state of his affairs. His Majesty laughed heartily; any speech that bore the stamp of wit was sure of pleasing him; but for all that, he replied with one of those royal jests whose soft speciousness is more to be feared than a reprimand. One of the king's confidential intimates soon after approached the Vendéan and let him know, in a guarded and civil manner, that the time had not yet come to make claims upon the masters, for there were others on the tapis whose services were of longer date than his. The count on this retired from the group which formed a semi-circle in front of the august royal family. Then, after disengaging his sword, not without difficulty, from the midst of the weak old legs which surrounded him, he made his way on foot across the court-yard of the Tuileries, to a hackney-coach which he had left upon the quay. With that restive spirit which characterizes the nobility of the *vieille roche*, in whom the memory of the League and the Barricades is not yet extinct, he grumbled aloud, as he drove along, on the change that was visible at court.

“Formerly,” he said, “every man could speak freely to the king of his affairs; the seigneurs could ask at their ease for money and offices; but now it appears we cannot even ask without scandal for the sums we have advanced in his service. *Morbleu!* the cross of Saint-Louis and the rank of general are no equivalent for the three hundred thousand francs that from first to last I have spent on the royal cause. I *will* speak face to face with the king in his private cabinet.”

This scene chilled the zeal of Monsieur de Fontaine, all the more because his requests for an audience were left without reply. He saw the intruders of the Empire successful in obtaining various offices reserved under the old monarchy for the best families.

“All is lost,” he said, one morning. “The king has never been anything but revolutionary. If it were not for MONSIEUR, who never derogates from the true régime, and consoles his faithful followers, I don’t know what would become of the crown of France. Their cursèd constitutional system is the worst of all governments, and will never suit France. Louis XVIII. and Monsieur Beugnot ruined everything for us at Saint-Ouen.”

The count, in despair, was again preparing to return to his country home, abandoning all his claims to indemnity; but, at that moment, the events of the 20th of March produced a new tempest, which threatened to engulf the legitimate king and his defenders. Like those generous souls who will not send out their servants in the rain, Monsieur de Fontaine borrowed money on his estate to follow the retreating monarchy, without knowing whether his emigration would stand

him in better stead than his former devotion. But, having observed that the companions of the king's former exile stood higher in his favor than those who stayed behind and protested arms in hand against the Republic, he may have considered that this journey into foreign lands would be more to his benefit than a perilous and active service in France. He was, therefore, to use the saying of our wittiest and ablest diplomatist, one of the five hundred faithful servants who shared the exile of the court to Ghent, and one of the fifty thousand who returned from it.

During this short absence of royalty, Monsieur de Fontaine had the luck of being employed by Louis XVIII., and of finding more than one occasion to give him proofs of great political sense and sincere attachment to his person. One evening, when the king had nothing better to do, he remembered the witty remark the count had made to him at the Tuileries. The old Vendéan did not let the opportunity slip; he related his history so cleverly that the king, who forgot nothing, was likely to remember it in due season. The royal literary man soon after noticed the graceful turn of phrase given to certain notes he had confided to the count to write for him; and this little merit, together with his wit, placed Monsieur de Fontaine in the king's memory as one of the most loyal servants of the crown. At the second Restoration the count was appointed one of the envoys extraordinary to go through the departments and pass judgment on the guilty actors of the rebellion; he used his terrible power moderately. As soon as this temporary jurisdiction was over he entered the Council of State, became a

deputy, spoke little, listened much, and changed considerably in his opinions. Certain circumstances, unknown to biographers, brought him into such intimate relations with the king that the witty monarch one day said to him:—

“Friend Fontaine, I shall never dream of appointing you to any post. Neither you nor I, if we were *employés*, could keep our places, on account of our opinions. Representative government has one good thing about it; it saves us the trouble we formerly had in getting rid of our secretaries of State. The Council is now a sort of wayside inn, where public opinion sends us queer travellers; however, we can always find some place to put a faithful servant.”

This somewhat satirical opening was followed by a special ordinance giving Monsieur de Fontaine the administration of a part of the Crown domain. In consequence of the intelligent attention with which he listened to the sarcasms of his royal friend, his name was often on his Majesty's lips whenever there was a commission to be created which offered a lucrative appointment. The count had the good sense to say nothing about the favors the king showed him; and he had the art of entertaining his royal master by a piquant manner of telling a story during those familiar conversations in which Louis XVIII. took as much delight as he did in political anecdotes, diplomatic cancons (if we may use that word in such connection), or the reading and writing of elegant little notes. It is well known that the details of his “governmentability,” as the august jester called it, amused him infinitely.

Thanks to the good sense, wit, and cleverness of the Comte de Fontaine, every member of his numerous family, young as they were, ended, as he said in jest to his master, by fastening like silk-worms on the leaves of the budget. His eldest son obtained an eminent place in the permanent magistracy. The second, a mere captain before the Restoration, received a legion on the return from Ghent, entered the Royal Guard, thence into the body-guard, and became a lieutenant-general after the affair of the Trocadéro. The youngest son, appointed first a sub-prefect, was soon after Master of Petitions and a director of one of the municipal departments of the city of Paris. These favors, given quietly, and kept as secret as the count's own favor with the king, were showered upon him unperceived by the public. Though the father and his three sons had each sinecures enough to give them a budgetary revenue that was nearly equal to that of a director-general, their political good luck excited no envy. In those days when the constitutional system was just established, few persons had any correct ideas as to the quiet regions of the budget, or the number of favorites who contrived to find there the equivalent of destroyed monasteries.

Monsieur le Comte de Fontaine, who had formerly boasted of never having read the Charter and had shown such displeasure at the eager avidity of courtiers, was not long in proving to his august master that he understood perfectly well the proper spirit and resources of a representative. Nevertheless, in spite of the careers opened to his three sons, Monsieur de Fontaine's numerous family was too numerous to

allow him to become a rich man all at once. In addition to his three sons he had three daughters, and he feared to wear out the bounty of the king. On reflection, he thought it better not to mention to his august master more than one at a time of these virgins, all waiting to light their lamps. The king had too much sense of the becoming to leave his work unfinished. The marriage of the first daughter with a receiver-general, Planat de Baudry, was arranged by one of those short royal sentences which cost nothing and bestow millions. One evening, when the king was sulky, he laughed on learning the existence of a second Demoiselle de Fontaine; nevertheless, he married her to a young magistrate,— of bourgeois descent, it is true, but rich, and full of talent, and he made him a baron. But when, the following year, the Vendéan let drop a few words about a Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine, the king replied, in his sour little voice:—

“Amicus Plato, sed magis amica natio.”

Then, a few days later, he presented his “friend Fontaine” with a rather silly quatrain, which he called an epigram, in which he teased him about three daughters produced so opportunely in the form of a trinity. If the chronicle be true, the monarch had made the unity of the three persons the point of his wit.

“Would the king deign to change his epigram into an epithalamium,” suggested the count, endeavoring to turn this freak to his profit.

“I don’t see the rhyme nor the reason of that remark,” said the king, harshly, not at all pleased at any joke about his poetry, however gentle it might be.

From that day his relations with Monsieur de Fontaine were less cordial. Kings like contradiction more than we imagine.

Émilie de Fontaine, like many youngest children, was the Benjamin of the family, and spoiled by everyone. The king's coldness was all the more distressing to the count because the marriage of this petted darling proved to be an exceedingly difficult one to carry through. To understand the obstacles in the way of it, we must enter the fine hôtel where the government official lodged with his family at the cost of the Civil List.

Émilie had spent her childhood on the Fontaine estate, enjoying that abundance which suffices to the pleasures of early youth. Her slightest wishes were laws to her sisters, brothers, mother, and even to her father. All her relations idolized her. As she reached girlhood at the very moment when her family were at the summit of fortune's favors, the enchantment of her life continued. The luxury of Paris seemed to her as natural as the wealth of flowers and fruit, and the rural opulence which had made the happiness of her earliest years. She had never been opposed in her childhood in satisfying her joyous fancies, and now, at the age of fifteen, when she was flung into the vortex of the great world, she found herself still obeyed.

Accustomed, by degrees, to the enjoyments of wealth, the elegancies of dress, gorgeous salons, and equipages became as necessary to her as the flattery, true or false, of compliments, and the fêtes and vanities of the court. Like many spoiled children, she tyrannized over those who loved her, and reserved her

coquetries for the persons who took least notice of her. Her defects grew with her growth, and her parents were soon to gather the bitter fruits of this fatal education.

At nineteen years of age, Émilie de Fontaine had not yet been willing to select, as her husband, any of the numerous young men whom her father's policy assembled at his fêtes. Although so young, she enjoyed as much freedom in society as though she were a woman. Her beauty was so remarkable that no sooner did she enter a room than she seemed to reign there; but, like kings, she had no friends, and no lovers; a better nature than hers, feeling itself the object of so much admiration, would not have repelled it as she did. No man, not even an old man, had nerve enough to contradict the opinions of a girl the mere glance of whose eyes roused love in a cold heart.

Brought up with a care that her sisters had lacked, she had various accomplishments; she painted fairly well, she spoke English and Italian, played on the piano remarkably well, and her voice, trained by the best masters, had a *timbre* which gave to her singing an irresistible charm. Witty by nature, and well-read in literature, she might have been thought, as Mascarielle says of people of quality, to have been born into the world knowing everything. She argued fluently about Italian or Flemish art, on the middle ages or the renaissance, and gave her opinion right and left on books ancient or modern, bringing out, sometimes with cruel cleverness, the defects of some work. The simplest of her remarks were received by an idolizing

crowd on their knees. She dazzled superficial persons; but as for wiser ones, her natural tact enabled her to recognize them, and to them she was so winning, so coquettish, that she escaped examination under cover of her flatteries. This attractive varnish covered an indifferent heart, an opinion, common to many young girls, that no one inhabited a sphere lofty enough to comprehend the excellence of her soul, and a personal pride based more on her birth than on her beauty. In the absence of the more ardent sentiments which, sooner or later, ravage the heart of woman, Émilie spent her youthful ardor in an immoderate worship of distinction, expressing the utmost contempt for everything plebeian. Very haughty toward the new nobility, she did her best to make her parents keep strictly to the social lines of the faubourg Saint-Germain.

This disposition in his daughter had not escaped the observing eye of Monsieur de Fontaine, who had more than once been made to wince under her sarcasms and witty sayings at the time of the marriage of her elder sisters. Logical minds might, in fact, be surprised to see the old Vendéan giving his eldest daughter to a receiver-general who had acquired possession of old seignorial property by confiscation; and the second to a magistrate too lately baronified to enable the world to forget that his father sold fagots. This notable change in the ideas of the count in his sixtieth year, a period when few men give up their fixed beliefs, was not due solely to a residence in the modern Babylon, where most provincials end by rubbing off their peculiarities; the new political conscience of the Comte de Fontaine was due far more to the counsels

and friendship of the king. That philosophical prince took pleasure in converting the Vendéan to the ideas which the march of the nineteenth century and the renovation of the monarchy demanded. Louis XVIII. desired to fuse parties as Napoleon had fused men and things; but the legitimate king, as wise, perhaps, as his rival, went to work in an opposite direction. The last head of the House of Bourbon was anxious to satisfy the *tiers état* and the followers of the Empire as the first of the Napoleons was eager to draw to himself the great lords and to endow the Church. Being the confidant of the king's thoughts, the councillor of State became insensibly one of the most influential and wisest leaders of the moderate party, who strongly desired, in the national interests, a fusion of opinions. He preached the costly principles of constitutional government, and seconded, with all his strength, the game of political see-saw which enabled his master to govern France in the midst of so many agitations. Perhaps Monsieur de Fontaine flattered himself that he should reach a peerage by one of those legislative gusts, the effects of which take the oldest politicians by surprise. One of the firmest of his acquired principles consisted in no longer recognizing any other nobility in France than that of the peerage, because the families of peers alone held the privileges.

“A nobility without privileges,” he said, “is a handle without a tool.”

Thus, equally far from the party of Lafayette as from that of La Bourdonnaye, he favored, ardently, the general reconciliation from which was to issue an

era of new and brilliant destinies for France. He tried to convince the families who frequented his salons, and those whom he visited, of the few favorable chances now to be found in a military or governmental career. He advised mothers to put their sons into industrial and other professions, assuring them that military employment and the higher functions of government must end in belonging constitutionally to the younger sons of peers.

The new ideas of the Comte de Fontaine, and the marriages which resulted of his two elder daughters, had found much opposition in the bosom of his family. The Comtesse de Fontaine continued faithful to the old beliefs, as became a descendant of the Rohans through her mother. Though she opposed, for a time, the marriage of her daughters, she yielded, after a while, as all mothers would have done in her place; but she insisted that her daughter *Émilie* should be married in a manner to satisfy the pride which she had herself developed in that young breast.

Thus the events which might have brought only joy to this household produced a slight leaven of discord. One of the sons married *Mademoiselle Mongenod*, the daughter of a rich banker; another chose a girl whose father, thrice a millionaire, had made his money by salt; the third had taken to wife a *Mademoiselle Grossetête*, daughter of the receiver-general at Bourges. The three sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law finding it for their interests to enter the salons of the faubourg Saint-Germain, agreed among themselves to make a little court around *Émilie*. This compact of self-interests and pride was not, however, so thor-

oughly cemented that the young sovereign did not occasionally excite revolutions in her kingdom. Scenes which good taste would have repudiated took place in private between the members of this powerful family, though they were never allowed to affect the outward show of affection assumed before the public.

Such were the general circumstances of the Fontaine household and its little domestic strife, when the king, into whose favor the count was expecting to return, was seized with his last illness. The great politician who had succeeded so well in piloting his wreck amid the storm was not long in succumbing. Uncertain as to the future, the Comte de Fontaine now made the greatest efforts to collect about his youngest daughter the *élite* of the marriageable young men. Those who have tried to solve the difficult problem of marrying a proud and fanciful daughter will understand the worries that came upon the poor Vendéan. If this event could worthily be brought about in a manner to please his precious child, the count's career in Paris for the last ten years would receive its final crown. His family, indeed, by the way it had invaded all departments of government, might be compared to the house of Austria, which threatens to overrun all Europe through its alliances. The old count therefore persevered against his daughter's objections, so much did he have her happiness at heart; though nothing could be more provoking than the way in which that impertinent girl pronounced her decisions and judged the merits of her adorers. It really seemed as if *Émilie* was one of those princesses in the Arabian Nights to whom all the princes of the earth were

offered; and her objections were equally grotesque and senseless; this one was knock-kneed, that one squinted, a third was named Durand, a fourth limped, and all were too fat. Livelier, more charming, and gayer than ever when she had just rejected two or three suitors, Émilie de Fontaine rushed into all the winter fêtes, going from ball to ball, examining with her penetrating eyes the celebrities of the day, and exciting proposals which she always rejected.

Nature had given her, profusely, the advantages required for the rôle of Célimène. Tall and slender, she was able to assume a bearing that was imposing or volatile, as she pleased. Her neck, a trifle too long, enabled her to take charming attitudes of disdain or sauciness. She had made herself a fruitful repertory of those turns of the head and feminine gestures which explained, cruelly or the reverse as the case might be, her smiles and words. Beautiful black hair, thick and well-arched eyebrows gave an expression of pride to her face which coquetry and her mirror had taught her to render terrible or to modify by the fixity or the softness of her glance, by the slight inflexion or the immobility of her lips, by the coldness or the grace of her smile. When Émilie wanted to lay hold of a heart she could make her voice melodious; but when she intended to paralyze the tongue of an indiscreet worshipper she could give it a curt clearness which silenced him. Her pure white face and alabaster forehead were like the limpid surface of a lake which is ruffled by the slight breeze, and returns to its joyous serenity as the air grows still. More than one young man, the victim of her disdain, had accused

her of playing comedy. In revenge for such speeches she inspired her detractors with the desire to please her, and then subjected them pitilessly to all the arts of her coquetry. Among the young girls of fashionable society none knew better than she how to assume a haughty air to men of talent, or display that insulting politeness which makes inferiors of our equals. Wherever she went she seemed to receive homage rather than courtesies, and even in the salon of a princess she had the air of being seated on a throne.

Monsieur de Fontaine perceived, too late, how much the education of his favorite daughter had been perverted by the mistaken tenderness of her family. The admiration which the world gives to a beautiful young woman, for which it often avenges itself later, had still further exalted Émilie's pride and increased her self-confidence. General approval had developed in her the selfishness natural to spoiled children, who, like kings, amuse themselves on all who approach them. At this moment the graces of youth and the charm of native talent hid these defects from ordinary eyes; but nothing escapes the eye of a good father, and Monsieur de Fontaine sometimes attempted to explain to his daughter the true meaning of the enigmatical pages of the book of life. A vain attempt! He was made too often to groan over the capricious intractability and sarcastic cleverness of his wayward girl to persevere steadily in the difficult task of correcting her warped nature. He contented himself, finally, with giving her kindly and gentle counsel from time to time; but he had the pain of finding that his tenderest words slid from her heart like water from polished

marble. It took the old Vendéan some years to perceive the condescending manner with which his petted child received his caresses.

But there were times when with sudden caprice, apparently inexplicable in a young girl, she would shut herself up and go nowhere; at such times she complained that social life separated her from the heart of her father and mother, she grew jealous of every one, even her brothers and sisters. Then, having taken pains to create a desert around her, the strange girl threw the blame of her dissatisfied solitude and self-made troubles upon life. Armed with her twenty years' experience, she railed at fate; not perceiving that the principle of happiness is within us, she cried aloud to the things of life to give it to her. She would have gone to the ends of the earth to avoid a marriage like those of her sisters, and yet in her heart she was horribly jealous on seeing them rich and happy.

Sometimes her mother — even more the victim of her proceedings than her father — was led to think there was a tinge of madness in her. But her behavior was otherwise explicable. Nothing is more common than self-assumption in the heart of young girls placed high on the social ladder and gifted with great beauty. They are often persuaded that their mother, now forty to fifty years old, can no longer sympathize with their young souls or conceive their wants. They imagine that most mothers, jealous of their daughters, have a premeditated design to prevent them from receiving attentions or eclipsing their own claims. Hence, secret tears and muttered rebellion against imaginary maternal tyranny. From the midst of these fancied

griefs, which they make real, they draw for themselves a brilliant horoscope; their magic consists in taking dreams for realities; they resolve, in their secret meditations, to give their heart and hand to no man who does not possess such or such qualifications, and they picture to their imagination a type to which their accepted lover must, willingly or not, conform. After certain experience of life and the serious reflections which years bring to them, and after seeing the world and its prosaic course, the glowing colors of their ideal visions fade; and they are quite astonished some fine day to wake up and find themselves happy without the nuptial poesy of their dreams. At present Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine had resolved, in her flimsy wisdom, on a programme to which a suitor must conform in order to be accepted. Hence her disdainful comments.

“Though young, and belonging to the old nobility,” she said to herself, “he must also be a peer of France, or the son of a peer. I could never bear to see our arms on the panels of my carriage without the azure mantle, or be unable to drive among the princes at Longchamps. Papa himself says the peerage is going to be the highest dignity in France. He must also be a soldier, but resign, if I wish him to; and I want him decorated, so that sentries may salute us.”

But the above qualifications would amount to very little, she thought, if this being did not also possess great amiability, an elegant manner, intellect, and a slender form. Slenderness, grace of body, fugitive though it might be, especially under a representative government, was absolutely indispensable. Made-

moiselle de Fontaine had a certain vision in her mind's eye which served her as model. The young man who at her first glance did not meet the required conditions never obtained a second.

"Oh, heavens! how fat he is!" was with her the expression of an abiding contempt.

To hear her, one would think that persons of honest corpulence were incapable of feelings, dangerous husbands, beings unworthy of existing in civilized society. Though considered a beauty at the East, plumpness was to her eyes a misfortune in women and a crime in men. These fantastic opinions amused her hearers, thanks to a certain liveliness of elocution. Nevertheless, the count felt that his daughter's pretensions would, sooner or later, become a subject of ridicule, especially to clear-sighted women of little charity. He also feared that as she grew older her fantastic ideas might change to ill-breeding; and he saw plainly that more than one actor in her comedy, displeased at her refusal, was only waiting for some unlucky incident to avenge himself. Consequently, during the first winter after the accession of Charles X., he redoubled his efforts, seconded by his sons and his sons-in-law, to fill his salons with the best marriageable men in Paris, trusting that at last this assemblage of suitors would put an end to his daughter's fancies, and force her to decide. He felt an inward satisfaction in having done his duty as a father; but no result appearing, he resolved to have a firm explanation with her, and toward the end of Lent she was summoned to his study.

She came in singing an air from the "Barbriere."

“Good-morning, papa. What do you want me for so early?”

The words were chanted as if they were the last line of the air she was singing; then she kissed the count, not with that familiar tenderness which makes the filial sentiment so sweet a thing, but carelessly, like a mistress, sure of pleasing, whatever she may do.

“My dear child,” said Monsieur de Fontaine, gravely, “I have sent for you to talk very seriously about your future. It has now become a necessity for you to choose a husband who will make your happiness lasting —”

“My dear papa,” replied Émilie, in her most caressing tones, “the armistice that you and I agreed upon as to my lovers has not yet expired.”

“Émilie, you must cease to jest on a subject so important. For some time past all the efforts of those who love you truly, my child, have been directed to finding you a suitable establishment, and you would be guilty of the greatest ingratitude if you made light of the interest which I am not the only one to spend upon you.”

Hearing these words, the young girl selected an arm-chair and carried it to the other side of the fireplace, directly opposite to her father, sat down in it with too solemn an air not to be sarcastic, and crossed her arms over a pelerine of innumerable snowy ruches. Glancing covertly at her father’s anxious face, she said, saucily: —

“I never heard you say, papa, that the heads of departments made their communications in their dressing-gowns. But, no matter,” she added, smil-

ing, "the populace are not punctilious. Now, then, bring in your bill, and make your official representations."

"I shall not always be able to make them, my silly child. Now listen to me, *Émilie*. I do not intend much longer to compromise my character for dignity, which is the inheritance of my children, by recruiting this regiment of suitors whom you send to the right-about every spring. Already you have been the cause of dangerous dissensions with certain families. I hope that you will now understand more plainly the difficulties of your position and mine. You are twenty-two years old, my dear, and you ought to have been married at least three years ago. Your brothers and sisters are well and happily established. I must tell you now that the expenses accruing from those marriages, and the style in which your mother keeps up this household, have absorbed so much of our property that I cannot afford to give you a dowry of more than a hundred thousand francs. It is my duty to make ample provision for your mother, whose future must not be sacrificed to that of her children; I should ill reward her devotion to me in the days of my poverty if I did not leave her enough to continue the comfort she now enjoys. I wish you to see, my child, that your dowry will not be in keeping with the ideas of grandeur you now indulge — Now, don't be sulky, my dear, but let us talk reasonably. Among the various young men who are looking for wives, have you noticed *Monsieur Paul de Manerville*?"

"Oh! he lisps; and he is always looking at his foot because he thinks it small. Besides, he is blonde, and I don't like fair men."

“Well, Monsieur de Beaudenord?”

“He is not noble. He is awkward and fat; moreover, he is so dark. It is a pity that pair could n't exchange points; the first could give his figure and his name to the second, who might return the gift in hair, and then — perhaps —”

“What have you to say against Monsieur de Rastignac?”

“Madame de Nucingen has made a banker of him,” she said, maliciously.

“And our relation, the Vicomte de Portenduère?”

“That boy! who does n't know how to dance; besides, he has no fortune. Moreover, papa, none of those men have titles. I wish to be at least a countess, like my mother.”

“Have you seen no one this winter who —”

“No one, papa.”

“Then what do you want?”

“The son of a peer of France.”

“You are crazy, my child!” said Monsieur de Fontaine, rising.

Suddenly he looked up as if to ask of heaven another dose of resignation; then, with a look of fatherly pity on the girl, who was somewhat touched, he took her hand, pressed it between his own, and said, tenderly: —

“God is my witness, poor, misguided girl! that I have conscientiously done my duty by you — Conscientiously, do I say? I mean lovingly, my Émilie. Yes, God knows that I have offered you, this winter, more than one honorable man whose character and morals were known to me as being worthy of my

child. My task is done. Émilie, from this day forth I leave you mistress of your own fate; and I feel both fortunate and unfortunate in finding myself relieved of the heaviest of all the paternal obligations. I do not know how long you may hear a voice which has, alas! never been stern to you; but it will never again say more to you than this: Remember that conjugal happiness does not depend as much on brilliant qualities or on wealth, as on reciprocal esteem and affection. Married happiness is, of its nature, modest and not dazzling. My daughter, I will accept whoever you may present to me as my son-in-law, but if you make an unhappy marriage, remember that you have no right to blame your father. I will not refuse to promote your wishes and help you; but your choice must be serious and definite. I will not compromise the respect due to my character any longer by promoting your present course."

Her father's affection and his solemn accents did really affect Mademoiselle de Fontaine sincerely; but she concealed her feelings, and sprang gayly on his knee, — for the count was again seated, and trembling with agitation. She caressed and coaxed him so prettily that the old man's brow began to clear, and when she thought him sufficiently recovered from his painful emotion she said, in a low voice: —

"I thank you for your great kindness, dear papa. Is it so very difficult to marry a peer of France? I have heard you say they were made in batches. Ah! you surely won't refuse me your advice?"

"No, my poor child, no; indeed, I will often say to you, 'Beware!' Remember that the peerage is too

new a thing in our 'governmentability,' as the late king used to say, for peers to possess large fortunes. Those who are rich want to become richer, and they are looking for heiresses for their sons wherever they can find them. It will be two hundred years before the necessity they are under to make rich marriages dies out. I don't need, I think, to warn a girl like you of the difficulties in your way. One thing I am sure of; you will never be misled by a handsome face or flattering manners to rashly attribute either sense or virtue to a stranger; you have your heart, like a good horseman, too well in hand for that. My daughter, I can only wish you good luck."

"You are laughing at me, papa. Well, listen. I declare to you that I will go and die in Mademoiselle de Condé's convent sooner than not be the wife of a peer of France."

She sprang from her father's arms and ran off, proud of being her own mistress, and singing, as she went, the *Cara non dubitare* in the "Matrimonio Segreto."

At dessert that day, Madame Planat, Émilie's elder sister, began to speak of a young American, the possessor of a great fortune, who was passionately in love with the girl, and had lately made her very brilliant proposals.

"He is a banker, I think," said Émilie, carelessly. "I don't like financial people."

"But, Émilie," said the Baron de Vilaine, the husband of her second sister, "you don't like the magistracy any better; so that really if you reject all men of property without titles, I don't see into what class you can go for a husband."

“Especially, *Émilie*, with your sentiments on fat men,” added her brother, the lieutenant-general.

“I know very well what I want,” replied the girl.

“My sister wants a noble name, a fine young man, a glorious future, and a hundred thousand francs a year, — *Monsieur de Marsay*, for instance,” said the *Baronne de Fontaine*.

“I know this, my dear sister,” returned *Émilie*. “I shall not make a foolish marriage, as I have seen so many people do. Now, to avoid, in future, these nuptial discussions, I here declare that I shall regard as a personal enemy any one who says another word to me about marriage.”

A great-uncle of *Émilie*, a vice-admiral whose fortune had just been increased by twenty thousand francs a year through the law of indemnity, an old man of seventy, assumed the right of saying harsh truths when he pleased to his grand-niece, whom he idolized. He now remarked, as if to put a stop to the sharpness of the conversation: —

“Don’t tease my poor *Émilie*; can’t you see that she is waiting for the majority of the *Duc de Bordeaux*?”

A general laugh replied to the old man’s jest.

“Take care I don’t marry you, you old goose,” retorted the girl, whose last word was fortunately lost in the hubbub.

“My children,” said *Madame de Fontaine*, endeavoring to soften this impertinence, “*Émilie*, like the rest of you, will take her mother’s advice.”

“Oh, heavens! no; I shall take no one’s advice but my own in a matter which concerns me alone,” said *Mademoiselle de Fontaine*, very distinctly.

All eyes turned to the head of the family on hearing this speech. Every one seemed curious to see how the count would take such an attack on his dignity. Not only did the worthy Vendéan enjoy the consideration of the world at large, but, more fortunate than many fathers, he was greatly esteemed by his own family, all the members of which recognized the solid qualities which had enabled him to make the fortune of those belonging to him. He was therefore surrounded by that respect and even reverence which English families and some aristocratic families on the continent show to the head of their genealogical tree. Silence fell; the eyes of every one turned from the haughty and sullen face of the spoiled child to the stern faces of her father and mother.

“I have left *Émilie* mistress of her own fate,” was the reply of the count, made in a deep voice.

All present looked at *Mademoiselle de Fontaine* with a curiosity that was mingled with pity. The words seemed to say that paternal kindness was weary of endeavoring to control a character which the family knew to be uncontrollable. The sons-in-law murmured disapprovingly; the brothers looked at their wives sarcastically. From that moment, none of them took any further interest in the marriage of the intractable girl. Her old uncle was the only person who, in his naval parlance, dared to board her, and he did, occasionally, receive her fire and return her broadside for broadside.

II.

THE BALL.

WHEN the summer season came (after the vote on the budget) this family, a true likeness of the parliamentary families on the other side of the British Channel, which have a foothold in all ministries and ten votes in the Commons, flew off like a covey of birds to the beautiful regions of Aulnay, Antony, and Châtenay. The opulent receiver-general, the husband of the eldest sister, had lately bought a country-seat in that vicinity, and though Émilie despised all plebeians, that sentiment did not lead her so far as to disdain the advantages of bourgeois wealth. She therefore accompanied her sister to her sumptuous villa, less from affection for the members of her family, who went with them, than from the rigid rule of good society, which imperiously requires all women who respect themselves to leave Paris during the summer season. The verdant meadows of Sceaux fulfilled these exactions of good taste and public duty suitably, and Émilie agreed to go there.

As it is doubtful whether the reputation of the rural ball of Sceaux has ever reached beyond the limits of the department of the Seine, it is necessary to give a few details on this hebdomadal fête, which threatened at that time to become an institution. The envi-

rons of the little town of Sceaux enjoys the reputation of delightful scenery. Perhaps, however, it is really commonplace, and owes its celebrity to the stupid ignorance of the Parisian bourgeoisie, who, issuing from the close and narrow streets in which they are buried, incline naturally to admire the plains of Beauce. Nevertheless, as the poetic woods of Aulnay, the hillsides of Antony, and the valley of the Bièvre are inhabited by artists who have travelled, by foreigners, by persons difficult to please, and by a number of pretty women who are not without taste, we may suppose that the transient Parisian visitors were right.

But Sceaux possesses another charm in addition to its scenery, not less attractive to Parisians. In the middle of a garden where many delightful points of view are obtained, stands an immense rotunda, open on all sides, the light and airy dome of which is supported by elegant pillars. This rural dais shelters a ballroom. It seldom happens that even the most conventional and proper of the neighboring proprietors and their families do not converge at least once or twice during the season toward this palace of the village Terpsichore, either in brilliant cavalcades, or in light and elegant carriages which cover with dust philosophical pedestrians. The hope of meeting there some women of the great world and being seen by them, the hope (less often betrayed) of meeting young peasant-women as demure as judges, brings, Sunday after Sunday, to the ball of Sceaux, swarms of lawyers' clerks, disciples of Esculapius, and other youths whose fresh complexions are discoloring behind the counters of Paris. Quite a number of bourgeois mar-

riages are yearly planned to the sounds of the orchestra, which occupies the centre of the circular hall. If that could speak, what tales of love it might tell!

This interesting medley of classes made the ball of Sceaux, in those days, more spicy and amusing than other rural balls in the neighborhood of Paris, over which its rotunda, the beauty of its site, and the charms of its garden, gave it additional advantages. Émilie at once proclaimed her desire to "play populace" at this lively rural scene, and declared she should take an enormous amount of pleasure in it. Her family were astonished at this fancy for mixing in such a mob; but to play at incognito has always had a singular charm for persons of rank. Mademoiselle de Fontaine expected to derive much amusement from citizen manners; she saw herself leaving in more than one bourgeois soul the memory of a look or a fascinating smile; she laughed to think of the awkward dancing, and she sharpened her pencils in preparation for the scenes with which she expected to enrich her satirical album.

Sunday arrived to put an end to her impatience. The party from Planat made their way on foot to avoid giving annoyance to the rest of the company. The family had dined early. The month of May was a delightful season for such an escapade. Mademoiselle de Fontaine's first sensation was one of surprise at finding under the rotunda a number of persons dancing quadrilles who appeared to belong to the best society. She saw, indeed, here and there, a few young men who had evidently put their month's savings into the joy of shining for this one day; but, on the whole,

there was little of satire to glean and none to harvest. She was amazed to find pleasure arrayed in cambric so much like pleasure robed in satin, and the citizen female dancing with as much grace as the noble lady, sometimes with more. Most of the toilets were simple and becoming. Those of the assembly who represented the lords of the soil, namely, the peasants, kept in the background with remarkable politeness. Mademoiselle Émilie would have been forced to make a study of the various elements composing the scene before discovering the slightest subject of ridicule.

But, as it happened, she had no time for malicious criticism, no leisure to listen for those absurd speeches which satirical minds delight to fasten on. The proud girl suddenly met in the midst of this vast field a flower, — the comparison is in order, — a flower, the color and brilliancy of which acted on her imagination with the prestige of novelty. It sometimes happens that we look at a gown, a curtain, or a bit of white paper so abstractedly that we do not at first see some stain, or some vivid beauty which later strikes our eye as if it had just come to the place where we see it. By a species of moral phenomenon of the same kind, Mademoiselle de Fontaine now beheld in a young man the type of those external perfections she had dreamed of for years.

Seated on one of the common chairs which surrounded the dancing circle, she had carefully placed herself at the extremity of the group formed by her family party, so as to be able to rise and move about as she fancied. She sat there, turning her opera-glass impertinently on all around her, even those in her

immediate vicinity; and she was making remarks as she might have done in a gallery over portraits or genre pictures, when suddenly her eyes were caught by a face which seemed to have been placed there, expressly, in the strongest light, to exhibit a personage out of all proportion with the rest of the scene.

The stranger, dreamy, and apparently solitary, leaned lightly against one of the columns that supported the roof, with his arms folded, slightly bending forward as though a painter were taking his portrait. His attitude, though proud and full of grace, was entirely free from affectation. No gesture showed that he held his face at three-quarters, inclining slightly to the right, like Alexander and like Byron and several other great men, for the purpose of attracting attention. His eyes followed the motions of a lady who was dancing, and their expression betrayed some powerful sentiment. His slim and agile figure recalled the proportions of the Apollo. Fine black hair curled naturally on his high forehead. Mademoiselle de Fontaine, at her first glance, noticed the fineness of his linen, the freshness of his kid gloves, evidently from the best maker, and the smallness of a foot well-shod in a boot of Irish leather. He wore none of those worthless trinkets which a counter-Lovelace or the fops of the National Guard affect. A black ribbon, to which his eyeglass was attached, alone floated over a waistcoat of elegant shape. Never had the exacting *Émilie* seen the eyes of man shaded by lashes so long and so curving. Melancholy and passion were both in that face, the tone of which was olive, and the features manly. His mouth seemed

ready to smile and to raise the corners of its eloquent lips; but this expression, far from denoting gayety, revealed, on the contrary, a certain graceful sadness. There was too much future promise in that head, too much distinction in the whole person not to make an observer desire to know him; the most perceptive observer would have seen that here was a man of talent, brought to this village ball by some powerful interest.

This mass of observations cost Émilie's quick mind but a moment's attention, during which moment, however, this privileged man, subjected to severe analysis, became the object of her secret admiration. She said to herself, "He is a noble, — he must be." Then she rose suddenly and went, followed by her brother, the lieutenant-general, toward the column on which the stranger leaned, pretending to watch the quadrille, but not losing, thanks to an optical manœuvre familiar to woman, a single one of the young man's movements as she approached him. The stranger politely yielded his place to the new-comers and went to another column, against which he leaned. Émilie, more piqued at this civility than she would have been by an impertinence, began to talk to her brother in a raised tone of voice, louder than good taste admitted. She nodded and shook her head, multiplied her gestures, and laughed without much reason, far less to amuse her brother than to attract the attention of the imperturbable stranger. None of these little artifices succeeded; and then it occurred to Mademoiselle de Fontaine to follow the direction of the young man's glances. On doing so, she saw at once the cause of his absorption.

In the middle of the quadrille directly before her, a pale young girl was dancing, who was like those Scottish deities whom Girodet has painted in his vast composition of French warriors received by Ossian. Émilie thought at first she must either be or belong to a distinguished lady who had lately come to occupy a neighboring country-house. Her partner was a young man of fifteen, with red hands, nankeen trousers, blue coat, and white shoes, which proved that her love for dancing made her not difficult to please in the matter of partners. Her movements did not show the languor of her apparent feebleness; but a faint flush colored her delicate cheeks and was beginning to spread over her face. Mademoiselle de Fontaine went nearer to the quadrille in order to examine the young stranger when she returned to her place, while the *vis-à-vis* repeated the figure she had just executed. But at this moment the young man advanced, stooped to the pretty dancer, and said, in a masterful, yet gentle tone of voice, these words, which Émilie distinctly overheard: —

“Clara, my child, do not dance any more.”

Clara gave a little pout, nodded her head in sign of acquiescence, and ended by smiling. After the dance was over the young man took all the precautions of a lover in wrapping a cashmere shawl around the girl's shoulders, and making her sit away from the draught. Presently Mademoiselle de Fontaine saw them rise and walk round the enclosure like persons intending to take their departure, and she followed them hastily, under pretence of admiring the views from the garden. Her brother lent himself with malicious good-humor

to the various caprices of this vagabond ramble. Émilie soon perceived her elegant couple getting into a tilbury held by a groom on horseback, and at the moment when the young man gathered up the reins she obtained from him one of those glances that are aimlessly cast upon a crowd; next, she had the satisfaction of seeing him turn twice to look at her again. The lady did likewise. Was she jealous?

“I presume that now, having examined the garden thoroughly,” said her brother, “we may return to the dance.”

“I am willing,” she answered. “Do you think that young girl can be a sister of Lady Dudley?”

“Lady Dudley may have a sister staying with her,” replied the Baron de Fontaine, “but she can’t be a young girl.”

The next day Mademoiselle de Fontaine was possessed with a strong desire to ride on horseback. Little by little she brought her old uncle and her brothers to accompany her daily in certain early morning rides, very beneficial, she declared, for her health. She particularly delighted in the country about Lady Dudley’s house. But in spite of her cavalry manœuvres she did not find the stranger as promptly as her joyous hopes predicted. Several times she returned to the rural ball, but in vain. The stranger who had fallen from heaven to rule her dreams and adorn them appeared not again. Nothing spurs the dawning love of a young girl like an obstacle; but there was, nevertheless, a moment when Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine was on the point of abandoning her strange and secret quest, despairing of the success of an enterprise

the singularity of which may give some idea of her daring character. She might, indeed, have ridden about the neighborhood indefinitely without meeting her unknown hero. Clara — since Clara was the name that Émilie had overheard — was not English; she did not belong to Lady Dudley's household, and the gentleman who accompanied her did not reside near the balmy groves of Châtenay.

One evening, as Émilie was riding alone with her uncle, who enjoyed a cessation of hostilities from his gout during the summer, she met the carriage of Lady Dudley. That illustrious foreigner was accompanied by Monsieur Félix de Vandenesse. Émilie recognized the handsome couple, and her past suppositions were dissolved like a dream. Provoked, like any other woman frustrated in her scheme, she turned her horse and rode so rapidly homeward that her uncle had all the trouble in the world to keep up with her.

“Apparently I'm too old to understand these young things,” thought the old sailor as he urged his horse to a gallop. “Or perhaps the youth of these days is n't the same as it was in mine — But what's my niece about now? Look at her, making her horse take short steps, like a gendarme patrolling Paris. Would n't one think she was trying to hem in that worthy fellow, who looks like an author composing poetry? Yes, to be sure, he has an album in his hand! Faith! what a fool I am! no doubt that's the young man we've been chasing all along.”

At this thought the old sailor checked the speed of his horse so as to reach his niece as noiselessly as he could. In spite of the veil which years had drawn

before his gray eyes the Comte de Kergarouët saw enough to note the signs of some unusual agitation in the girl, in spite of the indifference she endeavored to assume. Her piercing eyes were fixed in a sort of stupor on the stranger, who was tranquilly walking in front of her.

“That’s surely it!” thought the old gentleman. “She is making a stern chase of him, like a pirate after a merchantman. When she loses sight of him she’ll be in a fine state at not knowing who he is, whether a marquis or a bourgeois. Ah! those young heads, those young heads! they ought always to have an old wig like me at their elbow —”

Suddenly he set spurs to his horse to startle that of his niece, and passed so rapidly between Émilie and the stranger that he forced the latter to jump back upon the grass that bordered the road. Stopping his horse, the count cried out: —

“Could n’t you get out of the way?”

“Ah, pardon me,” replied the stranger. “I was not aware it was my place to make excuses for your nearly knocking me down.”

“Enough of that, friend!” returned the old sailor, gruffly, in a tone of voice which was meant to be insulting.

At the same time the count raised his whip as if to strike his horse, but he let the end of it touch the shoulder of the young man as he said: —

“The liberals always reason, and the man who reasons ought to be wise.”

The young man jumped into the road on hearing the words, and said, in an angry voice: —

“Monsieur, I can hardly believe, seeing your white hair, that you still amuse yourself by seeking duels —”

“White hair!” cried the sailor, interrupting him; “you lie in your throat; it is only gray.”

A dispute thus begun became, in a few seconds, so hot that the young adversary forgot the tone of moderation he tried to use. At this moment *Émilie* rode anxiously back to them, and the count gave his name hurriedly to the young man, telling him to say nothing more in presence of the lady who was intrusted to his care. The young stranger could not help smiling, but he gave his card to the old gentleman, remarking that he lived in a country-house at *Chevreuse*, after which he disappeared rapidly.

“You came near killing that poor fellow, niece,” said the count, riding up to *Émilie*. “Why don’t you hold your horse in hand? You left me to compromise my dignity in order to cover your folly; whereas if you had stayed on the spot one of your looks or civil words, which you can say prettily enough when you don’t want to be impertinent, would have mended matters even if you had broken his arm.”

“My dear uncle, it was your horse, not mine, that caused the accident. I really think you ought to give up riding; you are not half so good a horseman as you were last year. But instead of talking about trifles —”

“Trifles! the devil! Do you call it a trifle to be impertinent to your uncle?”

“— we had much better follow that young man and see if he is hurt. He is limping, uncle, see!”

“No, he is running. I gave him a good lesson.”

“Ah! uncle, that was just like you.”

“Stop, niece,” said the count, catching Émilie’s horse by the bridle. “I don’t see the necessity of running after some shopkeeper, who may think himself only too happy to be run down by a pretty young girl and the commander of the ‘Belle-Poule.’”

“Why do you think he is a shopkeeper, uncle? I think, on the contrary, that his manners are very distinguished.”

“Everybody has manners in these days.”

“Everybody has not the air and style of social life; I’ll lay a wager with you that that young man is noble.”

“You did n’t have time to examine him.”

“But it is n’t the first time I have seen him.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed her uncle; “and it is n’t the first time you have hunted for him, either.”

Émilie colored, and her uncle amused himself by leaving her a while embarrassed; then he said:—

“Émilie, you know I love you as my own child, because you are the only one of the family who keeps the legitimate pride of high birth. Ah! my little niece, who’d have thought good principles would have become so rare? Well, I wish to be your confidant. My dear little girl, I see you are not indifferent to that young gentleman. You know what that means. Therefore, let me help you. Let us both keep the secret, and I’ll promise to introduce him to you in a salon.”

“When, uncle?”

“To-morrow.”

“But, my dear uncle, you won’t bind me to anything?”

“To nothing at all; you can bombard him, set fire to him, make a wreck of him if you please. And he won’t be the first, either.”

“How kind you are, uncle.”

As soon as the count got home he put on his spectacles, pulled the card from his pocket, and read the name, “Maximilien Longueville, rue du Sentier.”

“You need n’t feel uneasy,” he said later to *Émilie*; “you can harpoon him in safety; he belongs to one of the great historical families, and if he is n’t peer of France now he can certainly become so.”

“What makes you think so?”

“That ’s my secret.”

“Do you know his name?”

The count nodded his gray head, which was something like an old oak stump, around which a few autumn leaves were clinging. At that nod his niece ran to him to try the ever fresh effect of her coquetries. Learned in the art of cajoling the old sailor, she coaxed him like a child with the tenderest words. She even went so far as to kiss him, in order to obtain the important secret. But the old man, who passed his life in making his niece play such scenes, let her entreat and pet him for a long time. Presently she grew angry and sulked; then, under the spur of curiosity, she coaxed again. The diplomatic mariner first obtained her solemn promise to behave with more discretion, to be more gentle, less self-willed, to spend less money, and, above all, to tell him everything. This treaty being concluded and signed by a kiss

which he deposited on Émilie's white forehead, he seated her on his knee, placed the card before her eyes, with his two thumbs covering the print, and let her make out, letter by letter, the name of Longueville, obstinately refusing to show her more.

This event made the secret sentiments of Mademoiselle de Fontaine even more intense, and she spent the greater part of the night in picturing to her mind's eye the brilliant dreams with which she fed her hopes. Thanks to chance, so often invoked, Emilie now saw something besides a mere chimera in her visions of conjugal life. Like all young girls, who are ignorant of the risks of love and marriage, she was captivated by the deceitful externals of the two conditions. In other words, her sentiments were like other caprices of early youth, sweet but cruel errors which exercise a fatal influence on the existence of girls who are inexperienced enough to take upon their own shoulders the responsibility of their future happiness.

The next morning, before Émilie was awake, her uncle had ridden to Chevreuse. Finding in the courtyard of an elegant country-house the young man he had so wantonly insulted the night before, he went up to him with the affectionate politeness of the old men of the olden time.

“My dear monsieur,” he said, “could any one believe that I should, at the age of sixty-three, get up a quarrel with the son of one of my oldest friends? I am a vice-admiral, monsieur; which is proof enough that I think no more of fighting a duel than of smoking a cigar. In my day, young fellows could n't be friends till they had seen the color of each other's

blood. But, *ventre-de-biche!* I had, you must know, taken a trifle too much grog aboard, and I ran foul of you. Shake hands! I'd rather receive a hundred rebuffs from a Longueville than give the slightest pain to any of the family."

Though at first the young man was inclined to be cold to the Comte de Kergarouët, it was impossible to hold out long against his hearty manner, and he allowed himself to be shaken by the hand.

"You are going out," said the count; "don't let me detain you. But, unless you have other plans, come and dine with me to-day at the Pavillon Planat. My nephew, the Comte de Fontaine, is a man you ought to know. And, besides, *morbleu!* I want to repair my rudeness by presenting you to four or five of the prettiest women of Paris. Ha, ha! young man, your brow unclouds! Well, I like young people, and I want to see them happy. Their happiness reminds me of those blessed days of youth when adventures were never lacking. Gay! oh, we were gay then, I can tell you. Nowadays, you reason, you worry about all sorts of things, as if there had never been a fifteenth or sixteenth century."

"But, monsieur, are not we right to do so? The sixteenth century gave Europe religious liberty only, whereas the nineteenth will give her poli —

"Stop, stop, don't talk politics. I'm an old foggy of an ultra. But for all that, I don't prevent young fellows from being revolutionists, provided they allow the king to disperse their meetings."

Riding on together a little way, the count and his companion were soon in the heart of the woods. The

old sailor selected a slim young birch, stopped his horse, pulled out a pistol, and sent a ball through its stem at forty paces.

“You see, my dear fellow, that I have no reason to fear a duel,” he remarked, with comic gravity, as he looked at Monsieur Longueville.

“Nor I, either,” said the young man, pulling out his own pistol. Aiming for the count’s hole he put his ball close beside it.

“That’s what I call a well brought-up young man,” cried the count, with enthusiasm.

During this ride with the man he already regarded as his nephew, he found several opportunities to make inquiries as to those trifling accomplishments the possession of which constituted, according to his peculiar code, a finished gentleman.

“Have you any debts?” he asked, finally, after a variety of other questions.

“No, monsieur.”

“What! you pay for what you buy!”

“Punctually, monsieur; otherwise we should lose our credit and standing.”

“But of course you have a mistress? Ah! you blush, young man. How times have changed, to be sure! With these ideas of legality, Kantism, liberty, youth is spoiled. You have neither Guimard, nor Duthé, nor creditors, and you don’t know heraldry! Why, my dear young friend, you are not *brought-up* at all! Let me tell you that he who does n’t commit his follies in the spring is certain to commit them in winter. If I have eighty thousand francs a year at seventy it is because I ran through my capital at thirty — Oh!

with my wife, honorably. Nevertheless your imperfections will not prevent me from presenting you at the Pavillon Planat. Remember that you have promised to come, and I shall expect you."

"What an odd little man!" thought Longueville; "he is lively and robust, but — though he tries to seem kindly, I shall not trust him."

The next day, about four o'clock, as the family party were scattered about in the salons and billiard-room at Planat, a servant announced: —

"Monsieur *de* Longueville."

Having already heard of him from the Comte de Kergarouët, the whole company, even to a billiard-player who missed his stroke, gathered to see the newcomer, as much to watch Mademoiselle de Fontaine's face as to judge of the phœnix who had won the day in defiance of so many rivals. Manners that were full of ease, courteous politeness, a style of dress both elegant and simple, and a voice which vibrated to the heart of all hearers at once obtained for Monsieur Longueville the good-will of the whole family. He did not seem unused to the luxury now about him. Though his conversation was that of a man of the world, it was easy to see that he had received a brilliant education, and that his knowledge was solid and also extensive. He used, for instance, the proper technical word in a slight discussion which the count started on naval constructions, which led one of the women present to remark that he must have been educated at the *École Polytechnique*.

"I agree with you, madame," he replied, "that it is an honor to have been educated there."

In spite of much urging, he declined politely, but firmly, the urgent invitation of the family that he should stay to dinner; and he put an end to all remarks from the ladies by saying that he was the Hippocrates of a young sister whose delicate health required incessant watching.

“Monsieur is perhaps a physician?” said one of Émilie’s sisters-in-law, rather maliciously.

“No, monsieur was educated at the *École Polytechnique*,” interposed Mademoiselle de Fontaine, whose face had brightened with the richest tints on hearing that the lady she had seen at the ball was Monsieur Longueville’s sister.

“But, my dear sister, a man can be educated at the *École Polytechnique* and yet be a physician. Isn’t that so, monsieur?”

“Madame, the two things are not incompatible,” replied the young man.

All eyes rested on Émilie, who looked with a sort of uneasy curiosity at the attractive stranger. She breathed more freely when he added, with a smile, —

“I have not the honor of being a physician, madame, and I have even declined an opportunity to enter the government service, in order to maintain my independence.”

“And you did right,” said the count. “But how can you call it an honor to be a doctor? Ah! my young friend, for a man like you —”

“Monsieur le comte, I feel infinite respect for all professions that are useful.”

“I’ll agree to that; you respect professions, I suspect, as other young men respect dowagers.”

Monsieur Longueville's visit was neither too long nor too short. He withdrew at the moment when he had pleased every one and when the curiosity of all was fairly roused.

"That's a sly fellow," said the count, returning to the salon, after seeing the young man to the door.

Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who alone was in the secret of this visit, had made a somewhat choice toilet to attract the eyes of the young man; but she had the small annoyance of perceiving that he paid her less attention than she thought her due. The family were a good deal surprised at the silence into which she retired. Usually Émilie displayed her coquettish charms, her clever chatter, and the inexhaustible eloquence of her glances and her attitudes on each newcomer. Whether it was that the musical voice of the young man and the attraction of his manners had seriously charmed her, and that this real sentiment had given her a change of heart, it is certain that her behavior lost all affectation. Becoming simple and natural she was all the more beautiful. Some of her sisters, and an old lady, a friend of the family, saw a refinement of coquetry in this conduct. They supposed that finding a young man worthy of her she intended to show him slowly her charms, and then to dazzle him suddenly when her mind was made up.

Every member of the family was curious to know what the capricious girl thought of the stranger; but when, during dinner, they each took occasion to endow Monsieur Longueville with some fresh merit, Mademoiselle de Fontaine was mute until a slight sarcasm from her uncle roused her suddenly from her apathy;

she then said, in a pointed manner, that such celestial perfections must cover some great defect, and that for her part she should be careful not to judge of so clever a man at first sight.

“Those who please every one please no one in particular,” she added; “and the worst of all defects is to have none.”

Like all young girls who fall in love, Émilie fondly hoped to hide her feelings in her heart by misleading the Argus eyes that surrounded her; but at the end of a fortnight there was not a single member of this numerous family who was not initiated into her secret.

At Monsieur Longueville's third visit Émilie felt that she attracted him. This discovery gave her such intoxicating pleasure that she felt surprised at herself when she reflected on it. There was something humiliating to her pride in it. Accustomed to feel herself the centre of the world she lived in, she was now obliged to recognize a power which controlled her in spite of herself. She tried to rebel against it, but she was wholly unable to drive from her heart the seductive image of the young man. Then came uneasiness. Two characteristics of Monsieur Longueville were very unwelcome, both to the general curiosity and that of Mademoiselle de Fontaine in particular; namely, his discretion and his modesty. He never spoke of himself, or of his family, or his occupations. In spite of the traps which Émilie repeatedly laid for him in conversation, he managed to evade them all with the cleverness of a diplomatist who means to keep his secret. If she talked of painting, Monsieur Longueville replied as a connoisseur. If

she tried music, the young man showed, without conceit, that he could play the piano fairly well. One evening he delighted the company by blending his delightful voice with that of *Émilie* in one of *Cimara*'s fine duets. But if any one attempted to discover whether he were an artist of any kind, he joked about his accomplishments with so much grace that he left these women, practised as they were in the art of divining such secrets, unable to discover the social sphere to which he belonged. No matter with what vigor the old admiral flung a grapnel to the vessel, *Longueville* managed to slip by it with a suppleness which preserved the charm of mystery; and it was all the more easy for him to keep his incognito at the *Pavillon Planat*, because the curiosity he there aroused never exceeded the limits of politeness.

Émilie, tortured by this reserve, fancied she might get more from the sister than from the brother, and she now attempted, with the help of her uncle, to bring that hitherto mute personage, *Mademoiselle Clara Longueville*, on the scene. The society at the *Pavillon* expressed an extreme desire to know so amiable a young lady and to afford her some amusement. An informal ball was proposed and accepted, and the ladies felt certain of getting the truth from a girl of sixteen.

In spite of these little clouds of doubt, a vivid light had entered the soul of *Mademoiselle de Fontaine*, who found a new and delightful charm in life when connected with another being besides herself. She began to conceive the true nature of social relations. Whether happiness makes better beings of us, or

whether her mind was too occupied to tease and harass others, it is certain that she became less caustic, gentler and more indulgent. This change in her character delighted the astonished family. Perhaps, after all, her selfishness was to turn into love. Merely to expect the arrival of her reserved adorer was joy. Though a single word of passion had never passed between them she knew herself loved. With what art she now enabled her unknown lover to display his accomplishments and the treasures of an education that was evidently varied. Conscious that she herself was being carefully observed, she felt her defects and tried to conquer those which her training had so fatally encouraged. It was indeed a first homage paid to love, and a bitter reproach which her awakened heart made to itself. The result was that, wanting to please, she fascinated; she loved, and was idolized.

Her family, knowing how amply her pride protected her, allowed her enough liberty to enjoy those little youthful happinesses which give such charm and such vigor to young love. More than once the young man and *Émilie* walked alone about the shrubbery of the park, where nature was decked like beauty for a ball. More than once they held those vague and aimless conversations the emptiest words of which conceal the deepest sentiments. Together they admired the setting sun and its glowing colors. They gathered daisies to pluck the leaves; they sang the passionate duets of *Pergolesi* and *Rossini*, using those notes as faithful interpreters to express their secret feelings.

III.

IN WHICH THE WORST COMES TO THE WORST.

THE day of the ball arrived. Clara Longueville and her brother, whom the footmen persisted in decorating with the particle, were the heroes of it. For the first time in her life Mademoiselle de Fontaine saw the triumph of another girl with pleasure. She lavished, in all sincerity, upon Clara, those pretty caresses and attentions which women often show to each other to excite the jealousy of men. Émilie had an object of her own, however; she wanted to obtain the secret. But Mademoiselle Longueville proved to have even more discretion and more cleverness than her brother, for she did not even seem to be reserved,—keeping the conversation away from personal interests, but giving it so great a charm on other subjects that Mademoiselle de Fontaine felt a sort of envy, and called her “the siren.” Though Émilie’s intention was to question Clara, it was Clara who questioned Émilie; she wanted to judge the girl, and the girl judged her; she was even provoked with herself for letting her real self appear in certain answers cleverly drawn out of her by Clara, whose modest and innocent air precluded all suspicion of malice. At one moment Émilie seemed really angry at having made an attack upon plebeians, which Clara herself had provoked.

“Mademoiselle,” said the charming girl, “I have heard so much of you from Maximilien that I have longed to know you; and to know you must be, I think, to love you.”

“Dear Clara, I was afraid I displeased you just now, in speaking as I did of those who are not noble.”

“Oh, no; don’t be troubled. In these days such discussions have no point; and as for me, I am outside of that question.”

This answer gave Mademoiselle de Fontaine the utmost satisfaction, for she interpreted it as people interpret oracles, to suit themselves. She looked at Maximilien, whose elegance surpassed even that of her imaginary type, and her soul was filled with joy at the knowledge at last obtained that he was noble. Never did the two lovers understand each other so well as at this moment; more than once their hands trembled as they met in the figures of the dance.

Autumn came in the midst of fêtes and rural pleasures, during which the charming couple let themselves float upon the current of the sweetest of all sentiments, strengthening that sentiment in a thousand little ways which every one can imagine, for all loves resemble one another on certain points. Also they studied each other’s characters, as much as persons can study each other when they love.

“Well, never did a fancy turn into a love-match so rapidly,” said the old uncle, who watched the proceedings of the young pair as a naturalist watches an insect through his microscope.

The words alarmed Monsieur and Madame de Fontaine. The old Vendéan was not as indifferent to his

daughter's marriage as he had lately professed to be. He went to Paris to make inquiries, and obtained no results. Uneasy at such evident mystery, and before he could hear the result of certain inquiries he had set on foot in Paris, he thought it his duty to warn his daughter to behave with more caution. This paternal advice was received with a show of obedience that was evidently ironical.

“But at least, my dear *Émilie*, if you love him don't let him see it.”

“Papa, it is true that I love him, but I shall wait for your permission to tell him so.”

“But reflect, *Émilie*, that you don't know anything as yet about his family or his station.”

“I don't mind that. But, papa, you wished to see me married; you gave me liberty to choose, and I have chosen — what more can you want?”

“I want to know, my dear, if the man you have chosen is the son of a peer of France,” replied her father, sarcastically.

Émilie was silent for a moment. Then she raised her head, looked at her father, and said, with some anxiety: —

“Who are the Longuevilles?”

“The family became extinct in the person of the old Duc de Rostein-Limbourg, who perished on the scaffold in 1793. He was the last scion of the last youngest branch.”

“But, papa, there are several good houses descended from bastards. The history of France swarms with princes who bear the bar sinister.”

“Your ideas seemed to have changed,” said the old noble, smiling.

The next day was the last which the Fontaine family were to spend at Planat. Émilie, whom the advice of her father had a good deal disquieted, impatiently awaited the hour of young Longueville's usual visit, being determined to obtain some definite explanation from him. She went out alone after dinner, and made her way to a grove in the park where she knew her lover would be sure to search for her. As she went along, she thought over the best means of obtaining, without committing herself, a secret so important; a difficult thing to do. Until now, no direct avowal had sanctioned the feelings which united her to this man. She had, like Maximilien, enjoyed the delights of unspoken love, but proud as they were, it seemed as though both shrank from acknowledging their feelings.

Maximilien Longueville, in whom Clara had inspired certain well-founded suspicions on Émilie's nature, felt himself alternately driven onward by the violence of his passion, and restrained by the desire to know and test a woman to whom he was about to confide the happiness of his life. His love did not prevent him from seeing in Émilie the faults and prejudices which injured her youthful character; but he desired to know whether he was truly loved by her in spite of them, before speaking to her; he would not risk the fate of either his love or his life. He therefore maintained an outward silence, which his looks and attitudes and slightest actions contradicted.

On the other hand, the pride natural to a young girl, increased in Mademoiselle de Fontaine by the foolish vanity of her birth and beauty, prevented her from

meeting half-way the declaration which her growing passion sometimes urged her to bring about. Thus these lovers had instinctively understood their mutual situation without explaining their secret motives. There are moments in life when the vague gives pleasure to young souls.

Seated on a rustic bench, Émilie now thought over the events of these three enchanting months. Her father's doubts were the last fears that could touch her, and even these she set aside by arguments which to an inexperienced girl seemed triumphant. In the first place, she convinced herself that it was impossible she should be deceived. During the whole summer she had never detected in Maximilien a look, or word or gesture which indicated a vulgar origin or occupation; more than that, his manner of discussing topics proved that he was a man whose mind was occupied with the highest interests of the nation. "Besides," she thought to herself, "a clerk, a banker, or a merchant would not have leisure to spend a whole summer in making love to me in the fields and woods; he spends his time as idly as a noble whose life is free of care." Then she abandoned herself to a course of meditation far more interesting to her than these preliminary thoughts, and was thus engaged when a slight rustling of the foliage let her know that Maximilien was looking at her, no doubt with admiration.

"Don't you know that it is very wrong to come suddenly upon girls in that way?" she said, smiling.

"Above all when they are thinking about their secrets," replied Maximilien, slyly.

"Why should n't I have secrets?" she asked. "You have plenty of your own."

“Were you really thinking of your secrets?” he said, laughing.

“No, I was thinking of yours. I know all about mine.”

“But,” said the young man, gently taking the girl’s arm and placing it in his, “perhaps my secrets are yours, and your secrets mine.”

After walking a few steps they reached a grove of trees which the setting sun was wrapping in a mist, as it were, of reds and browns. This natural magic seemed to give solemnity to the moment. The eyes of the lovers had never before told each other so many things that their lips dared not say. In the grasp of this sweet intoxication they forgot the small conventions of pride and the cold calculations of their mutual distrust. At first they could only express their emotions by clasping hands, and so interpreting their happy thoughts.

“Monsieur, I have a question to ask you,” said Mademoiselle de Fontaine, after a long silence, in a trembling voice, as they slowly paced onward. “But remember, I entreat you, that it is, as it were, forced upon me by the situation in which I stand with my family.”

A pause that was terrifying to Émilie followed these words which she almost stammered. During the moment that this silence lasted the girl, hitherto so proud, dared not meet the burning glance of the man she loved, for she was conscious in her heart of the baseness of the words she added: —

“Are you noble?”

When they had left her lips she wished herself at the bottom of a lake.

“Mademoiselle,” replied Longueville, gravely, his face assuming a sort of stern dignity, “I will answer that question without evasion when you have answered with sincerity the one I now put to you.”

He dropped the arm of the young girl, who suddenly felt alone in the world, and said, “Why do you question me about my birth?” She was motionless, cold, and silent. “Mademoiselle,” he went on, “let us go no farther if we do not comprehend each other. I love you,” he added, in a deep and tender tone. “Well, then!” he continued, on hearing the exclamation of joy which the girl could not restrain, “why ask me if I am noble?”

“Could he speak thus if he were not,” cried an inward voice which *Émilie* believed to have come from the depths of her heart. She raised her head gracefully, seemed to gather a new life in the look the young man gave her, and held out her arm to him as though to make a new alliance.

“You must think I care much for worldly dignities,” she said.

“I have no titles to offer to my wife,” he replied, half in jest and half in earnest. “But if I choose her in the highest rank and among those who are accustomed to luxury and the pleasures of opulence, I know to what my choice obliges me. Love gives all,” he added, gayly, “but to lovers only. Married people want more than the heavens above them and the velvet of the turf at their feet.”

“He is rich,” thought she. “As for titles, perhaps he wants to test me. They have probably told him I was fanatical about nobility, and would only marry a

peer of France. My cats of sisters may have played me just such a trick. I assure you, monsieur," she said aloud, "that although I have had exacting ideas as to life and society, I now," glancing at him in a manner to turn his head, "know where a woman should look for her real happiness."

"I trust that you speak sincerely," he answered, with gentle gravity. "Next winter, my dear Émilie, in less than two months, perhaps, I shall be able to offer you the enjoyments of wealth. What this means is a secret I am compelled to keep for the present. On its success depends my happiness; I dare not say *ours* —"

"Oh! say it, say it!" she exclaimed.

With many tender thoughts and words they slowly returned to the house and joined the company in the salon. Never had Mademoiselle de Fontaine seen her lover so lovable, so pleasing; his slim form, his engaging manners seemed to her more charming than ever. They sang together in Italian, with such expression that the company applauded enthusiastically. Their final adieu was made in a formal tone which covered a secret happiness. This day was to the young girl a chain which bound her more closely than ever to the destiny of the man she had chosen. The force and dignity he displayed in the scene we have just related, and in which their mutual sentiments had been revealed, may have inspired Mademoiselle de Fontaine with a sense of respect without which no true love exists.

Later in the evening, being alone with her father and uncle in the salon, the former came up to her,

took her hands affectionately, and asked if she had obtained any light as to the family and fortune of Monsieur Longueville.

“Yes, my dear father,” she replied, “and I am happier than I ever thought to be. Monsieur de Longueville is the only man I ever wished to marry.”

“Very good, Émilie,” replied her father; “then I know what I must do.”

“Do you know of any obstacle?” she asked, in real anxiety.

“My dear child, this young man is absolutely unknown; but, unless he is a dishonest man, he is dear to me as a son, because you love him.”

“Dishonest!” cried Emilie; “oh! I am easy about that. My uncle, who introduced him to me, knows that much, at least. Tell me, uncle dear, has he ever been a pirate, a filibuster, a corsair?”

“Ah! I knew I should come to this!” exclaimed the old sailor, waking up from a nap.

He looked about the salon, but his niece had disappeared, — like Castor and Pollux, to use one of his own expressions.

“Well, uncle,” said Monsieur de Fontaine, “why have you hidden from us all this time what you know of this young man? You must have seen what was going on. Is Monsieur de Longueville of good family?”

“I don’t know him from Adam,” cried the admiral. “Trusting to the tact of that wilful girl I brought her the Saint-Preux she wanted, by means known to myself alone. All I know about the lad is that he is a fine shot, hunts well, plays a marvellous game of bil-

liards, also chess and backgammon; and he fences and rides like the Chevalier de Saint-Georges. Also he has a most amazing erudition about vineyards; and he can cipher like Barême, and draws and dances and sings well. What the devil do you want else? If that is n't all a perfect gentleman need be, show me a bourgeois who knows as much, or a man who lives more nobly than he. You see for yourself he does n't do anything. Does he compromise his dignity in an office, and bow down to parvenus, as you call directors-general? No, he walks erect. He's a man. But here, by the bye, in the pocket of my waistcoat is the card he gave me when he thought, poor innocent! that I wanted to cut his throat. Ha! young men nowadays have n't any tricks in their bag. Here's the card."

"Rue du Sentier, number 5," said Monsieur de Fontaine, trying to remember that address among the various pieces of information he had obtained from his inquiries. "What the devil does that mean? Palma, Werbrust and company, wholesale dealers in muslins, calicos, and printed cottons of all kinds live there — Ah! I have it! Longueville, the deputy, has an interest in that firm. Yes, but I know Longueville has a son thirty-two years old, not the least like this man, to whom he has just given fifty thousand a year in order to marry him to the daughter of a minister; he wants to be made a peer like all the rest. I never heard him mention a son called Maximilien. And he has n't a daughter, so far as I know. Who is this Clara? Besides, it is open to any adventurer to call himself Longueville, or anything else he likes. I'll make some inquiries about Palma and Werbrust."

“You talk as if you held the stage alone,” cried the old admiral. “Do you count me for nothing? Don’t you know that if he is a gentleman I’ve got more than one sack in my lockers to repair his lack of fortune?”

“As for that, if he is Longueville the deputy’s son, he needs nothing; but,” added Monsieur de Fontaine, shaking his head from right to left, “he has n’t even bought a property which carries a title. Before the Revolution he was only an attorney, and the *de* he has stuck on since the Restoration no more belongs to him than one half of his wealth.”

“Ah, bah! happy those whose fathers were hanged!” cried the old sailor, gayly.

Three or four days later, on one of those fine days in November when Parisians find the pavement of their boulevard cleansed by a slight touch of frost, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, wearing a set of new furs which she wished to make the fashion, had gone out shopping with two of her sisters-in-law, the two whom she was most inclined to ridicule. The three ladies were induced to make this expedition less to exhibit an elegant new carriage and dresses in the latest style, than to see a certain pelerine that one of their friends had remarked in the large lace and linen shop at the corner of the rue de la Paix.

As the three sisters entered the shop the Baronne de Fontaine pulled Émilie by the sleeve and pointed out to her Maximilien Longueville behind the counter, occupied at that moment in receiving money from the mistress of the shop, with whom he seemed to be conferring. In his hand he held several patterns which left no doubt as to the nature of his occupation.

Émilie was seized with a cold shudder, fortunately unperceived. Thanks to the *savoir-vivre* of good society, she hid the fury in her heart and replied to her sister with the words, "I knew it," in a richness of tone and with an inimitable accent which might have made the fortune of an actress on the stage.

She advanced to the counter; Longueville raised his head, put the patterns in his pocket with perfect self-possession, bowed to Mademoiselle de Fontaine, and came out to meet her, giving her, as he did so, a penetrating look.

"Madame," he said to the mistress of the shop, who had followed anxiously, "I will send the money for this bill. My firm prefers to do business in that way. But here," he added, in a whisper, "is a thousand-franc note — take it; we will settle the matter between us later. You will, I hope, pardon me, mademoiselle," he said, turning back to Émilie, "and be so kind as to excuse the tyranny of business."

"It seems to me, monsieur, that the matter is one to which I am totally indifferent," replied Mademoiselle de Fontaine, looking at him with a vacant air which might have led a spectator to think she saw him for the first time.

"Are you speaking seriously?" asked Maximilien, in a broken voice.

For all answer Émilie turned her back upon him with inconceivable rudeness. These few words, said in a low voice, had escaped the notice of the sisters-in-law. When, after having purchased the pelerine, the three ladies returned to their carriage, Émilie, who was sitting on the front seat, could not refrain from glanc-

ing into the depths of that odious shop, where she saw Maximilien standing with his arms crossed, in the attitude of a man superior to the trouble which had come upon him so suddenly. Their eyes met, and each gave to the other an implacable look. Each hoped to cruelly wound the other's heart. In a moment they found themselves as far apart as if one were in China, the other in Greenland. The breath of worldliness had withered all!

A prey to the most violent struggle that ever went on in the heart of a young girl, Mademoiselle de Fontaine gathered the amplest harvest of bitter fruits which prejudice and pettiness ever sowed in a human soul. Her face, fresh and velvety a few moments earlier, was furrowed with yellow tones and red stains, and even the white of her cheeks turned greenish. In the hope of hiding her trouble from her sisters she ridiculed the passers in the street or laughed at a costume; but the laugh was convulsive. She was more deeply wounded by the silent compassion of her sisters than she would have been by the sharpest sarcasms which she might have revenged. She taxed her whole mind to drag them into a conversation in which she vented her anger in senseless paradoxes of the worst taste. On reaching home she became really ill, and was seized with a fever which at first showed dangerous symptoms. At the end of a month, however, the care of her family and her physician restored her entirely. Every one hoped that the lesson would subdue her self-will; but she declared there was no shame in having made a mistake, and she once more flung herself into society and returned to her former habits of life. If,

she said, she had, like her father, influence in the Chamber, she would pass a law that all merchants and shopkeepers should be branded on the forehead, like the sheep of Berry, to the third generation; it was a great injury to the monarchy that there was no visible difference between a merchant and a peer of France.

A hundred other such jests were poured out rapidly when any unforeseen accident started the topic. But those who loved her were conscious through her sarcasms of a tone of melancholy. Evidently Maximilien Longueville still reigned at the bottom of that inexplicable heart. Sometimes she would be gentle and sweet as she had been during the brief period when her love was born, and then again she would make herself intolerable. Her family excused these variations of temper, knowing that they had their rise in sufferings known and unknown. The Comte de Kergarouët alone obtained some slight control over her, and this was partly by gifts and amusements, a species of consolation which seldom misses its effect on a Parisian girl.

The first ball that Mademoiselle de Fontaine went to that winter was at the house of the Neapolitan ambassador. As she was taking her place in a quadrille she saw, not far from her, Maxmilien Longueville, who nodded slightly to her partner.

“Is that young man a friend of yours?” she asked, disdainfully.

“Only my brother,” he replied.

Émilie could not help trembling.

“Ah!” continued her partner in a tone of enthusiasm, “he is the noblest soul in the world —”

“Do you know my name?” asked Émilie, interrupting him, hastily.

“No, mademoiselle. It is a crime, I know, not to recollect a name which must be on every lip, or, I should say, in every heart; but my excuse is that I have just returned from Germany. My ambassador, who is in Paris on leave of absence, has sent me here this evening to serve as chaperon to his amiable wife, whom you can see over there in a corner.”

“A tragic muse,” said Émilie, after examining the ambassadress.

“But that’s her ball face,” returned the young diplomat, laughing. “I must ask her to dance; that’s why I take my consolation now.” Mademoiselle de Fontaine made him a little bow. “I am so surprised,” continued the chattering secretary, “to see my brother here. On arriving from Vienna I was told he was ill in bed, and I wanted to go to him at once; but diplomacy and politics leave no time for family affections. *La padrona della casa* keeps me in attendance, and gives me no chance to see my poor Maximilien.”

“Is your brother, like yourself, in diplomacy?” said Émilie.

“No,” said the secretary, sighing. “The poor fellow has sacrificed himself to me. He and my sister Clara have renounced their share of my father’s property to make an entail for me. My father is a deputy and expects a peerage for his services to the government. He has the promise of it,” added the young man, in a low voice. “My brother, after getting together a little capital, chiefly from our mother’s property, has gone into a banking business, and he has just made a speculation in Brazil which is likely to make him a millionaire. I am very happy in the

thought that I have helped him by my diplomatic relations to this success. I am now expecting a despatch from Brazil which I feel sure will clear that gloomy brow of his. Don't you think him handsome?"

"His face does n't seem to me that of a man who spends his thoughts on making money," she replied.

The young diplomatist gave a glance at the seemingly calm face of his partner.

"Ah!" said he, "so young ladies can detect the thoughts of love beneath all foreheads!"

"Is your brother in love?" asked Émilie, in a tone of curiosity.

"Yes. My sister Clara, whom he cares for like a mother, wrote me that he had fallen in love with a very pretty girl; but I have had no further news of the affair. Would you believe it, the poor fellow used to get up at five in the morning so as to get through his business and ride out into the country, where the lady was staying. He ruined a fine thorough-bred horse I had sent him. Forgive my chatter, mademoiselle, I am just from Germany, where I have n't heard a word of pure French spoken; I am so hungry for French faces and sick of Germans that I'd talk, I believe, to the griffins on a candlestick. Besides, the fault is yours, mademoiselle; you asked me about my brother, and when I get on that subject I am irrepressible. I should like to tell the whole earth how good and generous he is. He has given up a hundred thousand francs a year to me from our estates at Longueville."

If Mademoiselle de Fontaine obtained all this information she owed it partly to the cleverness with which she questioned her confiding partner.

“How can you bear to see your brother selling calico and muslins?” asked *Émilie*, as they finished the third figure of the quadrille.

“How do you know he does?” asked the diplomatist. “Thank heaven! if I do rattle off a flux of words I have learned to say no more than I choose, like the other fledgling diplomatists of my acquaintance.”

“I assure you that you told me so.”

Monsieur de Longueville looked at *Mademoiselle de Fontaine* with a surprise that was full of intelligence.

A suspicion entered his mind. He glanced from his partner to his brother, and guessed all; he clapped his hands together, threw up his eyes and began to laugh: —

“I am nothing but a fool,” he said. “You are the handsomest person here, my brother is watching you furtively, he is dancing in spite of his illness, and you are pretending not to see him! Make him happy,” he added, as he took her back to her old uncle. “I’ll not be jealous; though perhaps I shall wince a little at calling you my sister.”

However, the two lovers were resolved on being inexorable. About two in the morning a collation was served in a vast gallery, where, in order to allow persons of the same set to be together, the tables were arranged as they are at a restaurant. By one of those accidents which are always happening to lovers *Mademoiselle de Fontaine* found herself placed at a table adjoining that around which sat some very distinguished persons. *Maximilien* was among them. *Émilie* listened with attentive ears to the talk of these neighbors. The companion of the young merchant

was a Neapolitan duchess of great beauty, and the intimacy that he affected to have with her was all the more wounding to Mademoiselle de Fontaine because at that moment she was conscious of a tenfold deeper tenderness for her lover than she had ever felt before.

“Yes, monsieur, in my country, true love can make all kinds of sacrifices,” the duchess was saying in a mincing way.

“You Italians are far more loving than Frenchwomen,” said Maximilien, looking full at Émilie. “They are all vanity.”

“Monsieur,” said Émilie, quickly, “it is an ill thing to calumniate your country. Devotion belongs to all lands.”

“Do you think, mademoiselle,” said the duchess, with a sarcastic smile, “that a Parisian woman would be capable of following her lover everywhere?”

“Ah! understand me, madame; she would follow him to the desert and live in tents, but not behind the counter of a shop.”

Émilie emphasized these words with a gesture of disdain. Thus the influence exercised over the girl by her fatal education killed her dawning happiness twice, and made her life a failure. The apparent coldness of Maximilien and the smile of a woman, drew from her a sarcasm the treacherous delight of which she could not deny herself.

“Mademoiselle,” said Longueville, in a low voice, under cover of the noise the women made when rising from table, “no one will ever offer more ardent wishes for your happiness than I. Permit me to give you this

assurance on taking leave of you. I start in a few days for Italy."

"With a duchess, I suppose."

"No, mademoiselle, with what may prove a mortal illness."

"Is that a fancy?" asked Émilie, giving him an uneasy glance.

"No," he answered, "for there are wounds that never heal."

"You will not go," said the imperious young girl, with a smile.

"I shall go," returned Longueville, gravely.

"You will find me married on your return, I warn you," she said, coquettishly.

"I hope so."

"Impertinent man!" she said to herself; "he takes a cruel vengeance."

A fortnight later Maximilien Longueville started with his sister Clara for the balmy and poetic regions of *la bella Italia*, leaving Mademoiselle de Fontaine a victim to bitter regrets. The young secretary of legation took up his brother's quarrel, and revenged him publicly by telling everywhere the reasons for the rupture. The Comte de Fontaine was obliged to use his credit at court to obtain for Auguste Longueville a mission to Russia to protect his daughter from the ridicule this young and dangerous persecutor heaped upon her.

Not long after, the administration was compelled to make a new batch of peers to strengthen the aristocratic body in the Upper Chamber, which was beginning to totter under the voice of an illustrious writer;

among them appeared the name of Monsieur de Longueville, the father, with the rank of viscount. Monsieur de Fontaine was also raised to the peerage, a reward due to his devotion during the dark days, and also to his name, which was lacking to the roll of the hereditary Chamber.

About this time Émilie, who had now attained her majority, made, in all probability, some serious reflections upon life; for she changed completely in tone and manner. Instead of saying ill-natured things to her uncle, she began to show him the most affectionate attentions; she brought him his crutch with a persistent tenderness which made the family laugh, she gave him her arm, she went to drive in his coach, and took walks with him daily. She even persuaded him that she liked the smell of his pipe, and read his dear "Quotidienne" aloud to him in the midst of clouds of tobacco smoke which the mischievous old fellow would sometimes puff at her intentionally. She learned piquet to play with him, and she, so fastidious, listened without impatience to his ever-recurring tales of the famous fight of the "Belle Poule," the manœuvring of the "Ville de Paris," the first expedition of Monsieur de Suffren, or the battle of Aboukir. Though the old admiral was fond of saying that he knew his latitude and longitude too well for any young corvette to overhaul him, the salons of Paris were startled one fine morning by the news that Mademoiselle de Fontaine had married the Comte de Kergarouët.

The young countess gave splendid fêtes to divert her mind; but she soon found the hollowness of her vortex; luxury was a poor cover to the emptiness and

misery of her suffering soul; in spite of her feigned gayety, her beautiful features expressed, for the most part, a dull melancholy. She always, however, paid great attention to her old husband, and her whole conduct was so severely proper that the most ill-natured critic could find nothing to reprimand. Observers thought that the admiral had reserved the right of disposing of his fortune so as to hold his wife the more securely; but this supposition was unjust both to the uncle and to the niece. Their demeanor to each other was so judiciously managed that those most interested were unable to decide whether the old count treated his wife as a father or as a husband; though the admiral was heard to say, on more than one occasion, that he had saved his niece from a wreck; and that in former times at sea he had never abused his rights over a shipwrecked enemy who fell into his hands.

Though the countess aspired to reign in Parisian society, and successfully endeavored to hold her own against the duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chau-lieu, the marquises d'Espard and d'Aiglemont, the countesses Féraud, de Montcornet, de Restand, Madame de Camps and Mademoiselle des Touches, she did not yield to the love of the young Vicomte de Portenduère, who made her his idol.

Two years after her marriage, being in one of the oldest salons of the faubourg Saint-Germain, Émilie heard the name of Monsieur le Vicomte de Longueville announced. Her emotion passed unperceived in the corner of the salon where she was playing piquet with the Bishop of Persépolis. Turning her head, she saw her former lover enter the room in the glow of youth

and distinction. The death of his father, and that of his brother (killed by the climate of St. Petersburg) had placed upon his head the hereditary plumes of the peerage; his fortune was equal to his station and his acquirements; only the evening before, his fiery eloquence had electrified the Chamber. At this moment he appeared before the eyes of the sad countess, free, and adorned with all the advantages she had formerly demanded in her ideal lover; and more than all, Émilie knew well that the Vicomte de Longueville possessed that firmness of character in which a woman of sense sees the strongest pledge of happiness. She cast her eyes upon the admiral, who, to use his own expression, was likely to swing at anchor for a long time to come, and she cursed the follies and errors of her youth.

Just then Monsieur de Persépolis remarked with his episcopal grace, —

“My dear lady, you have thrown away the king of hearts, and I win. But don't regret your money; I keep it for my ragged schools.”

THE DESERTED WOMAN

THE DESERTED WOMAN

TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE D'ABRANTÈS.

HER AFFECTIONATE SERVANT,

HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

EARLY in the spring of 1822 the Parisian doctors sent to lower Normandy a young man who was recovering from an inflammatory illness caused by some excess of study, possibly of life. His convalescence required complete rest, simple food, a cold air, and the total absence of all excessive sensations. The lush fields of the Bessin and the pale life of the provinces seemed therefore propitious for his recovery. He went to Bayeux, a pretty town two leagues from the sea, to the house of a cousin who received him with the cordiality characteristic of those who live habitually in retirement, and to whom the arrival of a relation or a friend becomes a joy.

All little towns resemble each other, except perhaps in a few local customs. So that after a few evenings spent with his cousin, Madame de Sainte-Sevère, or with the persons who formed her society, this young Parisian, M. le Baron Gaston de Nueil, soon knew all there was to know of that exclusive circle who regarded themselves as being the whole town. Gaston

de Nueil saw in them that immutable clique which observers find in all the numerous capitals of the ancient States that formed the France of other times.

First comes the family whose nobility, unknown at a distance of fifty leagues, passes in the department as being incontestable and of the highest antiquity. This species of *royal family* on a minor scale is remotely connected by marriage with the Navarreins, the Grandlieus, the Cadignans, and even lays hold of the Blamont-Chauvrys. The head of this illustrious race is always a determined sportsman. A man without manners, he crushes every one by his nominal superiority, tolerates the sub-prefect precisely as he submits to taxation; acknowledges none of the new powers created by the nineteenth century, and calls attention to the fact, as a political monstrosity, that the prime minister is not a noble. His wife takes a peremptory tone, talks loudly, has had adorers, but receives the sacrament at Easter regularly; she brings up her daughters badly, and thinks that their name is fortune enough for their establishment. Neither wife nor husband has the slightest idea of modern luxury; they keep to their old state liveries and ancient forms of plate, furniture, and carriages, as they do to their manners, customs, and language. This long-past splendour comports, however, with the thrift of the provinces. In short, these are the nobles of the olden time, minus the feudal levies, minus the packs of hounds and the gold-laced coats; all full of honour among themselves, and all devoted to princes whom they see only from a distance. This historical, incognito family has the originality of an ancient

tapestry of noted warp. In it vegetates infallibly an uncle or a brother, lieutenant-general, red-ribboned, and a courtier, who went to Hanover with Maréchal Richelieu, and whom you find here like a stray leaf from a pamphlet of the days of Louis XV.

To this fossil family is opposed a richer family, but of less ancient nobility. The husband and wife spend two months every winter in Paris, the fleeting tone and ephemeral passions of which they duly report. Madame is elegant, but rather starched, and always a little behind in the fashions. Nevertheless, she sneers at the ignorance affected by her neighbours; her plate is modern; she has grooms, negro pages, and footmen. Her eldest son has a tilbury, does nothing, — he is the heir; the younger is auditor to the Council of State. The father, very well posted in the intrigues of the ministry, relates anecdotes of Louis XVIII. and Madame du Cayla; he invests in the “five per cents,” avoids conversation about ciders, but does sometimes give in to the mania for reducing the amount of departmental fortunes; he is member of the Council-General, gets his clothes from Paris, and wears the cross of the Legion of honour. In short, this nobleman has understood the Restoration, and coins money with the Chamber; but his royalism is less “pure” than that of the family he rivals. He takes the “Gazette” and the “Débats;” the other family reads only the “Quotidienne.”

Monseigneur the bishop, formerly vicar-general, floats between these two powers, which render him the homage due to religion, but make him feel at times the moral that the good La Fontaine has placed

at the end of "The Ass bearing Relics." The worthy bishop is a commoner.

Next come secondary stars, nobles who enjoy some ten or twelve thousand francs a year; who have been captains in the navy, or the cavalry, or nothing at all. On horseback along the roads they hold a middle distance between the rector who bears the sacraments, and the controller of taxes on his rounds. Nearly all have been pages at Court, or in the mousquetaires, and are ending their days peaceably in getting the most out of their means; more concerned about their timber or their cider than about the monarchy. Nevertheless, they converse of the Charter and the liberals between two rubbers of whist or games of dominoes, after having calculated *dots* and arranged marriages according to genealogies which they know by heart. Their wives assume a haughty manner and take Court airs in their wicker phaetons; they think themselves in full dress when rigged with a scarf and a head-dress. They buy two bonnets yearly, after mature deliberation, and occasionally import them from Paris. They are usually virtuous and gossiping.

Around these principal elements of the aristocratic tribe are grouped a few old maids of quality, who have solved the problem of immobility in human creatures. They appear to be sealed up in the houses where you find them; their figures, their clothes, are part of the estate, of the town, of the province; they are the tradition, the memory, the spirit thereof. All have something rigid and monumental about them; they smile, or shake their heads apropos, and, from time to time, say things that pass for witty.

A few rich bourgeois have slipped into this miniature Faubourg St. Germain, thanks to their aristocratic opinions or their money. But once there, in spite of their forty years, the clique says of them: "That young so and so *thinks well*," and helps to make them deputies. Usually they are patronized by the old maids — which causes gossip.

Finally, two or three ecclesiastics are admitted into this circle of the élite, either because of their cloth or because they have intelligence; for these noble personages, bored by one another, are ready to introduce a bourgeois element into their salons very much as a baker puts yeast into his dough.

The amount of intelligence amassed in all these heads is composed of a certain quantity of antique ideas, with which are mingled a proportion of new ideas, which brew together every evening. Like the waters of a little cove, the phrases that represent these ideas have their daily ebb and flow, their ceaseless eddy, ever the same; whoso hears to-day its hollow echo will hear it to-morrow, a year hence, ever. Their immutable verdicts on all things here below form a traditional knowledge, to which it is not in the power of any human being to add one iota of intelligence. The life of these monotonous persons gravitates in a sphere of habits as unchangeable as their religious, political, moral, and literary opinions.

If a stranger is admitted to this symposium every one will say to him in a tone of irony: "You will not find the brilliancy of your Parisian society among us;" and each will censure the lives of his neighbours, endeavouring to have it believed that he him-

self is an exception in this society which he has, unsuccessfully, endeavoured to renovate. But if, unfortunately, the stranger should strengthen by some remark of his own the opinion those people mutually entertain of one another, he is at once set down as a malicious person, without law or gospel, a corrupt Parisian, "such indeed as all Parisians are."

When Gaston de Nueil appeared in this little social world, where etiquette is perfectly observed, where all things within its own life harmonize, and everything is freely stated, nobiliary and territorial values being as openly quoted as stocks at the Bourse in the financial column of a newspaper, he had been already weighed in the infallible scales of Bayesian opinion. His cousin, Madame de Sainte-Sevère, had carefully told the amount of his fortune and that of his expectations; she had exhibited his genealogical tree and boasted of his acquirements, his politeness, his modesty. He therefore received the greeting to which he had strictly a right; he was accepted as a sound noble, without ceremony because he was only twenty-three years old; but certain young persons and their mothers looked sweetly upon him. He possessed in his own right eighteen thousand francs a year from property in the valley of the Auge, and his father would leave him, sooner or later, the château of Manerville with all its dependencies. As for his education, his political future, his personal merits, his talents, there was no question about them. His estates were good and the rentals certain; excellent plantations had been made upon them, repairs and taxes were paid by the tenant-farmers; the apple-

trees were thirty-eight years old; his father was now in treaty for two hundred acres of woodland adjoining his park, which he meant to inclose with walls. No ministerial hopes, no human celebrity could compete against such advantages. Whether from malice or calculation, Madame de Sainte-Sevère had never once mentioned Gaston's elder brother, neither did Gaston say a word about him. But this brother was consumptive, and likely to be buried, mourned, and forgotten before long.

Gaston de Nueil began by amusing himself with all these personages; he drew, as it were, their faces in his album, in all the vapid verity of their angular, hooked, and wrinkled countenances, in the droll originality of their clothes and their twitchings; he delighted in the *Normanisms* of their idioms, in the musty antiquity of their ideas and characters. But after having espoused for a while an existence that resembled that of squirrels turning in their cage, he felt the absence of opposing elements in a life so fixed beforehand, like that of monks in cloisters, and before long he fell into a nervous state which was not yet that of ennui or disgust, although it had many of the effects of them. After slight sufferings from such a transition, the individual finds that he has undergone the phenomenon of transplantation into a region which is either repugnant to him or in which he soon becomes atrophied and leads a stunted life. Commonly, if nothing draws him out of this society he insensibly adopts its usages, and grows wonted to its void, which soon gains upon him and reduces him to nonentity. Already Gaston's lungs were beginning

to get accustomed to this atmosphere. Almost ready to admit a sort of vegetating happiness in days passed without cares and without ideas, he was beginning to lose consciousness of that movement of sap, that constant fructification of minds, which he had so ardently enjoyed in the Parisian sphere; he was, in short, about to petrify among these petrifications, and stay there forever, like the companions of Ulysses content with his comfortable surroundings.

One evening Gaston de Nueil chanced to find himself seated between an old lady and one of the vicar-generals of the diocese in a panelled salon painted gray, floored with large white tiles, decorated with family portraits and occupied by four card-tables around which sixteen persons were babbling and playing whist. There, thinking of nothing, but digesting an excellent dinner (the conclusion of the day in the provinces), he suddenly found himself explaining and justifying to himself the ways of these people. He saw how it was that they used the same cards night after night, on the same worn-out cloths, and how it had come to pass that they dressed neither for their own sake nor for that of others. He divined a vague philosophy in the uniform motion of this rotatory life, in the calm of these logical habits and this ignorance of all real elegance. In short, he almost comprehended the uselessness of luxury. The city of Paris, with its passions, storms, and pleasures, was already a mere memory of adolescence in his mind. He sincerely admired the red hands, the modest, timid air of a young girl, whose face, at first sight, had seemed to him silly, her manners without

grace, her general effect repulsive, and her behaviour positively ridiculous. It was all over with him! Having gone to Paris from the provinces, he would now have fallen back from his inflammatory Parisian existence to the cold life of the provinces, if a few words had not caught his ear and caused him an emotion like that we feel when some original melody breaks in among the accompaniments of a wearisome opera.

“Did you not go yesterday to see Madame de Beauséant?” said an old lady to the head of the great family of the region.

“I went there this morning,” he replied. “I found her very sad, and so unwell that I could not persuade her to dine with us to-morrow.”

“With Madame de Champignelles!” cried the dowager, in a tone of surprise.

“With my wife,” said the old nobleman, tranquilly. “Madame de Beauséant belongs to the family of Bourgogne, does she not? Through the women, it is true, but that name whitens all. My wife is very fond of the vicomtesse, and the poor lady has been so long alone that — ”

As he said the last words the Marquis de Champignelles looked with a calm, cold air at the persons who were listening to him and watching him. Impossible to determine whether he was making a concession to the misfortunes or to the nobility of Madame de Beauséant, whether he was flattered to receive her, or whether he wished out of pride to force the gentlemen of the neighbourhood and their wives to visit her.

All the ladies present seemed to consult one another with a glance; after which such profound silence reigned in the salon that their attitude was taken as a sign of disapprobation.

“Is this Madame de Beauséant the same who had the affair with M. Ajuda-Pinto, that made so much noise?” asked Gaston of the lady next to whom he was seated.

“Precisely the same,” was the answer. “She came to live at Courcelles after the marriage of the Marquis d’Ajuda. No one here receives her. She has, however, too much intelligence not to feel the falseness of her position; consequently, she has never sought to know any one. Monsieur de Champignelles and a few other men have called upon her, but she has received none but M. de Champignelles — on account, perhaps, of their relationship; they are connected through the Beauséants. The Marquis de Beauséant, the father, married a Champignelles of the elder branch. Though the Vicomtesse de Beauséant is descended from the house of Bourgogne, you understand, of course, that we cannot admit into our society a woman who is separated from her husband. There are certain old-time ideas to which we no longer have the stupidity to adhere. The vicomtesse was all the more to blame in her behaviour because M. de Beauséant is a very gallant man, a man of the Court: he would perfectly have accepted the affair. But his wife is so impulsive.”

M. de Nueil, while hearing the old lady’s voice was not listening to her. He was absorbed in fantasy — is there any other word that so expresses the

attraction of an adventure at the moment when it catches the imagination, when the soul conceives vague hopes, foresees inexplicable delights, fears, events, while nothing as yet feeds, or fixes, the caprices of the mirage? The spirit wings its way, imagines impossible things, and gives itself in germ all the joys of a passion. Perhaps the germ of a passion contains all its joys, as a seed contains a beautiful flower with its fragrance and its glowing colours. M. de Nueil was not ignorant of the fact that Madame de Beauséant had taken refuge in Normandy after the noise of an affair which most women envy and condemn, especially when the seductions of youth and beauty seem almost to justify the fault itself. There is an inconceivable prestige in every species of celebrity, no matter to what it may be due. It seems as if to women, as it used to be with families, the fame of a crime effaces the shame of it. Just as some old houses actually take pride in their beheaded ancestry, a young and pretty woman becomes the more attractive through the fatal renown of a happy love or a cruel betrayal. The more she can be pitied, the more she excites sympathy. We are pitiless only to things, sentiments, and adventures that are commonplace. By attracting eyes we are magnified. And, in truth, is it not necessary to rise above our fellows in order to be seen? The crowd feels, involuntarily, a sentiment of respect for all that is great, without asking its ways of being so.

At this moment Gaston de Nueil felt himself impelled towards Madame de Beauséant by the secret influence of these reasons, or perhaps by curiosity, by

the need to put an interest into his present life; in short, by that crowd of motives impossible to put into words, but which the word *fatality* serves to express. The Vicomtesse de Beauséant had risen before him suddenly, accompanied by a host of graceful images; she was another world; near her there would doubtless be much to fear, hope, combat, vanquish. She would contrast with the persons Gaston saw about him in that dreary salon. In short, she was a woman; and he had never yet met a woman in this cold society where calculation took the place of sentiment, where politeness was merely duty, and where the simplest ideas found something too wounding to allow them to be uttered or understood. Madame de Beauséant awakened in his soul the memory of his youthful dreams and his keenest passions, lulled to sleep for a moment.

M. de Nueil was absent-minded for the rest of the evening. He sought for means to obtain an introduction to Madame de Beauséant, and there really seemed none. She was said to be extremely clever. But if clever people are readily attracted by original or refined things, they are also very keen and able to divine motives; near them there are often as many chances to be foiled as to be successful in the difficult enterprise of pleasing. Besides, the vicomtesse must, of course, add to the proud reserve of her situation the dignity that her name demanded. The absolute solitude in which she lived seemed to him the least of the barriers raised between herself and the world. It was therefore almost impossible for a stranger, no matter how good his family might be, to

get admittance to her. The next morning, however, M. de Nueil walked in the direction of the villa of Courcelles, and once or twice made a tour of the enclosure within which it stood. Impelled by the illusions in which, at his age, it is so easy to believe, he looked through the openings and over the walls, and stood in contemplation before the closed blinds, or examined attentively those that were open. He hoped for some romantic chance, he combined effects, without perceiving their impossibility, which would introduce him to the recluse. He took these walks for several mornings fruitlessly; and every day this woman, placed outside of society, the victim of love, buried in solitude, was magnified in his thoughts and lodged more and more in his soul. Thus it was that Gaston's heart beat high with hope and joy if by chance, skirting the walls of Courcelles, he heard the heavy step of a gardener.

He thought of writing to Madame de Beauséant; but what can be said to a woman whom you have never seen and who does not know you? Besides, Gaston distrusted himself; moreover, like all young men still full of illusions, he feared, more than death itself, the terrible disdain of silence; he shuddered in thinking of the chances his first amorous prose would have of being flung into the fire. He was a prey to a thousand contradictory ideas which fought within him. But at last, by dint of inventing chimeras, composing romances, and beating his brains, he succeeded in finding one of those happy stratagems which are generally to be met with among the multitude of which we dream, and which reveal to the most inno-

cent woman the extent of the ardour of the man's search for her. Often, social caprices create as many real obstacles between a woman and her lover as the oriental poets have put into the delightful fiction of their tales, and their most fantastic imagery is not exaggerated. So, in the world of reality as in fairyland, the woman will ever belong to him who knows how to reach her and deliver her from the situation in which she languishes. The poorest of the Calenders, falling in love with the daughter of a caliph, was certainly not separated from her by a greater distance than that between Gaston and Madame de Beauséant. The vicomtesse, of course, lived in complete ignorance of the circumvallations traced around her by M. de Nueil, whose love grew and increased to the height of the obstacles before him, obstacles which gave to his improvised mistress the attraction invariably possessed by distant charms.

One day, trusting to his inspiration, he hoped for all from the love that would gush from his eyes. Believing speech more eloquent than the most passionate of letters, and speculating also on the natural curiosity of women, he went to M. de Champignelles in order to employ his assistance for the success of his enterprise. He told him that he had an important and delicate commission to perform towards Madame de Beauséant, but not feeling sure that she would read letters in an unknown handwriting, or grant an interview to a stranger, he begged him to ask the vicomtesse whether, if he went to the house, she would deign to receive him. While asking the marquis to keep the secret in case of refusal, he cleverly sug-

gested that he should not be silent to Madame de Beauséant as to the reasons which made it proper that she should admit him. Was he not a man of honour, loyal, and incapable of lending himself to anything unbecoming or in bad taste? The haughty gentleman, whose little vanities were flattered, was completely duped by this diplomacy of love, which lends to a young man the calm assurance and deep dissimulation of an old ambassador. He tried to penetrate Gaston's motives, but the latter (much puzzled to tell them) opposed his Norman phrases to M. de Champignelles' adroit questioning, and the latter, as a true French knight, praised his discretion.

The marquis hurried to Courcelles, with the eagerness that men of a certain age put into doing a service to a pretty woman. In Madame de Beauséant's peculiar position, such a message was of a nature to puzzle her. Therefore, although in consulting her memory she could not see any reason that should bring M. de Nueil to her, she also saw no impropriety in receiving him, after first making sure of his social position. She began, however, by refusing; then she discussed the propriety of the affair with M. de Champignelles, and questioned him, trying to find out whether he knew the motive of the visit. After that she withdrew her refusal. The discussion and the enforced discretion of the marquis piqued her curiosity.

M. de Champignelles, not wishing to appear ridiculous, pretended to assume, like a well-informed but discreet man, that the vicomtesse knew the object of the visit perfectly well, though she was really seeking

to discover it. Madame de Beauséant, on the other hand, imagined relations between Gaston and persons whom he did not even know; she lost herself among the most absurd conjectures, and vainly wondered whether she had ever seen this M. de Nueil. The most genuine love-letter or the cleverest, would not have produced as much effect as this enigma without a key which Madame de Beauséant's mind turned over and over.

When Gaston learned that he could see her he was both ravished at the thought of obtaining a happiness so desired and greatly embarrassed as to how to give a reason for his plot.

“Bah! to see *her*,” he repeated, as he dressed himself; “to see her, that is all I care for!”

He was still hoping, as he entered the door at Courcelles, to come upon some expedient that should undo the gordian knot he had tied himself. Gaston was one of those young fellows who, believing in the omnipotence of necessity, go forward ever; and, at the last moment, when face to face with danger, they are inspired by it, and find a way to vanquish it. He took especial pains with his dress. He imagined, like all young men, that on a well or ill-placed lock of hair his success depended, unaware that in youth all is charm and attraction. Besides, choice women like Madame de Beauséant are only to be won by graces of the mind and superiority of character. A fine character flatters their vanity, offers the promise of a great passion, and appears to admit the exigencies of their heart. Wit amuses them, it replies to the intuitions of their nature, and they think themselves un-

derstood; and what do women want more than to be amused, understood, and adored? It is necessary, however, to have reflected deeply on the things of life to divine how much of the highest coquetry lies in carelessness of dress and reserve of mind, in a first interview. When we are sufficiently shrewd to be able politicians, we are usually too old to profit by our experience. While Gaston was distrusting his own wits by borrowing the seduction of clothes, Madame de Beauséant herself was instinctively adding elegance to her toilet, saying to herself as she arranged her hair:—

“There is no need that I should look like a fright.”

M. de Nueil had in his mind, in his person, and in his manners that naïvely original cast which gives a sort of savour to ideas and actions that are otherwise ordinary, allows all to be said, and makes everything acceptable. He was well-educated, observing, and possessed of a countenance as happy and mobile as his soul was impressible. Passion and tenderness were in his brilliant eyes, and his heart, essentially good, did not contradict them. The resolution he took on entering Courcelles was therefore in harmony with his frank nature and his ardent imagination. But in spite of the intrepidity of love he could not keep himself from a violent palpitation when, after crossing a great courtyard laid out like an English garden, he reached the hall, where a footman, having taken his name, disappeared for a moment and then returned to introduce him.

“M. le Baron de Nueil.”

Gaston entered slowly, but with pretty good grace;

a matter more difficult in a salon where there is but one woman than where there are twenty. At the corner of the chimney-piece, within which, despite the season, a large fire burned, and upon which were two lighted candelabra that threw a softened glow into the room, he saw a young woman seated in one of those modern easy-chairs with very high backs and low seats, which allow of placing the head in many varied poses full of grace and elegance, inclining it, bending it, lifting it languidly as though it were a heavy burden; while the feet can be shown or withdrawn beneath the long folds of a black gown.

The vicomtesse intended to lay the book she was reading on a little round table, but having at the same moment turned her head towards M. de Neuil, the book, half-placed, fell upon the ground in the space between the table and the chair. Without appearing disturbed by the incident, she lifted herself and bowed in answer to the young man's salutation, but in a manner so imperceptible that she scarcely rose from her chair, in which she remained ensconced. She leaned forward to stir the fire; then she stooped, picked up a glove which she negligently put upon her left hand, while with her right, which was white, almost transparent, without rings, the fingers tapering and slender with rosy nails that formed a perfect oval, she pointed to a chair as if to tell Gaston to be seated. When her unknown guest had taken the chair, she turned her head to him with an interrogative and coquettish motion, the delicate charm of which is not to be described; it belongs to the class of those courteous intentions, those gracious though

formal gestures, given by early education and the constant habit of doing all things in good taste. These multiplied movements succeeded each other rapidly, without jerk or brusqueness; and they charmed Gaston by that mingling of precision and freedom which a pretty woman adds to the aristocratic manners of the highest company.

Madame de Beauséant contrasted too vividly with the automatons among whom he had lived during his last two months of exile in the depths of Normandy not to personify to his mind the pcesy of his dreams. Neither could he compare her perfections with those he had formerly admired. In presence of this woman and in this salon, furnished like those of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, full of the rich nothings that lie about on tables with flowers and books, he felt himself back in Paris. He trod the very carpets of Paris; he saw once more the distinguished type, the fragile form, of the true Parisian woman, her exquisite grace, and her negligence of all sought-for effects, which do so much to mar the women of the provinces.

Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauséant was blond, white as a blonde, but with brown eyes. She presented her brow nobly, the brow of a fallen angel, proud of her fault and asking no pardon for it. Her hair, very abundant and braided high upon the smooth bands which followed the broad curves of the forehead, added still further to the majesty of her head. Imagination could see in the spirals of that golden hair the ducal coronet of Bourgogne; and in the brilliant eyes of this great lady the courage of her house, the courage of a woman strong only in repulsing dis-

dain and audacity, but full of tenderness for all gentle feelings. The outline of her little head, admirably poised upon a long white throat, the features of her delicate face, her slightly parted lips, and her mobile countenance wore an expression of exquisite prudence, a tinge of affected satire, which bore some resemblance to slyness and superciliousness. It was difficult not to forgive her for those two feminine sins in thinking of her misfortunes, of the passion which had almost cost her life, and was visibly attested by the furrows that the slightest movement traced upon her brow, and by the sorrowful eloquence of her beautiful eyes, that were often raised to heaven. Was it not an imposing spectacle (still further magnified by reflection) to see in that vast, silent salon this woman, parted from her kind, who for three years had lived in the depths of that valley, far from the city, alone with her memories of a brilliant, happy, ardent youth, once so filled with fêtes and homage, now given over to the horrors of nothingness? The smile of this woman proclaimed a high sense of her own value. Neither mother nor wife, repulsed by society, betrayed by the only heart that could make her own beat without shame, finding in no sentiment the needed support to her tottering spirit, she was driven to seek her strength within herself, to live upon her own life, and have no other hope than that of a deserted woman, namely: to await death, and hasten its slowness, despite the days of youth and beauty that still remained to her. To feel herself made for happiness, and die without receiving it, without giving it—a woman! What griefs!

M. de Nueil made these reflections with the rapidity of lightning, and felt ashamed of his own individual person in presence of the greatest poesy that can enfold a woman. Under the spell of that triple glow of beauty, misfortunes, and nobleness, he remained almost stunned, dreaming, admiring the woman before him, but finding nothing to say to her.

Madame de Beauséant, who was doubtless not displeased by this attitude, made a gentle but imperative gesture of the hand; then, recalling a smile to her pale lips, as if to obey the gracious rules of her sex, she said:—

“ M. de Champignelles has informed me, monsieur, of the message which you have so courteously taken upon yourself to bring me. Is it from — ? ”

Hearing that terrible speech Gaston felt the absurdity of his position, the bad taste, the disloyalty of his proceeding towards a woman so noble and so unhappy. He blushed. His glance, full of many thoughts, became agitated; then suddenly, with that strength which young people are able to get out of the consciousness of their faults, he recovered himself. Interrupting Madame de Beauséant, not without making a submissive gesture, he said in a voice of emotion:—

“ Madame, I do not deserve the happiness of seeing you; I have unworthily deceived you. The sentiment I have obeyed, great as it was, does not excuse the miserable subterfuge which I used to obtain an entrance here. But, madame, if you will have the goodness to allow me to tell you — ”

The vicomtesse cast a haughty look of contempt upon him, raised her hand to the bell, and rang it, and when the footman came she said, looking at the young man with dignity:—

“ Jacques, show this gentleman out.”

She rose proudly, bowed to Gaston, and stooped to pick up her book. Her movements were as stiff and cold as those with which she had greeted him were softly elegant and gracious. M. de Nueil had risen, but he remained standing. Madame de Beauséant flung him another look as if to say: “ Well, are you not going? ”

That look was full of such stinging sarcasm that Gaston turned pale like a person about to swoon. Tears rose in his eyes, but he restrained them, drying them in hot shame and regret as he looked at Madame de Beauséant with a sort of pride which expressed in the same glance resignation and a certain consciousness of his own value. The vicomtesse had the right to punish him, but ought she to have done so? Then he went out. As he crossed the antechamber, the perspicacity of his mind and his intelligence, sharpened by passion, made him see the danger of his position.

“ If I leave this house now,” he said to himself, “ I shall never be able to re-enter it; I shall always be despised by the vicomtesse. It is impossible that a woman—and she is indeed a woman!—should not divine the love she inspires; she may feel a vague and involuntary regret for having so brusquely dismissed me, but she will not, she ought not to, she never would, revoke her decision; it is for me to understand her.”

At this reflection, Gaston stopped short on the portico, made an abrupt exclamation, and said: —

“ I have forgotten something.”

Then he returned to the salon, followed by the footman, who, full of respect for the baron and the sacred claims of property, was completely deceived by the naïve tone in which this remark was made. Gaston entered the salon softly, without being announced. When the vicomtesse, thinking perhaps that the intruder was the footman, raised her head she saw M. de Nueil standing before her.

“ Jacques showed me out,” he said, smiling.

That smile, full of a half-sad grace, took from his words what might otherwise have seemed jesting, and the accent with which he said them went to the soul.

Madame de Beauséant was disarmed.

“ Well, then, sit down,” she said.

Gaston seized a chair with an eager movement. His eyes, animated with joy, cast so vivid a light that the vicomtesse, unable to support that young glance, lowered her eyes on her book and tasted the pleasure, always fresh, of being to a man the principle of his happiness, — an imperishable sentiment in woman. Besides which, Madame de Beauséant had been understood. A woman is always thankful to encounter a man who is able to perceive the caprices, so logical, of her heart; who comprehends the apparently contradictory ways of her mind, the fleeting reserves of her sensations, now timid, now bold, — astonishing mixture of coquetry and artlessness.

“ Madame!” cried Gaston, softly, “ you know my

fault, but you are ignorant of my crimes. If you knew with what happiness I have — ”

“Ah! take care,” she said, lifting one of her fingers with a mysterious air to the level of her nose, which she lightly touched, while, with the other hand she made the gesture of ringing the bell.

That pretty motion, that graceful threat created, no doubt, a sad thought, a recollection of her happy life, of the time when she might be all charm and fascination, when happiness justified the caprices of her mind and gave attraction to the slightest movements of her body. The lines upon her forehead gathered between her eyebrows; her face, softly lighted by the candles, took a gloomy expression; she looked at M. de Nueil with a gravity devoid of harshness, and said in the tone of a woman profoundly penetrated with the meaning of her own words: —

“All this is very ridiculous. Time was, monsieur, when I had the right to be thoughtlessly gay, when I could have laughed with you and received you fearlessly; but to-day my life is changed, I am no longer mistress of my actions, I am forced to reflect upon them. To what sentiment do I owe your visit? Is it curiosity? If so, I am made to pay dear for a moment’s gratification. Is it that you already love passionately a woman universally calumniated, whom you have never seen? In that case, your sentiments are founded on a low opinion of me, on a wrong-doing to which chance has given celebrity.”

She threw her book upon the table in disgust.

“What!” she continued, with a terrible look at Gaston. “Because I have once been weak does the

world expect me to be so always? This is horrible, degrading. Do you come here to pity me? You are very young to sympathize with sorrows of the heart. Learn, monsieur, that I prefer contempt to pity; I will not submit to the compassion of any one."

A moment's silence followed, and then she resumed, turning her head to him with a sad and gentle air:

"You see, monsieur, that whatever may be the sentiment which has brought you so heedlessly into my seclusion, it is wounding to me. You are too young to be entirely devoid of kind feeling; you must certainly feel the impropriety of your action. I forgive it, and I speak without bitterness. You will not return here, will you? I beg you where I could command you. If you pay me another visit it will not be in your power or mine to prevent the whole town from believing that you are my lover, and you will add to all my other griefs a very great grief. That is not your wish, I think."

She ceased speaking, and looked at him with an air of such true dignity that it confounded him.

"I have done wrong, madame," he said in a tone of conviction; "but ardent feelings, want of reflection, a keen desire for happiness, are virtues and defects both at my age. I now perceive that I ought not to have sought to see you, and yet my desire was very natural."

He tried to tell her, but with more sentiment than sense, the sufferings to which his enforced exile had condemned him. He pictured the state of a young man whose ardour burned without fuel, making him believe that he was worthy of being tenderly loved,

who yet had never known the delights of love inspired by a young and beautiful woman of good taste and delicacy. He explained his disregard of conventional propriety without seeking to justify it. He flattered Madame de Beauséant by showing her that she realized for him the type of mistress incessantly but vainly demanded by most young men. Then, speaking of his early morning walks around Courcelles, of the vagabond ideas that possessed him as he gazed at the villa, to which, at last, he had found a way, he excited that indefinable indulgence which a woman always finds in her heart for the follies she inspires. He rang the tones of a passionate voice in this cold solitude, into which he brought the warm aspirations of his youth and charms of mind, developed by a careful education. Madame de Beauséant had been too long deprived of the emotions given by a delicate expression of true feeling not to feel the delight of them keenly. She could not keep herself from looking at the expressive face of M. de Nueil, or from admiring the beautiful confidence of a soul which has not yet been torn by cruel knowledge of the ways of the world, or consumed by the ceaseless calculation of ambition or vanity. Gaston was youth in the flower of its age, appearing as a man of character, as yet imperceptive of his highest destinies.

Thus they both made, unknown to each other, most dangerous reflections for their peace of mind, mutually endeavouring to conceal them. M. de Nueil recognized in the vicomtesse one of those rare women who are always victims to their own perfections and their inextinguishable tenderness; whose graceful

beauty is their least charm when they have once accorded access to their soul, in which sentiments are infinite, and where all is good, where the instinct of the beautiful unites with the most varied expressions of love to purify its joys and make them almost sacred, — wonderful secret of womanhood, an exquisite gift, not often granted by nature.

On her side, the vicomtesse, listening to the truthful tones in which Gaston told her of the troubles of his youth, divined the sufferings imposed by timidity on children of larger growth when study has kept them safe from the corruption and contagion of men of the world, whose argumentative experience corrodes the fine qualities of youth. She found in him the dream of every woman — a man in whom there did not yet exist that egotism of family and fortune, nor that selfishness which ends by killing, after their first transports, devotion, honour, abnegation, self-respect, — flowers of the soul so early wilted, which at the start enrich existence with delicate though strong emotions, and reveal in man an honest heart. Once launched upon the vast spaces of sentiment, they soon went far in theory; each sounded the depths of the other's soul, seeking for the truth of its expression. This examination, unconscious in Gaston, was premeditated in Madame de Beauséant. Using her natural and acquired slyness she expressed, without doing injustice to herself, opinions quite the contrary of those she held, in order to discover those of M. de Nueil. She was so witty, so gracious, so completely herself with a young man who did not rouse her distrust, and whom she believed she should never see

again, that Gaston exclaimed naïvely after one of her charming remarks:—

“Oh, madame! how could any man desert you?”

Madame de Beauséant was silent. Gaston reddened; he supposed he had offended her. But in truth she was overcome by the first deep and true pleasure she had felt since the day of her sorrow. The cleverest roué could not have made by employing art the progress that M. de Nueil owed to this cry from his soul. Such a judgment, wrung from the purity of a young man, made her innocent in her own eyes, condemned society, blamed the man who had deserted her, and justified the solitude in which she had come to languish. Worldly absolution, tender sympathies, social esteem, so much desired, so cruelly refused, in short, all her most secret cravings were accomplished by that one exclamation, embellished still further by gentle flatteries of the heart and the admiration that is always so eagerly sought by women. She was understood and comprehended. M. de Nueil gave her naturally an opportunity to rise above her fall. She looked at the clock.

“Oh, madame!” cried Gaston, “do not punish my thoughtlessness. If you grant me but this one evening, deign not to shorten it.”

She smiled at the compliment.

“Well,” she said, “as we shall never see each other again, a few moments more or less cannot matter. If I had pleased you it would have been a great misfortune.”

“A misfortune that has happened,” he answered sadly.

“Do not say that!” she replied, gravely. “Were I in any other position I would gladly receive you. I shall speak to you without evasion, and you will comprehend why I cannot, and why I ought not to receive you. I think you have too great a soul not to feel that if I were suspected of a second weakness I should become in the eyes of every one a contemptible and vulgar woman; I should be like other women. A pure and spotless life will, on the contrary, put my character into relief. I am too proud not to attempt to live in society as a being apart, victim to laws in my marriage, victim to man in my love. If I did not remain faithful to my position, I should deserve the blame that crushes me, and I should lose my own esteem. I have not had the lofty social virtue to belong to a man I did not love. I have broken, in spite of the laws, the bonds of marriage; but to me marriage was equivalent to death. I wished to live. If I had been a mother, perhaps I should have found strength to endure the torture of a marriage forced upon me by conventions. At eighteen we know nothing, poor young girls, of what we are made to do. I have violated the laws of the world, and the world has punished me; we were just, the one to the other. I sought happiness. Is it not a law of our nature to be happy? I was young, I was beautiful — I thought I met a being who was as loving as he was impassioned. I was loved deeply for a moment!”

She paused.

“I think,” she resumed, “that a man ought never to abandon a woman in the situation in which I was. I was deserted, I had ceased to please; perhaps I was

too loving, too devoted, or too exacting; I know not. Sorrow has at last trained me. After being an accuser for a long, long time, I am now resigned to be the only guilty one. I have therefore absolved at my own expense him of whom I believed I had reason to complain. I was not clever enough to keep him; fate has harshly punished me for my incompetence. I know only how to love; how can one think of one's self when one loves? I was therefore a slave, when I ought to have made myself a tyrant. Those who know me may condemn me, but they esteem me. My sufferings have taught me never again to put myself in the way of desertion. I do not understand how it is I still live after enduring the eight days of anguish that followed that crisis, the most dreadful that can happen in the life of a woman. One must have lived three years in absolute solitude to have gathered sufficient strength to speak as I do now of my sorrows. A death-struggle usually ends in death; mine was that struggle without the grave to end it. Oh! I have suffered, indeed!"

She raised her beautiful eyes to the ceiling, confiding to it, no doubt, all that she could not tell to a stranger. A ceiling is certainly the gentlest, most submissive, most complying confidant that women can find on occasions when they dare not look at their interlocutor. The ceiling of a boudoir is an institution. Is it not a confessional, minus the priest? At this moment Madame de Beauséant was eloquent and beautiful; I would say coquettish if the word were not too strong. In rendering justice to herself, in putting between herself and love the highest barriers,

she spurred all the feelings of the man; and the more she raised her nature, the better she offered it to his sight. At the end she lowered her eyes to Gaston, after taking from them the too affecting expression given to them by the memory of her sufferings.

“You will admit that I ought to remain solitary and cold,” she said calmly.

M. de Nucil felt a violent desire to fall at the feet of this woman, sublime at this moment with reason and unreason; but he feared her ridicule; he repressed his enthusiasm and his thoughts; he felt both the fear of not being able to express them well, and a terror of some terrible rebuff or sarcasm, apprehension of which so often freezes the souls of ardent beings. The reaction of feelings thus repressed at the moment when they were about to gush from his heart gave him that bitter pain known to shy and ambitious persons when forced to swallow their own desires. He could not, however, help breaking the silence by saying in a trembling voice: —

“Permit me, madame, to give way to one of the greatest emotions of my life by avowing to you what you have made me feel. You enlarge my heart! I feel within me a desire to spend my life in making you forget your griefs, in loving you for all those who have hated or wounded you. But this is a sudden effusion of the heart, which to-day nothing justifies, and which I ought —”

“Enough, monsieur,” said Madame de Beauséant; “we are each of us going too far. I wished to remove all harshness from the refusal I am obliged to give; I wished to explain its mournful reasons, not

to attract your homage. Coquetry is becoming to none but happy women. Believe me, it is better we should remain strangers to each other. Later, you will know that it is better not to form ties that must eventually be broken."

She sighed slightly, and her brow wrinkled, only to renew its purity a moment later.

"What suffering for a woman," she resumed, "not to be able to follow the man she loves through all the phases of his life! And that deep grief, must it not echo horribly in the heart of that man, if indeed he loves her well? A double grief, is it not?"

A moment's silence, and then she rose as if to make her guest rise, saying with a smile:—

"You did not expect, in coming to Courcelles, to hear a sermon, did you?"

Gaston felt himself at this moment farther from this extraordinary woman than at the moment he first approached her. Attributing the charm of this delightful hour to the coquetry of the mistress of the salon, desirous of displaying her mind, he bowed coldly to the vicomtesse and left the house in despair. As he went along he tried to disentangle the true character of this creature, supple, yet hard as a steel spring; but he had seen her take so many aspects, so many shades, that he found it impossible to form any real judgment upon her. Besides, the intonations of her voice rang in his ears, and the recollection gave such charm to her gestures, to the motions of her head, to the play of her eyes that the more his thoughts examined her, the more he was in love. To him, her beauty shone the brighter in

the shadows; the impressions he received of it woke again, awakened by one another, seducing him anew by revealing graces of womanhood and intellect not perceived at first. He fell into one of those vagabond meditations during which the most lucid thoughts struggle together and cast the soul into a species of short madness. One must be young to reveal and to comprehend the secret of dithyrambics of this kind, in which the heart, assailed by the wisest and by the craziest ideas, yields to whichever strikes it last, a thought of hope or of despair, at the will of some unknown power. At twenty-three years of age a man is almost always ruled by a sentiment of modesty; the shyness, the timidity of a young girl agitate him; he is afraid of expressing ill his love, he sees nothing but difficulties, and stands in awe of them; he trembles in fear that he may not please; he would be bold if he did not love so much; the more he feels the value of happiness, the less he believes that his mistress will easily grant it to him. Sometimes he yields himself up too entirely to his pleasure, and fears to be unable to give any; or if, unfortunately, his idol is imposing he adores her in secret and from afar; if his love is not divined, it expires. Often this precocious passion, dead in the young heart, remains there, brilliant with illusions. What man has not several of these virgin memories, which, later, awake, ever gracious, bringing the image of a perfect joy? memories like children, lost in the flower of their age, whose parents have known nothing but their smiles?

M. de Nueil returned, therefore, from Courcelles, a prey to feelings big with contradictory resolutions.

Madame de Beauséant had become to him already the condition of his existence; he preferred to die than to live without her. Still juvenile enough to feel those cruel fascinations which a perfect woman exercises over a fresh and passionate soul, he must have passed one of those storm-tossed nights during which young men fly mentally from happiness to suicide, from suicide to happiness, exhausting a whole lifetime of joy and falling asleep powerless. Fatal nights, from which the greatest danger is to waken a philosopher. Too thoroughly in love to sleep, M. de Nueil rose and began to write letters, none of which satisfying him, he burned them all.

The next day he went to make a turn round the little inclosure of Courcelles, but only towards night-fall, fearing lest the vicomtesse should see him. The feeling he was then obeying belongs to a characteristic of the soul so mysterious that one must still be a young man in a like position to comprehend its mute delights and whimsicalities, — all of which make those persons fortunate enough to see only the practical side of life shrug their shoulders. After painful hesitation Gaston wrote to Madame de Beauséant the following letter, which may pass for a model of the phraseology special to lovers, and can be compared to the drawings made in secret by children to surprise their parents, — works of art detestable to all except the parents who receive them.

“MADAME, — You exercise so great an influence over my heart, my soul, my person, that to-day my fate hangs wholly upon you. Do not fling my letter into

the fire. Be sufficiently benevolent to read it. Perhaps you will pardon my first words when you perceive that they are not a selfish or vulgar declaration, but the expression of a natural fact.

“Perhaps you will be touched by the modesty of my prayers, by the resignation that a sense of my inferiority inspires, by the influence of your decision on my life. At my age, madame, I know only how to love; I am utterly ignorant of what will please a woman and win her; but I feel for her in my heart intoxicating adorations. I am irresistibly attracted to you by the immense pleasure you make me feel; I think of you with all the egoism which draws us instinctively where for us is vital warmth. I do not think myself worthy of you. No, it seems to me impossible that I, young, ignorant, timid, should bring to you one-millionth part of the happiness that I breathe in as I listen to you, as I see you. You are to me the only woman existing in the world. Unable to conceive of life without you I have resolved to leave France and risk my existence until I lose it in some impossible enterprise, in the Indies, in Africa, I know not where. Must I not combat a boundless love with something that is allied to infinity?

“But if you would have me hope, not to be wholly yours, but to obtain your friendship, I shall remain. Permit me to spend near you — rarely if you so insist — a few hours like those I have just obtained. That slender happiness, the keen enjoyments of which can be denied me at my first too ardent words, will suffice to make me endure the pulsations of my blood. Do I presume too far upon your generosity when I en-

treat you to permit an intercourse in which all the profit is to me alone? You can surely show to the world to which you sacrifice so much that I am nothing to you. You, so brilliant and so proud, what can you fear?

“ I would that I could open my heart to you, in order to convince you that my humble petition covers no secret thought. I should not have told you that my love is boundless in asking you to grant me friendship did I have any hope that you would share the sentiment so deeply sunken in my soul. No, I shall ever be, near you, that which you desire me to be, provided I may be there. If you refuse me, and you may, I shall not murmur, I shall depart. If, later, any other woman than you should enter my life, you will have acted rightly; but if I die, faithful to my love, you will perhaps feel some regret. The hope of thus causing you regret will soothe my anguish — it will be the only vengeance of my rejected heart.”

It is necessary not to be ignorant of any of the extravagant sorrows of youth, and also to have climbed upon all the white and double-winged chimeras which offer their feminine crupper to burning imaginations, in order to understand the torture to which Gaston de Nueil was a prey when he knew that his first ultimatum was in the hands of the vicomtesse. He imagined her cold, scornful, jesting at his love, like those who no longer believe in the tender passion. He would gladly have recalled his letter, — he thought it absurd; there came into his mind a thousand and one ideas that were infinitely better,

all of them more touching than his stiff sentences, those cursed, far-fetched, sophistical, pretentious sentences, but, happily, very ill-punctuated and written askew. He tried not to think, not to feel; but he did think, he felt, he suffered. If he had been thirty years old he would have made himself drunk; but the still artless young fellow knew nothing of the resources of opium or the other expedients of extreme civilization. He had not at his elbow one of those good Parisian friends who know so well how to say to you: *PÔTE, NON DOLET!* as they hold out a bottle of champagne, or carry you off to an orgy to ameliorate the pangs of uncertainty. Excellent friends, always ruined when you are rich, always at a watering-place when you are in search of them, always having just lost their last louis at cards when you ask them to lend you one, but always owning a bad horse to sell to you; yet, after all, the best fellows on earth, and ever ready to jump in with you and race down the steep incline on which time, and soul, and life itself are wasted.

At last M. de Nueil received, from the hands of Jacques, a letter sealed with perfumed wax bearing the arms of Bourgogne, and written on satin paper, unmistakable signs of a pretty woman. He rushed away instantly to lock himself in and read and re-read *her* letter.

“ You punish me very severely, monsieur, both for the kindness with which I saved you from the annoyance of a dismissal, and for the seduction which gifts of mind invariably exercise over me. I had confi-

dence in the nobleness of youth, and you have deceived me. Nevertheless, I spoke to you, if not with open heart, which would have been perfectly ridiculous, at least with frankness; I told you of my situation in order to make your young soul comprehend my coldness. The more you interested me, the more keen is the pain you have now caused me. I am naturally tender and kind, but circumstances render me harsh. Another woman would have burned your letter without reading it; I have read it, and I answer it. My reasons will prove to you that while I am not insensible to the expression of feelings to which, however involuntarily, I have given birth, I am far from sharing them, and my conduct will show you better still the sincerity of my soul. Besides, I wish, for your good, to employ the species of authority which you give me over your life, and exercise it, once only, in causing the veil that now covers your eyes to drop.

“ I shall soon be thirty years of age, and you are barely twenty-two. You are ignorant yourself of what your thoughts may be when you reach my years. The vows you take to-day may seem to you by that time extremely heavy. To-day, I am willing to believe, you would give me your whole life without regret, you would even die for an ephemeral pleasure; but at thirty, experience will have taken from you the strength to make me daily sacrifices; and as for me, I should be deeply humiliated to accept them. Some day everything about you, Nature herself, will command you to leave me; and, as I have told you already, I prefer death to desertion. You see how

sorrow has taught me to calculate. I reason, I have no passion. You force me to tell you that I do not love you, that I ought not, cannot, and will not love you. I have passed that moment in life when women yield to unreflecting impulse; I could not be the mistress of whom you are in search.

“My consolations, monsieur, come from God, not from man. Besides, I read too clearly into hearts by the sad light of a love betrayed, to consent to the friendship that you ask and that you offer. You are the dupe of your heart, and you hope much more from my weakness than from your strength. All that is an effect of instinct. I pardon you this childish plot, in which you are not yet an accomplice. I order you, in the name of this passing love, in the name of your life, in the name of my tranquillity, to remain in your own country, and not to abandon an honourable and noble life in its service for an illusion which must, sooner or later, be extinguished.

“Later, when you have, in accomplishing your true destiny, developed all the sentiments that await a man, you will appreciate my answer, which, at the present moment, you will doubtless accuse of harshness. You will then meet, with pleasure, an old woman whose friendship will be sweet and precious to you; it will not have been subjected to the vicissitudes of passion or to the disenchantments of life; noble ideas, religious ideas will have kept it pure and saintly.

“Adieu, monsieur, obey me; believe that your success in life will cast some pleasure into my solitude, and think of me only as we think of the absent.”

After having read this letter Gaston de Nueil wrote as follows:—

“Madame, if I ceased to love you, and accepted the chances which you propose to me of becoming an ordinary man, I should deserve my fate—admit it! No, I shall not obey you, and I swear to you a fidelity which can be unbound by death only. Oh! take my life!—unless you fear to put remorse in yours.”

When the servant whom M. de Nueil had sent to Courcelles returned, his master said to him:—

“To whom did you give my note?”

“To Madame la vicomtesse herself as she was getting into the carriage—”

“To come into town?”

“I think not, monsieur; the carriage of Madame la vicomtesse had post-horses to it.”

“Ah! then she is going on a journey,” said the baron.

“Yes, monsieur,” replied the valet.

Instantly Gaston made his preparations to follow Madame de Beauséant, and she led him as far as Geneva without knowing that he accompanied her. Among the thousand reflections that crowded upon him during this journey the one that occupied him more especially was this: “Why did she go away?” That question was the text of innumerable suppositions, among which he naturally chose the most flattering, namely: “If she desires to love me, there is no doubt that a woman of her intelligence would prefer Switzerland, where no one knows us, to France, where she would meet with censors.”

Certain passionate men would not like a woman clever enough to choose her ground; they belong to the class of the refined. However, there is nothing to show that Gaston's supposition was correct.

The vicomtesse hired a little house on the shores of the lake. When she was fully installed, Gaston presented himself one fine evening as the light was fading. Jacques, an essentially aristocratic footman, showed no surprise on seeing M. de Nueil, and announced him as a servant accustomed to understand things. Hearing the name, and seeing the young man before her, Madame de Beauséant let fall the book she was reading; her surprise gave Gaston the time to reach her and to say in a voice that seemed to her delightful. —

“With what pleasure I took the horses that had just taken you!”

To be so well obeyed in her secret desires! Where is the woman who would not have yielded to such happiness? An Italian, one of those fascinating creatures whose soul is at the antipodes to that of a Parisian woman, and whom, on this side of the Alps, we think profoundly immoral, said one day in reading a French novel: “I don't see why those poor lovers spent so much time in settling what ought to be the affair of an afternoon.” Why should a narrator not follow the example of the kind Italian, and refrain from delaying his readers or his topic. There would certainly be a few scenes of charming coquetry to depict, sweet delays which Madame de Beauséant preferred to give to Gaston's happiness, in order to fall with grace like the virgins of antiquity; perhaps,

too, she wished to enjoy the pleasures of inspiring a first love and of leading it on to its highest expression of strength and power. M. de Nueil was still of an age to be the dupe of these caprices, these manœuvres which women so delight in, and which they prolong, either to stipulate for conditions or to increase their power, the diminution of which they instinctively divine. But these little protocols of the boudoir, less numerous than those of the Conference of London, hold too small a place in the history of a real passion to be mentioned here.

Madame de Beauséant and M. de Nueil lived for three years in the villa on the lake of Geneva. They lived alone, seeing no one, and causing no talk about them; they sailed their boat, and were as happy as we ought all to be. The little house was simple, with green blinds, and wide balconies sheltered by awnings, a true lover's-nest, a house of white sofas, silent carpets, fresh coverings, where all things shone with joy. At each and every window the lake took on a different aspect; in the distance, the mountains with their vapory, many-tinted, fugitive fantasies; above them, a beauteous sky; and, before them, that long expanse of capricious, changeful water! All things seemed to dream for those lovers, and all things smiled upon them.

Important interests recalled M. de Nueil to France: his father and brother were dead; it was necessary to leave Geneva. The pair bought the little house; they would have liked to cast down the mountains and empty the lake by a subterranean current, in order to leave nothing behind them. Madame de Beauséant

followed M. de Nueil. She converted her fortune and bought, near to Manerville, a considerable property which adjoined the estates of M. de Nueil, and there they lived together. Gaston very graciously gave up to his mother the château and the income of the domains of Manerville in return for the liberty she gave him to live a bachelor. Madame de Beauséant's estate was close to a little town in one of the loveliest positions of the valley of the Auge. There, the two lovers put between themselves and the world barriers that neither social ideas nor individuals were able to cross, and there they found again the happy days of Switzerland. For nine whole years they enjoyed a happiness it is useless to describe; the end of this history will doubtless make all souls that are able to comprehend it in the infinity of its expressions divine its poesy and its aspiration.

Meanwhile, M. le Marquis de Beauséant (his father and elder brother being dead), the husband of Madame de Beauséant, was in the enjoyment of perfect health. Nothing assists us so much to live as the certainty of making others happy by our death. Monsieur de Beauséant was one of those ironical, stubborn men who, like life-annuitants, find an added pleasure to that of other men in getting up well and hearty every morning. Worthy man, however; a little methodical, ceremonious, and sufficiently of a calculator to be able to declare his love to a woman as tranquilly as a footman announces that "Madame is served."

This little biographical notice of M. de Beauséant is intended to show how impossible it was that Madame de Beauséant should marry M. de Nueil.

Thus, after nine years of happiness, the sweetest lease a woman ever signed, M. de Nueil and Madame de Beauséant were still in a position as natural and as false as that in which we saw them at the beginning of this affair; a fatal crisis, nevertheless, of which it is impossible to give an idea, though the lines can be laid down with mathematical correctness.

Madame la Comtesse de Nueil, Gaston's mother, had never been willing to meet Madame de Beauséant. She was a person of stiff virtue, who had very legally made the happiness of M. de Nueil, the father. Madame de Beauséant knew perfectly well that the honourable dowager was her enemy, and would surely attempt to win Gaston away from his anti-religious and immoral life. She would gladly have sold her property and returned to Geneva. But to do so would be showing distrust of M. de Nueil, and of that she was incapable. Besides, he had taken a great liking for the estate of Valleroy, where he was making great plantations and altering the lay of the land. It would be tearing him away from a species of mechanical happiness which women desire for their husbands, and even for their lovers.

Recently a young lady had arrived in the neighbourhood, a Mademoiselle de la Rodière, about twenty-two years of age, with a fortune of forty thousand francs a year. Gaston met this heiress at Manerville every time that his duty to his mother took him to the house.

Having thus placed these personages like the ciphers of a proposition in arithmetic before the reader, the following letter, written and given one

morning to Gaston, will explain the dreadful problem which for over a month Madame de Beauséant had been striving to solve: —

“MY BELOVED, — to write to you while living heart to heart, when nothing parts us, when our caresses serve us often in place of language — is not this a contradiction? No, love. There are certain things a woman cannot say face to face with her lover; the mere thought of them takes away her voice, drives the blood to her heart; she is left without strength, without mind. To be in this state near to you makes me suffer, and I am often in it. I feel that my heart ought to be all truth to you; that no thought within it should be disguised to you, not even the most fugitive; and I love this giving of all, which so becomes me, too well to remain any longer restrained and silent. Therefore I am going now to tell you my distress — yes, it is a distress, an anguish. Listen to me! and do not say that little ‘Ta ta ta’ with which you silence my sauciness, and which I love, because all pleases me from you.

“Dear heaven-sent husband, let me tell you that you have effaced all memory of the sorrows beneath the weight of which I was so nearly succumbing years ago. I have known love through you alone. It needed the candour of your beautiful youth, the purity of your great soul, to satisfy the exactions of an exacting woman. Friend, I have often throbbed with joy in thinking that during all these nine years — so rapid yet so long — my jealousy has never once been roused. I have had all the flowers of your soul, all

your thoughts. There has never been the slightest cloud upon our sky; we have not known what a sacrifice was; we have each obeyed the inspiration of our hearts. I have enjoyed a boundless happiness for a woman. The tears upon this page will tell you of my gratitude. I would like to write of it on my knees —

“ Well, this felicity has brought me an anguish greater than was that of desertion. Dear, the heart of a woman has folds within folds; I knew not myself until to-day the depth of mine, just as I knew not the depth of love. The greatest sorrows that can assail us are light to bear in comparison with the one thought of harm to him we love. And if we cause it, that harm, is it not a thing to die of?

“ There is the thought that oppresses me. But it drags after it another that is yet more heavy; one which degrades the glory of love, kills it, makes it a humiliation that tarnishes our life forever. You are thirty years old, and I am forty. What terrors does not this difference of age inspire in a loving woman? You may, first involuntarily, then consciously, have felt the sacrifices you have made to me in renouncing all the world for my sake. You may have thought, perhaps, of your social destiny, of this marriage which will so largely increase your fortune, of children to whom you can transmit it, of your reappearance in the world to occupy your place with honour. But those thoughts you may have repressed, happy in sacrificing to me, without my knowledge, an heiress, a fortune, and a noble future. In your manly generosity you will choose to remain faithful to the oaths

which bind us in the sight of God only. My past will reappear to you, and I shall be protected by the very grief from which you drew me — Shall I owe your love to pity? that thought is more horrible to me than even that of making your life a failure. Those who stab their mistresses are more merciful when they kill them happy and innocent in the glow of their illusions — Yes, death is preferable to these two thoughts which for some time past have saddened my heart secretly. Yesterday, when you said to me so tenderly: ‘What is the matter?’ your voice made me shudder. I thought that, as usual, you read my soul, and I expected your confidences, believing that my presentiments were just, and divining the calculations of your mind.

“Then it was that I remembered certain attentions which are habitual to you, but in which I believed that I could trace the sort of effort by which men betray that their loyalty is hard to maintain. At that moment I paid dear for my past happiness; I felt that the treasures of love were always sold to us. And, in fact, has not fate parted us? You have surely said to yourself: ‘Sooner or later I must leave my poor Claire; why not part from her in time?’ That sentence has been written in your eyes. At times I have left you to go and weep elsewhere. These are the first tears that grief has made me shed these ten years, and I have been too proud to show them to you.

“But remember, I do not blame you. You are right; I ought not to have the selfishness to bind your brilliant and long life to mine which is so nearly worn

out. But, if I am wrong, if I have mistaken one of your love-melancholies for a thought of separation? — Ah! my angel, do not leave me in uncertainty; punish your jealous wife, but give back to her the consciousness of your love and hers: all of womanhood is in that prayer; for in that sentiment alone all is sanctified.

“ Since your mother’s arrival and since you meet Mademoiselle de la Rodière so frequently at her house, I am a prey to doubts which dishonour us. Make me suffer, but do not deceive me; I wish to know all, — what your mother says and what you think. If you have hesitated between anything and me I will give you your liberty — I will hide my fate from you; I will never weep before you; only I cannot see you more — Oh! I stop, my heart is breaking.

.

“ I have sat here gloomy and stupid for several moments. Friend, I can have no pride with you, you are so good, so frank! You could not wound me, you would not deceive me; you will tell me the truth, however cruel it may be. Shall I help your avowal? Well, then, heart of mine, I shall be comforted by one thought: Shall I not have possessed the young being, all grace, all beauty, all delicacy, the Gaston whom no other woman can ever know, but whom I, I alone, have delightfully enjoyed? — No, you will never love again as you have loved me; no, I shall have no rival. My memories will be without bitterness in thinking of our love, which will be all my thought. It is beyond your power to enchant another woman with the young charms of a young heart, by those dear

coqueties of the soul, those graces of the body, that quick understanding of allurements — in short, by the whole adorable cortège that surrounds adolescent love. Ah! you are a man now; you will obey your destiny by calculating everything. You will have cares, anxieties, ambitions, troubles which will deprive *her* of the constant and unalterable smile which was ever on your lips for me. Your voice, to me so tender, will oftentimes be harassed now. Your eyes, that lighted with celestial gleams on seeing me, will be dim to *her*. Then, as it is impossible to love you as I love you, this woman will never please you as I pleased you. She will never take that perpetual care that I have taken of myself and that continual study of your happiness, the intelligence of which has never failed me. Yes, the man, the heart, the soul that I have known will exist no more; but I shall bury them in my memory to enjoy them still; I shall live happy in that beautiful past life, unknowing of all that is not *us*.

“ My dear treasure, if, nevertheless, you have not conceived the least desire for liberty, if my love indeed is not a weight upon you, if my fears are all chimerical, if I am still for you your EVE, the only woman that there is in this world, come, come to me, the moment you have read this letter. Ah! I will love you in that one instant more than I have loved you in these nine years. After having endured the useless torture of these doubts, every day that is added to our love, yes, every single day, will be a lifetime of happiness. Therefore speak! be frank; do not deceive me, for that would be a crime. Tell me, will you

have your liberty? Have you reflected on the life of your manhood? Have you a regret? — I, to cause you a regret! oh, I should die of it! I have love enough to prefer your happiness to mine, your life to mine. Cast aside, if you can, the memory of our nine years of bliss that you may not be influenced in your decision; but speak! I am submissive to you as I am to God, the one consoler that remains if you desert me.”

When Madame de Beauséant knew that her letter was in M. de Nueil's hands she fell into such deep dejection, into a meditation that was almost torpid from the crowding of her overabundant thoughts, that she seemed to be half asleep. Certainly she suffered an anguish the intensity of which has not always been proportioned to a woman's strength, and yet it is only women who endure it.

While she thus awaited her fate, M. de Nueil was, on reading her letter, much *embarrassed*, the term employed by all young men in a crisis of this kind. He had already half yielded to the instigations of his mother and the attractions of Mademoiselle de la Rodière, a rather insignificant young girl, straight as a poplar, white and pink, semi-mute, according to the programme prescribed for all marriageable girls; but her forty thousand francs a year from landed property were a sufficient charm. Madame de Nueil, with the true affection of a mother, desired to inveigle her son into virtue. She pointed out to him the flattery of being preferred by Mademoiselle de la Rodière when so many distinguished matches were offered to her;

it was surely time to think of his future; such a splendid opportunity might never come again; they would have eighty thousand francs a year between them eventually; fortune consoled for so much! If Madame de Beauséant loved him for himself she ought to be the first to advise him to marry; — in short, this good mother neglected none of the means of action by which a woman influences a man's mind. She had already brought her son to hesitate. Madame de Beauséant's letter came at a moment when his love was still debating against the seductions of a life arranged with propriety and in conformity with the ideas of the world; but the letter decided the struggle. He resolved to part from Madame de Beauséant and marry.

“One must be a man in life,” he said to himself.

Then he reflected on the sufferings this resolution would cause his mistress. His vanity as a man as well as his conscience as a lover magnified them still further; a sincere pity took possession of him. He felt, all of a sudden, the immensity of the misfortune, and he thought it necessary, charitable, to allay that mortal wound. He hoped by careful management to be able to bring Madame de Beauséant to a calmer state of mind and induce her to advise this cruel marriage, by accustoming her slowly to the idea of a necessary separation; keeping Mademoiselle de la Rodière always between them as a mere phantom, sacrificing her at first, that Madame de Beauséant might impose her upon him later. In order to succeed in this compassionate undertaking, he went so far as to count upon the nobility, the pride, the finest

qualities in the soul of his mistress. He therefore answered her letter in a way that he supposed would lull her suspicions.

Answer her! To a woman who united to the intuitions of true love the most delicate perceptions of a woman's mind an answer was condemnation to death. When Jacques entered the room and advanced towards Madame de Beauséant to give her a note, folded triangularly, the poor woman trembled like a captured swallow. A mysterious chill fell from her head to her feet, wrapping her, as it were, in a shroud of ice. If he did not rush to her, weeping, pale, a lover, all was over. And yet, there is so much hope in the hearts of loving women! so many stabs are needed to kill them; they love and they bleed to the last.

“Does madame need anything?” asked Jacques, in a gentle voice, as he withdrew.

“No,” she said. “Poor man,” she thought, wiping away a tear; “even he divines it, a valet!”

She read: “My Beloved, you are creating for yourself chimeras —” A thick veil fell upon her eyes; the secret voice of her heart cried to her: “He lies!” Then her glance seized the meaning of the whole first page with that species of lucid avidity given by passion, and read at the bottom of it these words: “Nothing has been settled.” Turning the page with convulsive haste she saw distinctly the intention which had dictated the involved evasive phrases of the letter, in which there was no longer the impetuous gush of love; she crumpled it, tore it, bit it, and cast it into the fire, crying out: —

“Oh! infamy! I was his when he did not love me!”

Then, half dead, she fell upon her sofa.

M. de Nueil went out to walk after he had written and sent his letter. On his return, he found Jacques at the door, who gave him a note and said: —

“Madame la marquise is not at the château.”

Much astonished, M. de Nueil opened the envelope and read: —

“Madame, if I ceased to love you and accepted the chances which you propose to me of becoming an ordinary man, I should deserve my fate — admit it! No, I shall not obey you, and I swear to you a fidelity which can be unbound by death only. Oh! take my life! — unless you fear to put remorse in yours.”

It was the note he had written to Madame de Beau-séant nine years earlier, as she started for Geneva. Beneath it Claire de Bourgogne had written: “Monsieur, you are free.”

M. de Nueil removed to his mother’s house at Manerville. Three weeks later he married Mademoiselle Stéphanie de la Rodière.

If this history, very commonplace in its truthfulness, came to an end here it would seem a mere hoax to relate it. Nearly every man has something as interesting, or more so, to tell to himself. But the noise made by its final conclusion, unhappily too true, and all that this tale brings back in memory to the hearts of those who have known the celestial delights of an infinite passion which they have themselves destroyed or lost by some cruel fatality, may justify its recital here and shelter it from critics.

Madame de Beauséant had not left the château de Valleroy at the time of her separation from M. de Nueil. For a multitude of reasons which we must leave buried in the heart of a woman (and which women themselves will divine) Claire continued to live there after the marriage of M. de Nueil. Her seclusion was so great that even her servants, except her maid and Jacques, did not see her. She exacted absolute silence from all, and never left her room except to go to the chapel of the château, where a priest of the neighbourhood came every morning to say mass.

Some days after his marriage the Comte de Nueil fell into a species of conjugal apathy which might be supposed to express happiness as much as unhappiness. His mother said to every one: "My son is perfectly happy."

Madame Gaston de Nueil, like many young wives, was rather tame, gentle, and patient; she became pregnant about a month after marriage. All of which conformed to the received ideas of wedlock. M. de Nueil behaved to her charmingly; only, about two months after his rupture with Madame de Beauséant, he became very dreamy and pensive. He had always been serious, his mother said.

After seven months of this lukewarm happiness, certain events occurred, very trivial apparently, but bringing with them too much development of thought and revealing too great a trouble of soul not to be simply mentioned here and left to the interpretations of different minds.

One day, when M. de Nueil had been hunting in the

woods of Manerville and Valleroy, he returned home through the park of Madame de Beauséant and, stopping at the house, he asked for Jacques.

“Does Madame la marquise still like game?” he asked.

On Jacques’ reply in the affirmative, Gaston offered him quite a large dole, accompanied by very specious arguments, in order to obtain from him the very slight service of keeping for madame’s own use the game he shot. It seemed very unimportant to Jacques whether Madame la marquise ate a partridge shot by her keeper or by M. de Nueil, inasmuch as the latter insisted that she should not be told from whom it came.

“It was killed on her land,” said the comte.

Jacques lent himself for several days to this innocent deception. M. de Nueil went out shooting every morning and did not return till dinner time, but always without any game. A whole week went by. Then Gaston made bold to write a long letter to Madame de Beauséant and sent it to her. This letter was returned to him unopened. It was evening when her footman brought it back to him. Suddenly he darted from the salon, where he seemed to be listening to a caprice of Hérold’s that his wife was murdering on the piano, and rushed, with the rapidity of a man on his way to a rendezvous, to the château de Valleroy.

Reaching it, he listened to the murmuring noises and knew that the servants were at dinner. He went up instantly to Madame de Beauséant’s apartment, which she now never left. He was able to reach the door without making any noise. There he saw, by

the light of two wax-candles, his former mistress, emaciated, pale, seated in a large armchair, her head bowed, her hands pendent, her eyes fixed on an object that she seemed not to see. It was SORROW in its most complete expression. There was something of vague hope in this attitude, but no one could have told if Claire de Bourgogne were looking to the grave or to the past. Perhaps the tears of M. de Nueil glistened in the darkness, perhaps his breathing echoed slightly, perhaps an involuntary shiver escaped him, or it may be that his presence near her was impossible without the phenomenon of intussusception, the habit of which is the glory, the joy, and the proof of veritable love. Madame de Beauséant turned her face slowly to the door and saw her former lover. M. de Nueil advanced a few steps.

“If you come nearer, monsieur,” she cried, turning pale, “I will fling myself from that window.”

She sprang to the fastening, opened it, and put her foot upon the sill, her hand on the rail of the balcony, as she turned her head to Gaston.

“Go! go!” she cried, “or I throw myself down.”

At that terrible cry, M. de Nueil, hearing the servants, who were roused, fled like a criminal.

Returning home Gaston wrote a short letter, and ordered his valet to take it to Madame de Beauséant and tell her it was a matter of life and death. The messenger gone, M. de Nueil returned to the salon where his wife was still at the piano. He sat down and awaited the answer. An hour later, husband and wife were seated, silent, on either side of the fireplace when the valet returned from Valleroy and handed his

master the letter, which had not been opened. M. de Nueil passed into a boudoir adjoining the salon, where he had left his gun on returning from the woods that afternoon, and killed himself.

This quick and fatal conclusion of his fate, so contrary to all the habits of young France, was natural.

Persons who have carefully observed, or who have delightfully experienced the phenomena to which the perfect union of two beings gives rise, will comprehend this suicide. A woman does not mould herself, does not bend herself in a single day to the caprices of passion. Love, like a rare flower, demands the choicest care of cultivation; time and the harmonizing of souls alone can reveal its resources, and give birth to those tender, delicate pleasures which we think inherent in the person whose heart bestows them upon us, and about which we cherish a thousand superstitions. This wonderful unison, this religious belief, and the fruitful certainty of ever finding a special and extreme happiness near the being beloved, are, in part, the secret of lasting attachments and long passions. Beside a woman who possesses the genius of her sex love is never a habit; her adorable tenderness clothes it in forms so varied, she is so brilliant and so loving, both, she puts such art into her nature, or so much of nature into her art, that she makes herself as all-powerful in memory as she is by her presence. Beside her all other women pale. A man must have had the fear of losing a love so vast, so brilliant, or else he must have lost it, to know its full value. But if, having known it, a man deprives himself of it to fall into a cold marriage; if the woman in whom he

expects to meet with the same felicity proves to him, by some of those facts buried in the shadows of conjugal life, that it can never be reborn for him; if he still has upon his lips the taste of that celestial love, and if he has mortally wounded his true spouse for the sake of a social chimera, then he must either die or take to him that material, cold, selfish philosophy which is the horror of all passionate souls.

As for Madame de Beauséant, she doubtless never supposed that her lover's despair would go as far as suicide after having drunk so deep of love for nine years. Perhaps she thought that she alone would suffer. She had, moreover, every right to refuse the most degrading joint-possession that exists; a sharing which some wives may endure for high social reasons, but which a mistress must hold in hatred, because in the purity of her love lies its only justification.

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